**Unit Overview: LANGUAGE & REPRESENTATION**

Target Grade Level(s): 10

Subject(s): ELA / Social Studies

Author(s): Michelle Coon, Matthew Macomber, Casey Rummel

**Problem Statement:**

How can we effectively teach different audiences about the impacts of language on perception?

**Unit Overview**

In this unit, students will explore the power of language to (mis)represent concepts and groups. Students will explore historical examples of the use of language as a tool to discriminate against groups or ideas, building an understanding of the power of language to create and shape perception. Students will then design and execute a group project in which they identify a marginalized demographic group and analyze how language is used to unfairly represent them. Students use their research to create a social awareness campaign that delivers key takeaways from their research. Projects will be presented in front of class and (when possible) displayed around campus. Ina addition to the social media campaign, groups will write a team research paper.

**Unit Standards (NGSS, CCSS, CTE):**

**PRIORITY STANDARD(S):**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/9-10/1/)

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/9-10/8/)

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/4/)

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.7](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/WHST/9-10/7/)

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating an understanding of the subject under investigation.

**SUPPORTED STANDARD(S):**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/WHST/9-10/5/)

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/3/)

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/4/)

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/5/)

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/6/)

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 9-10 Language standards 1 and 3 [here](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/9-10/) for specific expectations.)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/2/)

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

**Soft Skills:**

* Face-to-face collaboration
* Organization: outlines
* Goal setting / time management
* Communication
  + Delegating
  + Concise communication (email, formal writing)
  + Tone
* Presenting in front of groups
* Building, challenging of ideas using appropriate discourse/ sentence frames
* Providing constructive/positive feedback to students face-to-face
* Time management /self regulation / independence
  + Backwards planning
  + Prioritization

**Locally and/or Personally Relevant for Students:**

Social justice causes tend to be high-engagement because they evoke passionate responses from students and satisfy their desire to feel connected to meaningful real-world issues through their work. Exploring the role of language in the misrepresentation of oppressed groups is especially relevant in the current socio-political climate. *Update 5/30/20*: a couple days ago, George Floyd was killed by a police officer, sparking protests and riots around the nation. Different media outlets have used language to frame the debate in drastically different ways. Are these people “peaceful protesters exercising their first amendment rights,” or are they “thugs” and “criminals”? Understanding the way language is intentionally used to sway opinions about certain groups is vital to making informed choices.

**Connections to career and educational pathways:**

* **Language & media literacy**

Understanding the power of language to persuade - and, more specifically, to misrepresent and oppress - is essential for modern voters seeking to make informed choices. Students often lament their lack of power and agency in what they perceive to be a controlling world. Framing the unit and lessons as empowering and liberating should increase engagement. These skills will be used throughout their lives, regardless of career choice.

Instructor(s) should also take the opportunity to incorporate current events - whether as part of their “hook” for the unit or into daily lessons. The tragic current in this country suggests that language will continue to be used to misrepresent oppressed people(s). Including the most current examples will reinforce the urgency of the content to students.

* **Conducting research**

Boeing reps confirm that they regularly “research, process the data, and then...validate that the data is good data.”

* **Collaborative skills & self-assessment**

Most modern careers require collaboration skills and a knowledge of one’s strengths and weaknesses. Industry reps from Boeing emphasized the essential role that collaboration plays in their daily work, including peer feedback, research delivery, and, “peer auditing.”