

Critical Language Awareness and Student Vulnerability: The Case for Contextual Rhetorical Propriety

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Responding to recent articles on Critical Language Awareness (CLA), this essay considers local linguistic environments alongside attributes of moral philosophy from Adam Smith, humanist scholar and rhetorician. I introduce the term “contextual rhetorical propriety” to describe the significance of rhetors’ local contexts and circumstances, arguing that our field’s top-down emphases on translingual and antiracist pedagogies are eliding important considerations of propriety. I then recommend, as a pedagogical solution, the use of Smith’s Impartial Spectator as a critical interlocutor to help writers employ the appropriate blend of propriety and persuasion for their audiences.