Linguistics and Education 46 (2018) 102–112

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Linguistics and Education

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/linged

“They don’t see us otherwise”: A discourse analysis of marginalized students critiquing the local news

Angela M. Kohnen*, Amanda Lacy

University of Florida, College of Education, PO Box 117048, Gainesville, FL 32611, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 29 November 2017
Received in revised form 6 July 2018
Accepted 11 July 2018

Keywords:
Discourse analysis
Critical race theory
Media literacy
Multiliteracies

ABSTRACT

At the end of the fall semester, a fight broke out at a high school in the southeastern United States, a fight large enough to be covered by the local news. In this article, we analyze two data sources related to this event: one local news report and a discussion of that news report that occurred in an Intensive Reading class at the school. Intensive Reading was a remedial course designed for students who had failed a required standardized literacy assessment. In this article, we draw upon discourse analysis and critical race media literacy to argue the following: 1) the local media representation presented a version of events that used coded language and visual images to create a figured world in which students of color were silenced and a master script was perpetuated; and 2) students, having been taught critical literacy (in the form of multiliteracies pedagogy) and media literacy, resisted the media representation and constructed a counter-story based on their own figured worlds. Our analysis also supports the call for critical race media literacy pedagogy in schools.

© 2018 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

> *If they wanted to know what really happened, they would have asked people that was there.*
> *– Kyle*[1]

1. Introduction

A few days before the end of the fall semester, a large fight broke out at Parkmore High School where Kyle was a student and Amanda (second author) worked as a teacher. The police were called, several students were arrested, and the events made the local evening news. When Amanda’s students returned from their semester break, they were eager to view the news broadcast and discuss it in their Intensive Reading course. Intensive Reading was ostensibly a remedial “test preparation” course for upper level students who had not met the state’s reading requirement on their standardized tests, the majority of whom were Black or African American[2]; however, Amanda’s students regularly read and critiqued media messages and news reports, as we explain below.

In this article, we use discourse analysis (Gee, 2005, 2011) and critical race media literacy (King, 2017; Yosso, 2002) to analyze the local news broadcast and the class discussion students had in response to that broadcast. In doing so, we argue the following: (1) the local media representation presented a version of events that used coded language and visual images to create a figured world in which students of color were silenced and a master script was perpetuated; and (2) students, having been taught critical literacy (in the form of multiliteracies pedagogy) and media literacy, resisted the media representation and constructed a counter-story based on their own figured worlds. Our analysis also supports the call for critical race media literacy pedagogy in schools.

2. Critical theories

We undertook this study from a critical perspective, incorporating critical literacy, critical media literacy, and critical race theory into our discourse analysis of events. In this section we also discuss

---

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: akohnen@coe.ufl.edu (A.M. Kohnen).

[1] All student and place names are pseudonyms; student pseudonyms were self-selected. To mask the identity of the research site, Amanda has chosen to write under a name slightly different from the one she uses as a teacher at the school and we have not reported details such as the year of the events under study, the geographic region of the country, or specific enrollment figures for the school. All data was collected with permission from students and their parents and with the knowledge of the school administration, as part of Amanda’s commitment to continuous improvement of practice. Angela (first author) became involved in the study during data analysis.

[2] In this article, we use the terminology for racial/ethnic categories used in official state department of education reports.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2018.07.002
0898-5898/© 2018 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

how previous scholars have synthesized these concepts in what Yosso (2002) first called "critical race media literacy."

2.1. Critical literacy

From an institutional perspective, the purpose of the Intensive Reading course was straightforward: to provide high school juniors and seniors additional targeted instruction so they could pass state mandated reading assessments required for graduation. These assessments were based on what the New London Group (1996), the ten scholars from a variety of disciplines who first coined the term "multiliteracies," called a "mere literacy" paradigm, or one that rests on these tenets:

- Literacy refers primarily to the ability to read and write print texts.
- "Standard" language (i.e., the dialect used by those in positions of power) is the primary form of language that should be taught in schools.
- Literacy and language are stable, unchanging, and rule-governed and can therefore be acquired by mastering a set of rules.

The New London Group (1996) further argued that "mere literacy" lends itself to authoritarian pedagogy and individual, standardized assessment measures, exactly the kind of assessments Amanda's students had failed to pass.

In contrast, Amanda had adopted a "multiliteracies" approach to instruction. Though the term has been taken up by many other researchers, Amanda drew heavily on the New London Group's (1996) definition. Multiliteracies pedagogy assumes that:

- Literacy includes the ability to communicate using various modes, including audio, gestural, spatial, visual, and linguistic. Many texts are multimodal and require additional literacy skills to produce, consume, and critique.
- Languages are dynamic and constantly being remade by language users. No "standard" form of language is inherently more important, valuable, superior, or worthy of study.
- Students are best served by pedagogy that supports their ability to be flexible and to see language as social and situated. "Critical framing," or the ability of learners to situate their literacy practices "in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice" (New London Group, 1996, p. 86), is an essential aspect of instruction.

Multiliteracies pedagogy is democratic, incorporating the students' voices, funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), out-of-school experiences, and interests into the curriculum.

Multiliteracies pedagogy is one of the strands of critical literacy identified by Rogers and Wetzel (2014). According to Rogers and Wetzel (2014), "critical literacy refers to approaches to literacy instruction that place an emphasis on helping people develop agency so that they can accomplish goals they deem important and resist the coercive effects of literacy" (p. 4). Amanda approached her teaching as a critical literacy educator and we approach this research from a critical literacy stance, asking, first, what a local news report's coverage reveals about systems of power in the community and, second, what a classroom discussion reveals about the usefulness of multiliteracies pedagogy in aiding students to identify and disrupt these systems.

2.2. Critical media literacy

Like multiliteracies pedagogy, critical media literacy informed both Amanda's instruction and our research. Multiliteracies scholarship provided Amanda with a theoretical rationale for including multiple social languages and multiple modes of meaning in the curriculum; critical media literacy helped her design classroom routines for analyzing *media* messages, defined Scheibe and Rogow (2012) as multimodal messages that are mass produced for a mass audience and distributed through a technological medium for consumption across geographic space (away from the producer). Though media literacy educators vary in their goals, critical analysis is a key part of media literacy. In the U.S., the 1993 Media Literacy National Leadership Conference issued a working paper in which scholars agreed to five concepts that should underpin all analysis of media messages. Among these concepts were that "media messages are produced within economic, social, political, historical, and aesthetic contexts" and that "media representations play a role in people's understanding of social realities" (Hobbs, 1998, pp. 17–18). To help her students critically analyze media texts, Amanda used resources produced by the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), including "Key Questions to Ask when Analyzing Media Messages" (reproduced as Appendix A and available at www.projectlooksharp.org). As researchers, we examined the media message itself from a critical perspective and subsequently analyzed the students' ability to employ NAMLE questions in resisting this message.

2.3. Critical race theory

While critical literacy, multiliteracies, and media literacy were all deliberately infused into Amanda's teaching, Critical Race Theory (CRT) became part of our study once we attempted to analyze data. Critical Race Theory (CRT) began in legal studies and has been used in education for over twenty years (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Ladson-Billings (1998) argued that CRT could be "a powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequality that people of color experience" (p. 18) within U.S. schools. According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), CRT research in education rests upon the following principles: "the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination" (p. 25); challenging dominant ideology; commitment to social justice; privileging experiential knowledge; and transdisciplinarity (see also Howard & Navarro, 2016). CRT scholars emphasize the importance of the counter-story, or narratives that forefront the experiences of people of color and challenge the master script (Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Counter-stories have the potential to bring the stories of marginalized students to the center of educational research (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

We acknowledge that we are not the first to bring together CRT and media literacy. Several scholars have used CRT as a lens through which to examine media representations (e.g., Rodríguez, 2007; Velez, Perez Huber, Benavides Lopez, & Solórzano, 2008), while others have used CRT analyze student-created projects (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008). Alemán and Alemán (2016) used the term "critical race media projects" to describe projects where students produced media deliberately designed to offer counter-stories and "fulfill the promise of praxis hailed by critical race theorists" (p. 287).

Others have used the principles of CRT to inform media literacy curriculum in what in what some have called "critical race media literacy" (King, 2017; Yosso, 2002). In calling for educators to infuse critical race media literacy in their curriculum, King (2017) argued that the media play an important role in the "racial contract," or "the established set of formal or informal rules. . .created and maintained by the dominant culture to appoint non-Whites as inferior" (p. 33, see also Mills, 1997); in one example of the media's role in perpetuating the racial contract, King (2017) cited research showing that the news media in the U.S. over-represents people of color as criminals or suspects while simultaneously underrepresenting people of color as victims of crime. To address this issue,

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6845896

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/6845896

Daneshyari.com