

The Substantive Universals in the Relationship between Language Ideology and Language Education

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Abstract: While we need to problematize the notions of development and sustainable development, we are also faced by a particular challenge related to language: what models of language in the world are we using to understand the role of language education in development? I shall discuss a range of possible understandings of English in the world in order to see how they relate to questions of development.

In recent years, work in critical linguistics has begun to have an impact on theory and practice in second language learning and teaching. Particularly influential has been work in language policy, the role of language in identity formation, and analyses of ideologies of language. One question that deserves particular attention is how implicit assumptions about language and about language learning and teaching impact language teaching practices. In part, this question foregrounds the importance of naming. Indeed, commonly accepted terminology can determine our experience. I do not mean this in the traditional sense of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis¹, in which our language determines our sense of reality (though that may be true in some ways). What I mean instead is that our experience, particularly our emotional experience of events, is fundamentally shaped by our beliefs about these events and by the language we use to describe the events.

In this paper, I will examine how our beliefs about language and second language learning and teaching shape our professional experience. The major claim explored here is that our beliefs about language fundamentally determine our interpretations of the reality of language classrooms, including students, teachers, what we should teach, how we should teach, and virtually everything that matters in language education. The search for underlying assumptions takes us into the study of ideology. Therefore I will briefly define what I mean by language ideology, and then I will examine some important ways that it shapes what we do in language education. I am especially interested in what I will call "standard language ideology,"² which refers to a cluster of beliefs about the value of linguistic homogeneity. I explore the impact of standard language ideology upon common language teaching practices and how those practices often are in the service of social and political agendas. Finally I will consider one pedagogical alternative to standard language ideology.

1. Introduction

The term *language ideology* refers to a shared body of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world, including cultural assumptions about language, the nature and purpose of communication, and "patterns of communicative behavior as an enactment of a collective order" (Woolard, 1992)³. This means that the ways we communicate play a crucial role in shaping and reflecting fundamental assumptions about identity, including who we are as members of collective identities. Ideology has become something of a buzzword, and it risks losing meaning

¹ Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf developed a theory of linguistics which claims that language shapes thought. <http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?SapirWhorfHypothesis>

² In his article "*Critical Inquiries into Language in an Urban Classroom*" Bob Fecho describes a scene in his urban Philadelphia high school English classroom where students engaged in a personal, open-ended exploration of language usage and language legitimacy in their lives as played out in the American academic setting. In his classroom, Fecho has his students use critical inquiry to explore the impact language and learning has on their lives.

³ In [sociolinguistics](#) and [linguistic anthropology](#), a *language or linguistic ideology* is a systematic construct about how [languages](#) carry or are invested with certain moral, social, and political [values](#), giving rise to implicit assumptions that people have about a language or about [language](#) in general. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_ideology

as it becomes so pervasive in our professional vocabulary. But it is important to keep in mind what the term tries to capture, namely the implicit, usually unconscious assumptions about reality that fundamentally determine how human beings interpret events.

In her important book *English with an Accent*¹, about linguistic discrimination in the United States, Rosina Lippi-Green (1997)² defines standard language ideology as "a bias toward an abstract, idealized homogenous language, which is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions and which has as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class." An example of standard language ideology is the commonsense belief that communication is more efficient if everyone speaks a uniform language variety. Another example is the belief that uniform language varieties are typical and normal. I am interested in exploring some of the ways that language education (especially English language teaching) is shaped by standard language ideology.

Many of the tools of the profession of language education are instruments of standard language ideology. Grammar books, dictionaries, most teaching manuals and methods textbooks generally sustain the illusion of a uniform standard language (a "target language"), "persuading English language teachers and learners against all evidence to the contrary that uniformity is normal and desirable"(Milroy and Milroy, 1985). The obsession with errors and error correction in language teaching is probably the most striking manifestation of standard language ideology, along with the related belief that students' lack of motivation, their carelessness, and merely their failure to learn are the reasons for the non-standard linguistic forms that learners produce.

Standard language ideology shapes our work in many ways. For instance, when I teach, I notice that I often delete the auxiliary "have" in sentences such as "I have been thinking about language ideology for a long time." In other words, I often say "I been thinking about language ideology for a long time." In producing this structure, I am typical of speakers of American English in most informal and formal contexts, including university lectures. The current trend in American English is for the unstressed auxiliary "have" (even its contracted form) to disappear altogether in normal spoken English. Yet in teaching English, virtually everyone continues to insist that students produce the full or the contracted form of "have." Any English language learner who deletes "have" is considered to have produced an error. In other words, most English teachers continue to insist that students produce forms that many teachers themselves no longer produce with any consistency.

2. Language Ideology

A key component of standard language ideology is the myth of the uniformity of languages. In other words, standard language ideology entails an ideology of variation. Deborah Cameron³ points out that standard language ideology assumes that "variation is deviant; and that any residual variation in standard English must therefore be the contingent and deplorable result of some users' carelessness, idleness or incompetence" (Cameron, 1995: 39). This myth of uniformity has two parts. First, each separate world variety of standard English, such as British or American English, is assumed to be uniform, with any variation a form of deviance. Second, the output of learners is expected to conform to this uniform standard. The job of language teachers is to teach students to produce Standard English.

I would like to examine each of these beliefs, beginning with the uniformity of standard languages. Everyone of course acknowledges dialect variation. That is not the issue. Many also recognize that everyone has an accent, even people who speak prestigious standard varieties, though the word "accent" in popular usage is usually limited to non-standard varieties. Yet virtually everyone also believes that standard varieties are essentially uniform, homogeneous and fixed. Despite this belief, all linguists agree that variation is normal and intrinsic to all spoken

2 *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States* (1997)

3 Rosina Lippi-Green, née Rosina Lippi (b. [January 14, 1956](#) in [Chicago, Illinois, USA](#)) is an American writer. She writes under the names Rosina Lippi-Green (linguistics).

4 Deborah Cameron (born 1958) is an English feminist philologist, who currently holds the [Rupert Murdoch](#) Professorship in Language and Communication at [Worcester College, University of Oxford](#). She is mainly interested in [sociolinguistics](#) and [linguistic anthropology](#). A large part of her academic research is focused on the relationship of language to gender and sexuality.

language, even to standard varieties. In William Labov's¹ words, "heterogeneity is an integral part of the linguistic economy of the community, necessary to satisfy the linguistic demands of everyday life" (Labov, 1982). What this means is that human beings recognize and exploit variation in order "to send a complex series of messages about ourselves and the way we position ourselves in the world" (Lippi-Green, 1997: 30). We vary our languages, even standard languages, in order to mark social, geographical, and other forms of associations and identities.

Human beings are remarkably attuned to variation. Seemingly miniscule linguistic features can have tremendous social importance. For example, in the city of St. Louis², Standard English includes two variants: the difference between [u] and [ju] in words like "duke," pronounced either [duk] or [djuk]. This single difference is used consistently to distinguish socioeconomic classes (see Murray, 1986; also Lippi-Green, 1997), with the variable [u] marking lower socioeconomic status. Yet both forms are Standard English, and most residents are not consciously aware of this form of variation.

All individuals also vary their speech style in Standard English as a way of expressing their position in relation to social groups that are not socioeconomic. For instance, studies of the speech style of upper middle class California teen-agers show that the use of the intrusive "like," as in "It was, like, a too crowded at the mall," increases when they are speaking about their friends and activities they enjoy, and it decreases when they are speaking about topics such as going to college (California Style Collective, 1993). Again, we find speakers using variation in Standard English in order to position themselves in a web of personal and collective relationships. There is no way to know in advance which particular features of a language will be used to mark the speaker's social position. Only members of the speech community know, and linguists who analyze the community can often figure it out. But it is significant, in my opinion, that the language teaching profession largely ignores these subtle yet powerful forms of variation. Rather than confront the issue and acknowledge the variational features that communities use for social purposes, particularly for creating social hierarchies, we act as though communities that speak Standard English are essentially uniform, with a uniform language.

A second key component of the myth of uniformity is that language learners' output is the result of their success, or lack of success, in learning English. In other words, language learning is widely seen as the process of attempting to produce increasingly close approximations to Standard English. The measure of a learner's success is his or her ability to approximate standard forms. Is this an accurate picture of the process of language learning? Do learners produce non-standard forms because they fail to learn the correct ones? The answer to this question depends on one's perspective. If we view language learning as essentially something that individuals do, then perhaps it makes sense to view the language they produce as a measure of their relative success at learning the forms they are studying. But if we view language learning as a social phenomenon, a process in which groups of people are engaged, with consequences for social relations and identities, then we get a different picture.

Jay Peterson at Portland State University in Oregon has been interested for several years in the Korean-American community in the States, particularly efforts within the community to learn English. Peterson's research (Peterson, 1998) sees English language learning as a process affected by two competing forces in the Korean-American community. One is the shift to English; the other is the effort to retain the community's ethnocultural identity. In order to understand language learning in this community, Peterson asks questions such as the following: How do Korean-Americans conceptualize their own ethnic and cultural identity? What attributes, including language, are important for the various ethnic and cultural identities central to Korean-American life? How are these identities linked with particular domains, such as the family, work, and school? What ethnic and cultural sub-groups are important within the community?

Much of the existing research on language and identity assumes that individuals normally have a single dominant ethno-cultural identity, with secondary identifications being weaker add-ons, and with a relatively straightforward connection between particular languages and particular identities. In addition, most research assumes that language learning and language shift among immigrants involve cultural and psychological conflict and confusion, called "culture shock." Peterson argues that these beliefs reflect standard language ideology, what he calls "linguistic monism."

¹ William Labov (IPA: /ləˈboʊv/, *lə-BOEV*^[1];) is an [American](#) linguist, widely regarded as the founder of the discipline of variationist [sociolinguistics](#).^[2] He has been described as "an enormously original and influential figure who has created much of the methodology" of sociolinguistics. <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~wlabov/home.htm>

²St. Louis is a city in the U.S. state of [Missouri](#), located near the [confluence](#) of the [Mississippi River](#) and the [Missouri River](#). <http://stlouis.missouri.org/>

An alternative approach is to expect complex, fluid, changing, and even contradictory identities, with different languages playing multiple and varying roles in these identities. Peterson has found that "Korean" is not always the most important aspect of identity for Korean-Americans. More central in some contexts is a sense of Asian appearance, Confucian family values, preference for living in the United States, or certain positive group attributes. He has also found that Korean identity entails several levels of abstraction, so that individuals have flexibility in the intensity and direction of their identities, depending on the demands of domain and circumstance. People can have multidimensional identities, such as English language with Korean culture, or Korean language with American culture. Moreover, different identifications may be simultaneously available, depending on particular domains, and identities may work at different levels of abstraction. Individuals may feel that they are Koreans, or Chinese, or more generally Asian, while simultaneously accessing multiple levels of American identity.

3. Language Education

What does this have to do with language learning? One aspect of the process of identity formation taking place within the Korean-American community in the States is the creation of new varieties of English: Korean English¹, if you will, that's what I noticed in Korea as well². These new varieties are not merely imperfect attempts to learn standard English. They are newly forming varieties of English that are appropriate for particular domains and identities. They are, in this sense, new target languages. Anyone teaching English in this Korean-American community must understand that many members of the community are involved in the process of learning and creating these new varieties of English, and this process fundamentally shapes the language that these learners produce in their English classes.

Yet the picture is even more complex. While some learners are acquiring or creating new varieties of Korean English, other learners acquire existing non-standard varieties of American English. Many immigrants from Southeast Asia and Latin America live in city neighborhoods in close proximity to large populations of African Americans, who speak varieties of African American English, also called Ebonics. Many of the young people in these immigrant communities are powerfully affected by African American culture, both in terms of their interpersonal interactions day to day at school and in the neighborhood, and in terms of such cultural forces as popular music, video and film. As a result, many immigrants, particularly between the ages of five and twenty, acquire many features of African American English as their dominant language.

This process has profound implications for language teaching. Consider two examples from pronunciation. Most varieties of African American English permit deletion of final consonants in word-final consonant clusters, when both consonants in the cluster are either voiced or voiceless. So "test" becomes [tos], and "fold" is pronounced [fol]. But "pant" remains [paent], because the cluster "n-t" has a voiced and a voiceless consonant. Vietnamese has no consonant clusters in final position, and Vietnamese learning English often have difficulty with these clusters in English. Therefore English teachers often spend a lot of time on this issue, assuming that the problem is interference from the Vietnamese language. But for some learners, what is really going on is acquisition of a variety of English that systematically deletes many final consonants in word-final consonant clusters³. Unless teachers understand this process, their students may simply not be able to make sense of their teacher's efforts.

Another example is the interdental fricatives, spelled as TH- in English, both voiced and voiceless. In African American English, the initial TH- becomes either voiced [d] or voiceless [t]. So "those" becomes [doz], and "think" becomes [t I?k]. Many Vietnamese learning English make similar substitutions. But it would be a mistake for

¹ *Konglish* (Korean: 콩글리시) is the use of [English](#) words (or words derived from English words) in a [Korean](#) context. The words, having initially been taken from English language, are either actual English words in Korean context, or are made from a combination of Korean and English words. Much Konglish appeared following the Korean War when US troops mixed with Korean troops and English vocabulary, real and slang, permeated Korean. ex. *a-pa-teu* (아파트; "apartment, te-re-bi (텔레비; "television"; a-reu-ba-i-teu (아르바이트; "part-time job", from [German](#) *Arbeit*.

² The author of this paper lived in South Korea, 2004-2009 years.

³ During my doctorate studies at Hanyang University, Seoul/South Korea my labmate was from Vietnam, and it was a great chance to discover peculiarities of English used by Vietnamese. .

teachers to assume that the substitutions are simply due to the impact of Vietnamese phonology. Equally important may be the fact that the main target language for some learners is African American English.

Examples from grammar also may be found. I mentioned deletion of the auxiliary "have," as in "I been running all day." In such sentences, "been" is unstressed. In African American English¹, we find similar sentences, but "been" sometimes may be stressed, as in "He been running." The meaning of this sentence is "He has been running for a long time, and still is doing so." In other words, unlike many other varieties of American English, African American English marks aspect grammatically. Consider the sentence "She been married," with stressed "been." Most white Americans mistakenly interpret that sentence as meaning that she was married, but is no longer married, while nearly all African Americans correctly interpret the sentence as meaning that she is still married (Rickford, 1997). This difference is due to the fact that most varieties of English spoken by white Americans permit only the unstressed form, while African American varieties include both stressed and unstressed forms, with different meanings. Therefore when an immigrant to the United States is learning English, two kinds of complexity affect output: First, deletion of the auxiliary "have" by speakers of all varieties, including standard spoken English, and second, the two forms of "been" used by African Americans. When young immigrants learn English in settings with many African American speakers, they may acquire either or both systems.

How do books about teaching pronunciation and grammar accommodate this sort of variation? In general, they ignore it. In reviewing some of the most popular books about teaching English pronunciation, I found that four types of variation are acknowledged. The first type includes different levels of achievement, as different learners achieve different levels of conformity to the standard. A second type of variation mentioned in texts is due to first language interference, which especially affects pronunciation. A third type of variation is degree of accent, which is often seen by teaching manuals as a measure of the learner's orientation to assimilation. Only the fourth form of variation is relevant to here: dialect variation. Yet even in this case, most textbooks about teaching mention only a few specific issues, such as differences between British and American English or matters such as the pronunciation of "cot" and "caught." Dialect is generally seen as quaint and interesting, but largely irrelevant to the task of teaching the uniform standard. One book says "Foreign accents can be very charming as long as the person speaking is able to communicate" (Orion, 1988: xxiii), a view that ignores the powerful role of accent and dialect in linguistic discrimination.

4. Language Variation and Dialects

I am suggesting that a language ideology perspective reveals that pedagogical descriptions² of English grammar and pronunciation are mechanisms for justifying conventions of language teaching and interpretations of those conventions. Grammar and pronunciation texts are two of the ways in which we as language educators forge norms that we follow in our work and in our programmatic roles.

My concern is that language variation, dialects, and the status of different varieties of English are too often defined as being outside the core professional concerns of English language teaching. This is an important manifestation of the power of standard language ideology. The result is that we as language teachers may become enforcers of the dominance of standard English ideology and ultimately we may fail to serve as effectively as we can the needs of language learners, many of whom are involved not in the process of learning standard English, but rather in something quite different and profound, namely the learning or even the creation of other varieties of English that have enormous social value within their communities.

¹ Bidialectalists postulate that Black English is equal to Standard English but not quite equal enough. They acknowledge that the language variety is not inferior linguistically or conceptually but, claiming to be pragmatic, they feel that Standard English must be mastered by Black children in the schools so that these children can keep the possibility of upward mobility alive. This latter option, code-switching (also known as bidialectism or bidialectalism), has become the teachers standard response to linguistic variety in the American college composition classroom. (Rebecca Moore Howard. *The Great Wall of African American Vernacular English in the American College Classroom*)

² Within the critical framework of language and literary studies, disability becomes a representational system more than a medical problem, a discursive construction rather than a personal misfortune or a bodily flaw, and a subject appropriate for wide-ranging intellectual inquiry instead of a specialized field within medicine or science. (ROSEMARIE GARLAND THOMSON *The New Disability Studies: Inclusion or Tolerance?*)

One of the most important consequences of standard language ideology is its impact on language policies. In the United States, England, Australia, and elsewhere, national language policies are adopted that explicitly invoke standard language ideology as their primary justification. Lippi-Green points out that policies requiring linguistic uniformity are no more rational or practical than a policy that requires everyone to be the same height. Certainly if everyone were the same height, much about life might be more efficient. Furniture, clothing, and buildings could be standardized. No doubt vast sums of money could be saved. But of course that policy goal is an irrational fantasy, because people cannot be the same height. A policy requiring linguistic uniformity is equally irrational, just as much a fantasy, because all people cannot speak the same language variety, even if they try to do so. Language variation is universal, inevitable, and necessary for complex social communication. Yet the power of standard language ideology makes such policies seem like a good idea, and quite practical if everyone who does not speak the standard would just try a little harder to learn it. The failure of the language teaching profession to incorporate an adequate notion of variation would not be too problematic, except that social agendas call our language ideologies into service. In other words, social agendas, which determine which groups get particular economic and political benefits, make use of language ideologies. The best example in the United States is the issue of language and race. Standard language ideology is used by dominant white social groups as a justification for restrictions on the use of the home language of African American children in the educational system. The rigid exclusion from most schools of African American vernacular English, as well as the home languages of most immigrants, is routinely justified by standard language ideology. When the Oakland California School Board in 1996 proposed a new policy requiring teachers to take their students' home language, African American English, into account when teaching standard English, there was a firestorm of protest that blocked the policy. Even this minimal effort to permit the schools to accommodate African American English was overwhelmed by the power of standard language ideology, which in this case was in the service of racism.

A second way in which social agendas shape teaching practice is in programs for immigrants. In the United States, the overwhelming emphasis in immigrant language education¹ is on employment, particularly on the imperative that immigrants get a job - any job - as quickly as possible. This imperative fundamentally determines curriculum, materials, teaching practices, program structures, and funding. Much of the pedagogy of English education in the United States is determined by the social agenda of keeping immigrants off welfare and moving them into low paid jobs in the peripheral economy. The English teaching profession has largely gone along with this agenda, producing a vast array of textbooks, materials, tests, and other artifacts in a new segment of the language education industry, called survival ESL.

A third way that social agendas shape our work is in our notions of research and critical reflection on teaching practices. The rise of second language acquisition as a distinct discipline since the 1970s has been accompanied by the desire to ensure that the field is scientific. Thus we see a great concern for research methodology. As scientists, we like to believe that we challenge our assumptions, we argue with each other, and we work hard to meet the norms of the scientific method. As a result, current theories of second language acquisition and commonly recommended teaching practices appear to be based on a kind of scientific consensus. Concerns about equity, about the status of minority languages in schools, and about language rights are defined as outside the scope of the science of second language acquisition

In effect, we have developed a narrative about our work (see Stephan, 1999). In this narrative, we work in a field in which claims about language and teaching are empirically tested. Weak ideas are rejected while the ones with solid foundation survive. This version of our history has an important social and political function. It limits the possible contexts that can be drawn upon to give meaning to teaching practices. The scientific process that creates theories and practices is the only context that matters. The wider social context in which immigrants, refugees, linguistic minorities, and speakers of non-standard dialects are fighting for full civil rights is not part of the core concerns of the field. Research and the professionalism of teachers are paramount. In other words, language teaching is separate from social action. Indeed, theories and teaching methods based upon the explicit social agenda of achieving economic, political or linguistic equality for language minorities are defined as "political" rather than

¹ In a 1998 survey, the foundation Public Agenda posed the question: "With students who are new immigrants, which is more important for the public schools to do? Teach them English as quickly as possible, even if this means they fall behind in other subjects, or teach them other subjects in their native language, even if this means it takes them longer to learn English?" Foreign-born parents favored "English as quickly as possible" by 75 percent to 21 percent, while Hispanic parents supported that option by 66 percent to 30 percent. Read more: "Immigrant Education - UNITED STATES, INTERNATIONAL" - <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2077/Immigrant-Education.html#ixzz0FxxnYcOZ&A>

"scientific" or "educational," and therefore they are suspect, unreliable, and not a legitimate source for decision making in the classroom. Teachers, we are told, have no right to impose their own political agenda on their students.

5. Language Process

Another way of saying this is that second language acquisition (SLA) theory and formal teaching methods are a set of rules for determining the situational meaning of teaching practices. SLA theory and teaching methods determine the pragmatic value of teaching acts in classroom contexts. This is the ideological function of theory and method: They combine with social values such as participation, student involvement, and individualism to enshrine particular practices as objective, as scientific, as effective, or, to use a currently popular term, as "best practice."

Thus ideologies of language, including standard language ideology and ideologies about the English teaching profession, are fundamentally involved in the process of setting up contexts that construe meaning for particular teaching acts. Thus, for example, the teacher's job is to reduce errors, to move language learners' speech closer and closer to the ideal standard. Output that differs from the ideal standard is an error. Accepting these errors ultimately is bad teaching. Ideologies about standard language and about second language acquisition are not the only ideologies implicit in most English language teaching. Another is the assumption that language is a system divisible into parts that work in their separate ways, and that it is the semantic in language that supplies meaning and is the home of ideas (see Stephan 1999). This assumption is implicit especially in student centered approaches, which profess that students must be encouraged to express meanings that they intend to convey. The assumption is that the students have the meanings inside themselves, and the task of the teacher is to help the students find ways to express those meanings in the new language. This belief entails the central belief that teachers' regulation of language structure poses no restrictions on content. Within the bounds of good taste, we are told, students are free to express their own meanings.

Yet is content neutrality of language structure really possible? Laurie Stephan (1999) examines Henry Louis Gates' examples of racist speech¹. In the first example, a white professor says to his African American student: "LeVon, if you find yourself struggling in your classes here, you should realize it isn't your fault. It's simply that you're the beneficiary of a disruptive policy of affirmative action that places underqualified and often undertalented black students in demanding educational environments like this one." Gates' second example of racist speech is much shorter: "Out of my face, jungle bunny." "Jungle bunny" is an intensely negative expression used by white racists and directed against African Americans

Only this second example is regulated by the U.S. legal system. As Stephan points out, the legal system, with its limits on hostile and inflammatory speech, cannot respond to the power of speaking that comes from a polished style. The first example of racist speech, which upper middle class and highly polished, is free from legal restrictions. The second example, which is more likely to be working class or lower class in origin, can be illegal in specific contexts. Indeed, the legal system in the U.S. in many ways protects some styles, particularly speech that is considered refined language, but not other styles. Yet power in speech is largely a function of style, not merely of propositional content, and style is one of the aspects of language that the English language teaching system is most ill equipped to teach. In this sense, the English teaching profession, despite its professed concern with empowering students through language learning, rarely provides the linguistic tools of power (mainly stylistic) recognized by the U.S. legal system and essential for real verbal authority.

How might they offer language programs that provide the linguistic tools of power? Perhaps the most important effort is that of the participatory approach to teaching, an approach that places control of classrooms in the collaborative hands of students and teachers. A lot has been written about the participatory approach, but I fear that it is too often seen merely as a set of techniques for getting students involved in classroom decision making. It is, in my view, far more than this, with consequences for teachers and students that extend well beyond the classroom. The underlying ideology of the participatory approach is the antithesis of standard language ideology. The participatory approach is not merely about acknowledging students' native languages and cultures, or about involving students in decisions about course content and method. Rather, it entails a critique of theories and practices that value uniformity, and a critique of some of the key constructs in our field, including "target language," "native speaker,"

¹ In his 1925 dissent in *Gitlow v New York*, Justice Holmes wrote: If in the long run the beliefs expressed in proletarian dictatorship are destined to be accepted by the dominant forces of the community, the only meaning of free speech is that they should be given their chance and have their way

and "error." It entails also an ongoing effort to undermine the forces of linguistic discrimination that require speakers of stigmatized varieties, including African American English, Korean-English or Vietnamese-English, and immigrant languages, to acquire the so-called standard. Of course learners have powerful practical reasons for learning standard languages, based upon the fact that languages are pervasively used to channel individuals unequally into different occupational, social, and economic groups. For those of us in the language teaching profession, a central concern should be our response to these forms of linguistic discrimination. Do we devise teaching practices that reinforce the power of standard language ideology? Or do we work actively to undermine that power? It is important to note that liberal notions about "valuing diversity" in education have little effect on standard language ideology. Lippi-Green argues that asking children who speak non-standard languages and dialects to come to school in order to find validation of their home communities and to speak their own stories in their own voices at school is a little like asking the fly to knock at the spider's door in hopes of having a rational discussion about changing the structure of the food chain. Standard language ideology in the schools entails two main processes: devaluing language varieties other than the dominant one and valuing the dominant language variety. The power of ideology is in the ability of the school system to present this process as necessary and good for the greater society. It is unrealistic to expect children to effectively alter this situation.

Ultimately, I think that standard language ideology leads us to miss much of what is important in second language learning and teaching, namely the experiences of learners and teachers themselves. I mentioned earlier the role of research and theory in second language acquisition. Teachers are not necessarily thinking about where they stand in relation to a theory of second language acquisition or a set of teaching practices prescribed by methodology. They are concerned with how to get through each class, each day, and with how their participation in their profession might help them to make connections with other people around them. Similarly, outside of class, learners are not necessarily thinking about what learning strategies they should adopt or the type of motivation they exhibit or even the grammatical structures they do not know. They are concerned with how to produce utterances that accomplish their communicative goals.

Unfortunately, theory and methodology too often seek to discover a kind of perfect world, an alternative to the messy everyday reality of real people in teaching and learning languages. In this search for the best theory or the right method, we often try to lay out rules that teachers should follow. In this quest, theory and method more closely resemble a religion than useful guidelines for practicing teachers. Theory and methodology should provide a steady and continual source of principles, ideas, suggestions, and inspiration. They should help teachers understand the fluctuating and contradictory experiences of their everyday teaching lives.

In a sense, teaching is performance. Performance¹ which entertains is an opportunity for spectators to think through and experiment with, that is, to play with, roles and identities. Language teachers are engaged in a performance not with an audience of spectators, but rather with an audience of language learners who in fact participate in the performance. For learners/performers, language is a fundamental determiner and reflection of individual and collective identities and of the social order in which they live. In this sense, language learners are being challenged to form new identities and new social relations by virtue of their participation in the language class. Daniel Cavaricchi (1998) argues that theatrical performance presents times when the structure of society is temporarily suspended, and a new structure substituted that permits people to reconsider their roles, their institutions, and their social divisions. Language classes also provide this opportunity.

But for most teachers, language teaching is more than theatre. It is not merely a temporary suspension of normal reality that ends when the class period is over. Many language teachers continually examine themselves and their place in the world by engaging in teaching and in the continual discussion of teaching practice that characterizes the profession. Many teachers, perhaps most, extend their roles as teachers beyond the classroom, into their daily life situations. Yet these teachers are continually urged to avoid imposing their values on their students, and thus separate their teaching from their social concerns and activism.

It is here, in the intersection of the professional and personal lives of teachers, that the participatory approach offers a powerful alternative ideology. What is important about the participatory approach is that it explicitly tries to extend teachers' capacity for analysis and feeling beyond the classroom, into the rest of their everyday lives, so that teaching and learning are for both teachers and students a continual source of meaning, a

¹ Performance-based assessments are based on classroom instruction and everyday tasks. You can use performance-based assessments to assess ELLs' language proficiency and academic achievement through oral reports, presentations, demonstrations, written assignments, and portfolios. These assessments can include both processes (e.g., several drafts of a writing sample) and products (e.g., team projects). You can use scoring rubrics and observation checklists to evaluate and grade your students. These assessment tools can help document your ELLs' growth over a period of time. Using Informal Assessments for English Language Learners By: Colorin Colorado (2007)

continual force for the examination of values, and a continual catalyst for social action. Within the participatory framework, the profession of language teacher (that is, becoming a teacher and being a teacher) extends performance beyond the class period, so that language teachers are forever participating in activities in which personal, cultural, and social values are made explicit and subject to scrutiny. In this sense, teaching is not about the application of theories to specific situations or the use of particular techniques or practices. It is instead about devotion, about creating meaning out of daily life through sustained attention to teaching performance.

Conclusion

I do not believe that theory and research are unimportant, but I do believe that their capacity for having something significant to say depends upon an ongoing dialogue with and among teachers and learners. Academic theories must engage in a continual dialogue with teachers' and learners' own theories. Through the use of diary studies, intensive interviews, ethnographies, and other qualitative forms of action research, researchers can begin with the lived experience of teachers and students, moving then to scholarship that sheds light on and challenges that experience, and then back again to the participants themselves (see Cavicchi, 1998). We need theory that locates meaning in people rather than in research methodology or cleverness of interpretation.

The field of language education needs to critically examine some of the key names we use in the language teaching profession, including native speaker, the standard norm, error and error correction, and achievement and progress. As this paper suggests, many of these names reflect standard language ideology. A new vocabulary is needed in order to alter our perceptions, our interpretations, our understandings of the work of language teaching and learning. Much of the challenge ahead is to develop this new vocabulary. I believe the best place to look for it is in the first person accounts of teachers and learners themselves.

Of course, giving teachers and learners a central voice in their own representations, in theory and method, complicates matters of knowledge and truth. In many ways, researchers on the one hand and teachers and students on the other hand speak different languages. In addition, not all teachers agree on teaching practices. Who is qualified to speak about language learning and teaching? Whose knowledge of these processes counts? Addressing such messy issues is the only way to achieve knowledge of second language learning and teaching that is relevant, useful, and ultimately meaningful to those who find it intellectually significant and those who participate in it, including both learners and teachers. In Cavicchi's words, "we need fewer scholars speaking for others and more speaking with others" (Cavicchi 1998, p. 189). Only then will research, theory, and methodology become what teaching itself is for those who love it: a continual source of excitement and occasionally of frustration, of provocation and fulfillment, of identity and meaning, something that brings people together and makes sense of their world.

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