

Sociolinguistics in the schools: The next forty years of service in return

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The emergence of contemporary sociolinguistics has been characterized not only by the use of powerful new theories and methods for investigating language variation and change but also for the field's commitment to using the insights of such research to address pressing social justice issues, particularly regarding the education of schoolchildren who speak nondominant dialects and languages. As sociolinguists have long emphasized, such undertakings are a basic ethical obligation for the field (Cameron et al. 1993; Labov 1982; Rickford 1997; Wolfram 1998). Educational interventions by sociolinguists have been vitally important in challenging language deficit perspectives (Labov 1969) and promoting dialect awareness in classrooms and teacher preparation programs (e.g., Rickford 1999; Rickford & Rickford 1995; Smitherman 2000; Wolfram, Adger, & Christian 2007). This transformative effort and the ongoing programs that have arisen from it (e.g., Labov 2010; Reaser & Wolfram 2007) have paved the way for later scholars to continue to work toward "sociolinguistic justice" in our nation's classrooms (e.g., Alim 2007; Charity Hudley and Mallinson 2011; Denham & Lobeck 2005, 2010; Wheeler 1999). Yet in light of ongoing public debates over language, it is clear that our efforts must be redoubled.

This panel profiles recent projects on both coasts of the United States that contribute to the new wave of sociolinguistics in the schools. In keeping with the conference goal of looking back on our field's accomplishments as well as ahead to new challenges, the panel reports on the successes and struggles of these projects as they strive to foster awareness and understanding of sociolinguistic variation and its role in education. Julie Sweetland's paper presents findings from an innovative program in Washington, DC, to prepare highly motivated teachers to work effectively with students who speak African American English. Sweetland demonstrates the efficacy of the program in raising teachers' appreciation for nonstandard varieties. Yet she also notes the tension between teachers' goal of empowering their students and the constraints of an often inflexible educational system. Christine Mallinson and Anne Charity Hudley, in the first of two coauthored papers on their multifaceted collaboration in Maryland and Virginia, also emphasize the importance of educating teachers in sociolinguistic issues. Drawing on interview and focus group responses to workshops they regularly lead on language variation for educators, they report that the program has lasting positive effects on teachers, although work remains to be done in developing sociolinguistically informed educational materials. In their second paper, Hudley and Mallinson present another aspect of their project, in which undergraduates and graduate students bring sociolinguistics into local communities and classrooms through service learning and curricular development. Bucholtz and her coauthors similarly focus on links between education at multiple levels in their discussion of an academic outreach project involving graduate students and undergraduates in teaching linguistically diverse high school students in California how to conduct original research as part of a sociolinguistics curriculum. These projects offer fruitful starting points for a fieldwide discussion of the sociolinguistic agenda for improving America's education of linguistic minority youth in the next forty years.

**“Students will be able to explain why dialect matters”:
Exploring novice teachers’ goals for language awareness**

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Alternative-route teacher preparation programs provide a unique site for fostering pluralistic language attitudes toward language diversity, as these aspiring teachers are typically selected through a highly competitive process that considers applicants' dispositions toward diversity as part of admissions, and commit to an unusual degree of supervision and program-specific requirements as part of their participation. This paper reports on recent findings from an alternative-route teacher preparation in the District of Columbia that introduces an asset-based, descriptive approach to language variation, with a particular emphasis on effective pedagogical responses to students' use of African American Vernacular English.

Results from the second and most recent year of the program support previous research indicating that when teachers are exposed to linguistic training, they adopt more pluralistic attitudes toward nonstandard varieties of English. Quantitative data from language attitude surveys are enriched and contextualized by coursework artifacts such as excerpts from sociolinguistic autobiographies, reflections on linguistically-informed lesson plans piloted in DC middle and high schools, and critical observations of classroom discourse.

Finally, data from multiple iterations of the course are explored, demonstrating and analyzing recurring themes in novice teachers' goals for students in terms of language awareness. Teachers in this program consistently prioritize student acquisition of Standard English, but often frame this goal as a first step in a larger, long-term project of empowering students to reject social norms from a position of power. This stance neatly parallels the central dilemma these teacher candidates face as idealistic, would-be change agents working within a school system characterized by highly visible accountability initiatives that devalue or disrupt teacher autonomy and individuality. With this data in mind, implications of teacher identity and self-perception for sociolinguistic interventions are considered.

How K-12 educators apply sociolinguistic knowledge in the classroom

Christine Mallinson (*University of Maryland-Baltimore County*) and Anne Harper
Charity Hudley (*The College of William and Mary*)

We report on a three-year ongoing study, “Language Variation in the Classroom,” and explore how educators who have attended language variation professional development workshops in the study apply the knowledge they gained in their classrooms. From Fall 2008 through Summer 2011, we led workshops ranging from half-day sessions to week-long courses with hundreds of educators from elementary, middle, and high schools in and around Baltimore, Maryland, and Richmond, Virginia. We draw upon our own book (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2011) and other educational materials developed by linguists for educators (Wolfram & Christian, 1993; Wolfram, Adger & Christian, 2007; National Research Council, 2010). In this paper we present data from 14 K-12 educators who attended two different week-long workshops and agreed to serve as educator-consultants for one year. Participants varied by race/ethnicity, gender, content area, grade level, school location, and school type. Participants were interviewed individually 4 months after the workshop, and then in small groups after 10 total months had passed, about how the workshop impacted their teaching. The interviews lasted from 1 to 2 hours and were analyzed for discourse about language. Three main themes arose from the participants’ interviews: 1.) The need to view language as a key component of multicultural education, 2.) The need to bring language awareness back to their schools, and 3.) The knowledge that language variation is critical when assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students. In the group interviews, participants discussed the need for educational materials that help students practice acquiring school-specific registers, are framed with multicultural literature, and that can be integrated into creative writing assignments. After the one-year period, a podcast was produced using the teachers’ voices to promote the awareness of language variation and education.