Enhancing the Development of Students' Language(s):

An Introduction for Teachers

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> There are different ways of looking at, and seeing, the children we teach. One prevalent ways is to see school children as bundles of deficiencies, lacks and problems. We are typically advised to begin each new school year by diagnosing problems in our students and then providing experiences designed to eradicate those problems… "Diagnose," "prescribe," and "treat" are medical terms and suggest that we view the child as an unhealthy, poorly functioning organism…But in the area of language, the child is an extraordinarily healthy organism who will continue to flourish in the rich environment we can provide. We are not trying to rid the child of language "problems," but rather to enhance her remarkable continuing language development. (Lindfors, 1987:25)

INTRODUCTION

All teachers, regardless of the language backgrounds of their students, are directly and intimately involved with language. No matter what subjects they teach, and whether they work with kindergartners, middle school students, or high school students, teachers use language in many varied ways in all of their teaching activities. Although they may not be aware of it, most teachers use language skillfully to get students' attention, to present information, to emphasize particular points, to provoke discussion, to praise, to push for better answers, to explain, and sometimes to reprimand. Different teachers, of course, use language differently, but all skilled teachers are able to communicate both direct and very subtle messages to students about both their learning and their behavior.

For most experienced teachers, however, their own language use is completely unconscious. They seldom analyze the strategies they use to convey particular meanings and to achieve desired reactions and responses. Few notice the choices that they make in using particular strategies to convey tone or stance, and even fewer recall how they acquired these strategies. For many teachers, language only becomes a subject of discussion when it is suspected to be the underlying cause of students' problems. They are thus unable to analyze what is typical at different stages of language development and what is characteristic of all children or only a few. They may, in fact, "misdiagnose" children's conditions and provide treatment for non–existing "illnesses".

In this chapter, we argue that an understanding of how language works in their own lives and in the lives of students who appear <u>not</u> to have language "problems" is essential for enabling teachers to effectively support all students' growth in academic language – the language used in schools to learn, speak, and write about academic subjects. Therefore, we purposely avoid beginning this chapter with a discussion of what teachers need to know about "those students" for whom language appears to be a problem. Instead, we present the kind of information about language use and development that will help teachers first examine their own language use as well as their views about particular ways of speaking and writing. We then turn to the implications of what they have learned for their students from a variety of language backgrounds. We suggest that such an examination can provide teachers with important insights about how language varies inside and outside school and about the types of language differences that seem to matter in school.

It is our view that it is important for teachers to notice language and to attend to the taken-for-granted characteristics of everyday talk even before they take on the study of language structure or linguistics. Noticing language, even when it appears to be transparent, is essential for teachers committed to supporting the general intellectual and specific subject-matter competencies of students at all levels. To illustrate the complexities of their own language use of which teachers may be unaware, we begin this chapter by introducing a fictional mathematics teacher named John. We give examples of the ways he speaks to different people for different purposes, and describe the various situations and interactions that cause him to select from a repertoire of possible choices (see box 4.1). After the vignette and our discussion of John, we

present the knowledge base that teachers must have about the language development of their students both before and into the school, focusing first on children from monolingual families and then on children whose families speak languages other than the dominant language of instruction. We then discuss the ways in which literacy development compare and contrast with oral language development, and we demonstrate how a focus on learning the language valued by school is particularly crucial. Throughout this chapter, we highlight classroom implications of teachers' understanding (or not understanding) the nature of language use and development. We conclude with a summary of the "big ideas" essential for teachers to understand, classroom implications for each of those themes, and examples of how teacher education and professional development might help teachers develop those understandings.

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Box 4.1

Language in the Life of One Teacher

John is a young middle-school teacher of Italian and Polish background, originally from Boston. He grew up speaking only English, but, because his grandmother lived with them during most of his childhood, he also understands quite a bit of Italian. For the last five years, John has been teaching math in Tupelo, Mississippi, the hometown of his wife Alice. For the last two years, he has also been coaching the school's football team.

In this section, we follow John during a typical morning and eavesdrop on his conversations with family and friends. Our goal is to notice the many different kinds of English that John both hears and uses inside and outside of school.

At 6:00 am, John wakes up to the radio alarm. As usual, it is set to the local public radio station. Through a slight haze, John recognizes the unmistakable sounds of the talk show host and his Midwest accent:

> Good morning and welcome to the program. The president has revealed a proposal that would make it easier to remove trees and brush from forests vulnerable to fires. A fire prevention strategy, the healthy forests initiative, would increase the amount of logging on public lands. Today's guests are all experts in forest management . . .

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John grins as Alice growls at him and chides him in her soft southern drawl, "Honey, it's bad enough waking up to one northern school teacher. Can't you wake up to anything a little less serious?" Absent-mindedly he hits the other pre-recorded stations. Alice growls again when she hears a series of space-age sounds blare and fade to the echoed special effects of an electronically-enhanced voice: "Discover WHAT'S NOW! WHAT'S NEXT! WHAT'S NEW! right here on your only choice for the latest hit music". John then turns to the morning traffic report, read by an announcer who sounds like he was born and bred right there in Mississippi.

"Now that sounds more like you and your kin-folk, don't it?" he jokes, in his best southern accent, exaggerating his impressions of Mississippi speech. Knowing it will make Alice want him to return to public radio, John turns to the shock jock station, aired in New York City. The host, in a high-pitched argument with a caller, berates the caller with slurs such as "hey, genius, why aren't you at work?" and "you are the stupidest man I have talked to in a long time". The host female assistant laughs as the caller is speechless for a moment, trying to compose himself to respond.

Alice mutters, "You win, but it's still your turn to get the baby ready," as a loud wail is heard from the next room.

John sighs and stretches a moment or two before he jumps out of bed. "I'm coming little fella," he calls out. "Mommy's being lazy, but here comes daddy. You just hold on there. Daddy's coming." Baby Matthew is standing in his crib, his face covered with tears and rubbing his eyes. He is tall for eighteen months, but has not yet begun to talk. "AAAAAh," he cries, as he holds out his arms to be picked up. "Well good morning to you too, Matt. Yes Daddy had a very good sleep. Thank you for asking." Matt responds by wailing "Baaaaahhhh" impatiently and stretching out his arms once again. John continues his conversation with Matthew, as he skillfully removes pajamas, changes the wet diaper, and begins to get him ready for another day at his baby sitter's. "Are you trying to say bear, Matt? He asks. Yes wittle bear was right there all night. Wittle bear loves Matt. Give Wittle Bear a wittle hug."

Forty-five minutes later, John is finally heads for Long Acres Middle School. It is a short drive to the school, but today he is in a hurry and is a bit annoyed when his cell phone rings. He hopes that he has not forgotten something at home.

"Hello" (John's voice sounds impatient as he places his earphone in his ear.)

"Hey John, Sam here."
"Hey, man, what's up?" John yells into the faint connection.
"Well, it's about that racquetball game we had scheduled for this afternoon."
John pauses and says dramatically, "Don't EVEN tell me you're not going to make it!"
"Well, uh, I'm up to my ears in this project at work . . . If I don't finish it this week, the boss is gonna have my hide."
"Listen,", John chides, "if you are afraid of losing to me AGAIN, just tell me—you don't have to make up some sorry excuse about your boss and some lame project at work."
Sam quickly retorts, "Man, with the way I am playing these days, you should be thanking your lucky stars that you don't have to face me today . . . it would NOT be pretty". They both laugh.
"Listen," John says, a little more seriously, "call me when your so-called project is done".
"Will do"
"Later, man"
"Later"
John hangs up smiling, and continues to drive.

On his way into the main office to check his mail, the first person John runs into is the school's assistant principal, Roberta Johnson, a forty-something African-American woman. John greets her professionally, but with a playful (almost flirtatious) tone, as he checks his mailbox:

 "Good MORNING, Mrs. Johnson".
"Good morning, Mr. Carlucci," she replies, smiling.
"Oh, Mrs., Johnson, by the way, what do you think the chances are of us getting that revised bell schedule today for next week's homecoming activities?"
"For you, Mr. Carlucci, anything. And if the photocopy machine is still broken, I'll just hand copy them for all 25 teachers," she adds sarcastically but still smiling.
"I hear you," John replied, "Thanks for lookin' into it."
"My pleasure. Have a great day Mr. Carlucci."
"You too," John smiles, as he begins the trek down the hallway to his classroom.

There are several students gathered around his door, obviously unaccustomed to being at school at this hour. John greets them all with a "Good morning, early birds, I'll be with you in one moment!" He unlocks his room, turns on the lights, throws his mail on an already-large pile of papers on his desk, opens the blinds, and says cheerfully (but in a mock gruff tone) "O.K. you goofballs, get in here and WAKE UP!" The students, all on the football team, amble in, followed by others just arriving. As the students take seats and chat with each other quietly

(some just sitting staring into space, others with their heads down on their desks), John prepares a video projector and screen, and then, in a much more serious voice, begins the meeting:

O.K. guys, we're gonna watch some film this morning, and we're gonna talk about what happened out there last week. But before we do, we're gonna start with the basics. There's rules to be followed. You gotta follow 'em in life; you're gonna have to follow 'em in football. (One boy leans over and whispers something to another.) And I'll tell you one thing for darn sure. The next one that talks, I'm gonna bench for the next three games. In any phase of life, you have to listen and, and follow rules and follow orders.   That's part of life. O.K., now let's see what the heck happened last week. [1]

After reviewing the film of last week's embarrassing loss and discussing specific plays and strategies, John decides to end on a positive note:

Now next week. I do see a lot of progress in you. By the time we get out on that field, you'll be very good football players, because I'm seeing a lot of progress. But we've gotta lot of work to do before then. I'll see you after school. Jones and Anderson—I need to talk to you before you head off to your class.

As most team members file out of the room, four or five of the African-American players cluster around Frank Jones and Jamal Anderson. Frank and Jamal have begun to engage in a display of verbal skill that is known as *snapping* or *playing the dozens*. Jamal begins by laying out the initial challenge in the game of ritual insults by saying: "Your mother is so fat that when she sits on a quarter she gets two dimes and a nickel." As the appreciative audience howls with laughter, Frank responds by saying: "Your mother is so old that when she read the Bible she reminisces."[2] The cluster of onlookers laughs again.

John, overhearing the boys' talk, marvels at their quick wit. He knows, however, that he must interrupt a form of extended competitive play that can continue until one of the players is determined to be the winner by the audience. Breaking up the cluster with a stern face and motioning to the door, he says to Frank and Jamal, "I just wanted to let you both know how much leadership you showed during that game, even when we were losing so badly. Nice job."

A few minutes later, as John greets his students coming in for first period, he is back to being cheerful, fun-loving John. "Mornin', Anna, I read a great paper with your name on it last night!"
"Hey, Zack, welcome back. Hope you're feeling better."

"Hello, Sharon and Charisse . . . "

The final bell rings. "Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I hope everyone is ready for a great day of math! Take out your homework and let's get started." The students groan good-naturedly. It is 8:30 a.m., and John is ready to start his day as a teacher.

A careful analysis of John's use of language up to this point highlights many aspects of language that teachers may not have thought deeply about but which have profound implications for the learning of their students. First, we will notice that John hears, understands, and uses many different types of English. On the radio, it is not only accents that differ, but also styles and "rules" for what is acceptable to say, with the contrast between public radio and the shock jocks perhaps being the most extreme. With his son, John holds a one-sided conversation in which he speaks of himself in the third person (*daddy's coming*) and uses baby talk (*wittle bear*) and repetition, practices he obviously would avoid with adults. John uses language differently to speak to his wife, the assistant principal, the football team, and his regular students. And he uses language differently for different purposes even when speaking to the same person. For example, his very direct and friendly greeting of the assistant principal is followed by a somewhat sarcastic and very indirect request for her to do something (*what do you think the chances are of us getting that revised bell schedule today*) and then an equally indirect, but much more polite, apology (*I hear you*).

Once teachers begin to think about the nature of language variation in their own speech and the speech of those with whom they interact regularly, it will not come as a surprise that their students also use variations of language depending on whom they are talking to or what the context of the interaction is. Some linguists refer to such differences as *registers*. Others prefer to think of them as specialized styles of speech used for carrying out particular types of tasks (e.g., teaching class, motivating a football team, giving a public speech, presenting evidence before a court of law). What is clear is that styles or registers that are appropriate for speaking in one situation are not appropriate for speaking in another. John chooses very different types of language to convey friendliness and camaraderie with each person or group he is interacting with. For example, John and his wife use terms of intimacy (*honey*), but also mild sarcasm (*you win*). When speaking to the assistant principal, he uses formal greetings, but his intonation and

body language demonstrated that this was not a formal exchange. With Sam, John uses language to demonstrates his friendship both by the way he addresses his friend (*hey, man, what's up*?) and by pretending to accuse his friend of making up a phony excuse to get out of the game. Different still are the ways John shows camaraderie with his football team (using the expectedly "tough" language of coaching) and his students (like with the assistant principal, a combination of formal features showing respect and more personal features indicating personal relationships). When speaking to his class, John first establishes cordiality by adopting a cheerleading style to greet students, and then authority by addressing the class as "ladies and gentlemen" and issuing a direct command: "Take out your homework." Figure 1 summarizes John's use of language during a single morning.

Figure 1: John's Use of Language

Situation	Features of Language
Makes fun of his wife Alice	--Imitates Southern colloquial verb forms (e.g. don't it) --Imitates Southern (Mississippi) accent
Talks to baby Matthew	--Speaks about himself in the third person (Daddy's coming) --Uses pronunciation typical of informal oral language (fellA instead of fellOW) --Uses "baby talk" (wittle bear)
Converses with male friend on the phone	--Uses informal "male" style characterized by: (1) elliptical language (Will do. Later man.) (2) mock aggression and self-aggrandizement
Interacts with assistant principal	--Exaggerates standard polite greeting (Good MORNING) --Uses question form to make an indirect request (What do you think are the chances of us getting the revised bell schedule…) --Uses grammatical structure typical of informal oral language (the chances of **us** getting versus the changes of **our** getting) --Uses pronunciation typical of informal oral language for a single word (lookin') --Uses informal response drawn from the African American tradition of call and response (I hear you)
Conducts team meeting	--Uses pronunciation typical of informal oral language throughout (gonna, gotta, wanna, follow 'em) ----Uses mildly profane language for emphasis (for darn sure, what the heck happened)
Addressing Frank and Jamal	--Uses pronunciation typical of standard formal language (I just wanted to let you know). --Primarily uses grammatical structure typical of formal language. --Uses elliptical language in closing (Nice job! versus You did a nice job.)
Greets students individually as they come into class	--Uses informal style characterized by: (1) pronunciation typical of informal oral language (mornin' Anna) (2) elliptical language (Hope you're feeling better)
Addresses entire class	--Uses formal style that is characterized by (1) careful pronunciation (good morning) (2) standard grammatical structure (I hope everyone is ready…) (3) direct command

What may not be very apparent from the transcribed examples of John's speech is that John's English is also different from the English spoken by his fellow teachers in Mississippi.

English varies from region to region in pronunciation and in the use of particular words and expressions. Moreover, English varies depending on social status and ethnic background. A lawyer from Mississippi will speak very differently from a cowboy from Texas, and a white Appalachian grandmother will not sound like a polished New York society matron. Social dialects, as opposed to regional dialects, also vary in grammatical structure. Speakers from rural areas in all parts of the country, for example, might say, "He done come," and "I might could," expressions rarely heard in most suburban areas.

Like most other speakers of English, John is very probably not aware that judgments about features that are considered incorrect or non-standard are social and not linguistic judgments. As Wolfram et al. (1999:11) point out:

> The value placed on a certain way of saying something is very closely associated with the cultural identity and social status of the people who say it that way. The valuing is not an individual decision; it is society's evaluation of different groups, including their ways of speaking. As we are socialized, we learn these attitudes, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes through expressed regulations and rules, just as we learn eating behavior.

Examining such judgments can help teachers avoid sending the message, either overtly or implicitly, that the language spoken by certain groups of students is in some way inferior to that spoken by others. As we saw, above, Alice jokes with John about having to wake up to "northerners'" speech, and John, in turn, ridicules Mississippi English by trying to imitate a southern drawl. Interestingly, he also uses a non-standard feature in his imitation: "That sounds more like your kinfolk, *don't it*." This suggests that for John, the speech of Mississippi sounds somehow less "correct" than his own. Although the construction, "he don't" is found in the non-standard speech of most regions and is thus just as likely to be heard in Boston as it is in Mississippi, John pretends that this is not the case. Even though John would probably agree that the communicative effect of "don't it" and "doesn't it," are similar, he associates the former with what is socially unacceptable or incorrect.

Finally, from John's interactions with Mrs. Johnson and with his student Jamal, we saw examples of Standard African-American English as well as of African-American Vernacular English. As is the case with John's variety of English, the speech of both Mrs. Johnson and Jamal varies depending on a variety of factors including the cultural and ethnic background of

the speakers engaged in the interaction. As Smitherman (2000) has pointed out, African-American or Black verbal style ranges from what she calls a southern sacred style (associated with the Black church tradition) to a secular style that is urban and northern and a product of both its southern roots and the unique experiences of inner-city African-American people. Mrs. Johnson's speech when participating in a socially sensitive situation in which she interacts primarily with white colleagues is quite different from how she speaks when surrounded by close African-American friends. Similarly, Jamal, who is an honor student, often exaggerates the Hip Hop nuances of his talk as he trades verbal insults with his homies. He knows quite clearly which features to use in dress, behavior, and language in order to maintain his standing among other African American students.[3]

From a single morning in John's life, we can learn a great deal about language. As some scholars have suggested (e.g. Austin, 1975), speakers skillfully use language to carry out particular actions by means of words. For example, they approve, they disagree, they apologize, and they request; and they do so either directly or indirectly. In presenting themselves in public, people are engaged in what other scholars (Goffman, 1959) have called "impression management." They carefully select from a broad repertoire of speech styles (Gumperz, 1982) the best style for the purpose at hand. One scholar (Bell, 1984) has referred to the process of selecting the best language for particular situations and interactions as "audience design."

John's particular speech repertoire offers examples of two very important facts that teachers need to know about language (whether it is English, Spanish, Chinese, or any other language): that language varies depending upon regional and social origins and that there are no single-style speakers. As adults, the way we speak to a good friend, the way we speak in a courtroom, and the way we speak to a young child are not the same. More importantly, however, if young children's language is influenced by adult's language, which in turn varies according to geographic area and cultural factors, it is also influenced by how the various adults around them use language differently for different goals, purposes, situations, etc. As we saw in a single morning of John's life, there are different ways people convey meaning, even when they are talking about the same thing. In addition to varying language according to interpersonal purpose, to get things done effectively and efficiently with people who use a particular variety of language, people vary their language to present themselves in ways in which they want to be

viewed (or, to be more precise, "heard") in particular situations. These choices in language variety may be overt (e.g. consciously avoiding the use of obscene language around children or being extra polite around older people) or so subtle the speaker herself may not be aware of it (e.g. the tendency to modify our speech slightly toward that of someone we are talking with whom we like and respect, both in word choice and pronunciation). Language is also an act of identity (Eckert, 1989; Gee, 1990; Norton, 2000). Choices in language use, as we saw in the case of Jamal, may signal broad categories to which people wish to demonstrate their allegiance, or they may represent momentary acts of "image control" (Goffman, 1959).

LANGUAGE BEFORE AND INTO SCHOOL

Teachers need to understand that language—unlike most school subjects— surrounds children from the time that they are born. Adults speak to each other as they hold young babies, feed them, care for them, and go about their everyday lives. As we saw in the case of baby Matthew, in some cultures and in some families, adults speak directly to even new-born babies. They carry on pretend conversations in which they act as if the baby had opinions and could respond to questions. In other families and in other cultures, adults may not treat children as conversational partners. These adults, however, will have clear expectations regarding when children begin to understand what is said to them, what kinds of language should be used with them, and what kind of language young children will first produce.

From anthropologists who have studied language all over the world and from psycholinguists who study first language acquisition, what we know is that all normal children – and even most children with disabilities—acquire the ability to use language. Parents engage in communicative acts that focus on meaning with their children, and children begin to "acquire" language from the input that surrounds them. While initially they may be capable of producing sounds not used by the adults around them, during their first year of life infants start to constrain their babbling so that it sounds like their parents' language, and they lose the ability to hear sound distinctions that carry no meaning in their parents' language. By two or three years of age, children begin to develop the ability to communicate with the people around them, to use words learned from adults, to form new words that fit into the patterns licensed by their parents' language, and to create novel sentences, sentences that they have never heard before. Because

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language is extraordinarily complex, psycholinguists do not entirely agree about how the process of first language acquisition takes place. Some linguists emphasize the remarkable ability that children have to extract the rules of the particular language or languages spoken around them from the varied and imperfect input that they hear.   Even in homes of highly educated parents, children may hear utterances that are not always well-formed according to the rules of formal grammar. They will likely hear various versions of "baby talk", that is, of speech that is modified to accommodate the supposed needs of the child. They will also hear the everyday elliptical talk that characterizes intimate conversations. Somehow, perhaps by extrapolating from the input, or perhaps from their own efforts to use language to communicate important messages, young children acquire vocabulary (some estimates suggest that first graders know 5000-12000 different words) and grammar, (i.e., how possible sentences in the language are formed and which words are possible words in the language) and make a good start on learning the sociolinguistic and pragmatic rules of communication within their communities that allow them to know what things to say and not say, how to be polite, and how to get others to fulfill one's needs.

Although not everything that children hear is relevant to the acquisition of language, the ways in which language is used in particular families and in particular communities is of central importance in language acquisition**.** A child from Mississippi and a child from Boston will acquire the accents of the adults and children with whom they interact. The child from Mississippi will not sound like he comes from New York, and the child from Boston will not sound like she grew up in south Texas. Similarly, as Heath (1983) tells us, the child who grows up in the community or family where displaying information is emphasized will learn how to display information. In the same way, the youngster whose parents and siblings use careful school-like language and correct all stigmatized uses (e.g., Don't say gots, say has.) will grow up concerned about what her family considers to be correctness and incorrectness. By comparison, a child whose parents and community members care more about how effectively a child can think on her feet to defend herself when being teased by others, may be much less concerned with norms of school correctness than with verbal expressiveness. It is important to emphasize, however, that speech communities and/or families within the <u>same</u> speech communities also differ in the ways in which they use language. Families of the same social

class as well as the same racial and educational background will nevertheless socialize their children in the use of various speech genres (narrating, teasing) at different ages and in different ways. The structure of those genres, moreover, may differ as may the conditions under which the genre can be invoked.

Dramatic growth appears to take place in children's language during a very short period of time, although some scholars (e.g., Aichinson, 1996 cited in Bialystok, 2001) argue that language acquisition takes as much as twenty years, with the first five years dedicated to acquiring basic structure, the next five years to mastering complex grammar, and the last ten years to acquiring a rich vocabulary. When they start to speak, toddlers typically communicate their intents by using single words (e.g., *up* with a gesture to request to be picked up, *gone* to request help finding something, *goggie* or *kiki* to direct the hearer's attention to a dog or a cat). They move gradually into early combinatory speech, in which these same intents are expressed with longer and more complex utterances (e.g., *pick me up, where cookie gone?, dat a goggie).* Somewhat older children often produce forms (*goed, runned)* that are different from those produced by adults, or use words and expressions in ways that differ considerably from the standard adult use *(don't put me spinach!).* Such inventive uses occur in three and four year olds, who typically have previously used correct forms (went, ran, don't give me spinach, don't put spinach on my plate). Thus, they suggest that children are active processors of the language they hear, and try to generate regularities in it.[4]

In every case, children ultimately acquire the grammatical and sociolinguistic rules used by the adults and children around them. Thus, a white child from the south whose parents speak a rural vernacular and use the form *done* to mark a completed action or event (e.g., *I done told you not to mess up.*) will acquire this rule as she internalizes the grammatical structure of English and will also use *done* to mark completed action. She may also acquire *fixin to* to express what is about to be done or to happen (It's fixin to rain). In Appalachia, a child whose parents use an a-prefix with –ing forms will produce sentences such as: *He was a-comin' home or He starts a-laughin' at you.* Similarly, a child whose family are speakers of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) and who use habitual be (e.g*., Everyday he be tired.*) to talk about an action or condition that occurs habitually will internalize this rule to produce sentences such as: *By the time I go get my momma, it be dark* to mean: By the time I go get my momma, it is always dark.

The child, rather than producing incorrect English, is using the grammatical resources of AAVE to express meanings that other varieties of English express very differently.[5]

Teachers must know that when children arrive at school at the age of five, they have already acquired the ability to use language in important and effective ways within their families and their communities. However, teachers must also realize that only children whose families use language in ways that are very similar to the ways that it is used in school will have acquired the rules for using school-like language. Such children may already have been taught how to respond to questions that are requests for display of information (e.g., What is a baby cow called, Johnny?). And they may already know how to distinguish a true question (Did you bring lunch money today?) from a polite request (Don't you want to put your toys away now and get ready for recess?). Other children who have not had experience with the many different meanings that questions have in school settings will have to learn new mappings of forms to communicative intents, both in order to interpret school questions correctly and to decide whether to respond or not to such questions. Children also differ in how verbal they are. Children who are more verbal are often rewarded by schools if they conform their talk to school norms and punished if they use their verbal skills in other ways, while the contributions of less verbal children often go unnoticed.

In the United States, schools often value the particular varieties of English acquired by a particular subsection of the population, mostly that of families who have traditionally been largely white and middle- and upper-middle-class. While schools rarely talk about these values overtly, it quickly becomes clear to students that different ways of speaking are valued differentially, and students often quickly get the clear message that they have a "problem" with language or that they are not speaking "correctly." Children who are from working class communities and who come to school speaking vernacular varieties of English can and will acquire the rules for speaking in school in very much the same way that they acquired the rules for speaking in their homes and communities, or in the same way that children who arrive at school speaking a language other than English acquire English. However, such acquisition will take time, and there may be many features of their home varieties of language that they will not abandon. Children from Boston will not sound like Mississippi children until they have been

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among Mississippi children for a period of time and until they want to sound like Mississippi children.

The important point for teachers is that the English that Boston children acquire is not a flawed Texas English, but rather Boston English, a very different and legitimate regional variety of the language. Similarly, children whose varieties of English have rules that are not identical to the rules of the standard language variety used in school are not speaking flawed school language. Rather, they are competently speaking a very legitimate variety of English that also has strict rules for communicating meaning and that is used in everyday interactions by the adults in their homes and communities. Children, then, who arrive at school not speaking school language should not be faulted. It would tantamount to faulting a child who grew up speaking Japanese for not speaking German (LAUSD & LeMoine, 1999; LeMoine, 2002).

THE ACQUISITION OF MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE

As outlined above, in monolingual English-speaking families, students acquire one or more varieties of English and, over time, a repertoire of registers and styles consistent with those with whom they interact. In such families, children need only one language to communicate with those around them. In other families and in many communities, children need more than one language to communicate with all the people who are important to them. They may have parents who have different language backgrounds and grandparents and other relatives who only speak the language of their home countries. In John's family, for example, an Italian-speaking grandmother always spoke to her grandchildren in Italian although, toward the end of her life, she understood quite a bit of English. As a result, John can still understand everyday household Italian, although he cannot read or write Italian. Teachers in the United States increasingly find themselves in classrooms with students from families in which languages other than English are spoken. Below, we outline the knowledge necessary for teachers to understand the language development of students from a variety of language backgrounds.

In some households, especially among middle-class professionals who come to this country in adulthood, much time and attention is given to the development of the children's two languages. For example, two highly-educated, French-speaking parents who are fluent in English may carefully plan ways of exposing their children to both English and French. They may decide to use only French with their child but to hire a baby sitter who speaks English, or they may

decide that each of the parents will each use a different language with the child for all interactions. For such parents, bilingualism is seen as a valuable asset, and they assume that all educated persons are, by definition, bilingual. As is the case with other middle-class parents, such bilingual parents provide their children with books and recordings—but they provide them in two languages instead of only one. They might also travel to France or Canada on a yearly basis in order to provide the child with genuine models of the home language. For such middle-class children, the transition to a school in which only English is spoken is ordinarily painless. Because the children already speak English, they often pass undetected among monolingual, English-speaking middle-class children. Indeed, in order to avoid the stigma associated with bilingualism in many schools, the parents of such privileged bilinguals may not give information about the use of a non-English language at home to school personnel.

In the case of working class immigrant families, the situation is often quite different. Many individuals who come to this country, especially from very poor countries, have very little formal education. They do not speak English, and they move into neighborhoods where they are isolated among other immigrants, many of whom also speak little English. They work at jobs in which they have little contact with English-speaking people, and they have little opportunity to acquire English in ordinary interactions. While they may enroll in English language classes within their communities, such classes are generally overcrowded and taught by inexperienced volunteers. Because of their geographical and economic isolation, they often make little progress in learning English. As compared to middle-class highly educated professionals, then, working class immigrants do not ordinarily design a language curriculum in the home for their children. They simply use their home language around their children, and it is the home language that their children acquire.

In those families where there are no speakers of English, such as relatives who have been here for many years or older siblings who have already begun to acquire English at school, children will remain monolingual in the home language until they arrive at school. In most schools, students who arrive with no English whatsoever, whether in early or late elementary school, middle school, or high school, present the greatest challenges. Such children must ideally be given access to the curriculum in order to prevent their falling hopelessly behind academically while they are in the process of acquiring English. Unfortunately, schools have few choices.

When there are few children, they are often placed in ordinary classes with English-speaking peers and offered whatever support is feasible for the school. Teachers who work with such newly-arrived children often wring their hands because they realize that their background and training has not prepared them to help children to develop English quickly at the same time that they are learning other subject matter.

When there are many immigrant children at the same school, the responsibility for working with them is primarily left in the hands of language specialists (i.e., ESL teachers and subject matter teachers who teach special classes designed to simplify the language for such learners). Unfortunately in many such schools, English language learners (ELLs) spend most of their school days isolated among other learners of English. They have few opportunities to interact with fluent speakers of English either at school – where most interactions are with the teacher and the ratio of learners to native speakers is 30 to 1 – or in their communities where they interact primarily with other immigrant families. Many children make very little progress in learning English under such circumstances even when they are taught exclusively in English. The situation is made even more complex when older immigrant students arrive at school in the later years without the same level of literacy background or exposure to school in their native language that their classmates have had, due to limited number of daily school hours in their countries of origin, interrupted schooling, and other social, political, and economic obstacles.

In families where both English and the home language are spoken, children will begin to acquire English at home. They may arrive at school speaking and understanding some English. As compared to children who have grown up in English-speaking homes, however, the English that immigrant children bring to school (even when they appear to communicate fairly well in interpersonal interactions) may still be limited. Their two or more languages will not develop in exactly parallel ways. Rather, their languages will be functionally specialized. They will use one of their languages to talk to certain people in certain contexts, and their other language to carry out other functions and to talk to other people about other topics. Because language development reflects language use, they will not be identical to monolingual children of either language who use one language exclusively for all purposes and in all contexts. Like monolinguals, bilinguals also have broad language repertoires and both styles and registers that they use for different

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types of interactions. In the case of bilinguals, however, this repertoire includes styles and registers in two languages.

While addressing many of the challenges outlined above may be out of the control of individual teachers, an understanding of the nature of the development of more than one language *can* help teachers begin to understand and respond to the needs of their students. Unfortunately, the education profession has perpetuated a number of myths about bilingual students. Indeed the very term "bilingual" is often used as a euphemism for *disadvantaged*. Even though research for over forty years has clearly established the cognitive advantages of bilingualism (Peale & Lambert, 1962), beliefs about bilingual handicaps still persist as do unrealistic notions about "perfect" bilinguals, often believed to be individuals who are two monolinguals in one. Few human beings attain such perfection, but most English language learners if given the necessary opportunities to acquire English and to learn <u>through</u> English can develop strong academic skills in their second language.

Like the process of first language acquisition, the process of second language acquisition is complex and in many ways poorly understood. Unlike for first language learners, who eventually become indistinguishable from native speakers of the same social and ethnic background, the end point for many second language learners is not necessarily native-like proficiency. Many speakers of English as a second language who sound non-native-like, however, are nonetheless dominant English speakers, capable of completing challenging communicative tasks in English and of learning and developing intellectually through English.[6]

LITERACY BEFORE AND INTO SCHOOL

Just as they learn that spoken language can be used differently for different ends in the same language, children in most communities also learn from an early age that communicating involves more than oral language. However, teachers need to keep in mind that unlike oral language, written literacy is not a universal human characteristic. In fact, while humans have been using language for tens of thousands of years, if not hundreds of thousands of years, it is only in the last several thousand or so that they have been using writing, and only much more recently that people have been called upon to use special forms of reading and writing for formal education (Gee, 1993; Halliday 1993).

The word "literacy" means different things to different people. Some people think of literacy as the most basic ability to read and write simple words and sentences. For others, literacy is synonymous with the particular kind of reading and writing commonly done in school. However, neither definition is sufficient. Literacy is more than simply reading words and writing letters, but it also often takes forms very different from those practiced in schools.

Anthropologist Shirley Brice Heath (1986) uses the term "literacy events" to describe a wide range of children's interaction with text. According to Heath, literacy events can include practices as diverse as telling bedtime stories, looking at cereal boxes, noticing stop signs, watching TV ads, and following instructions for store-bought games and toys. James Gee (1990) defines literacy as not only the written but also the oral ways in which people control "secondary uses of language," which ultimately involve all the ways in which people communicate with social institutions beyond the family: schools, workplaces, stores, government offices, businesses, and churches. In an even broader view of literacy, some argue that in the current technological age, literacy is not limited to language at all. In this view, there is no such thing as "literacy," but instead "multiliteracies" (New London Group, 1996). In addition to language, these multiliteracies include visual meanings (images, page layouts, screen formats); audio meanings (music, sound effects); gestural meanings (body language, sensuality); spatial meanings (environmental spaces, architectural spaces); and multimodal meanings which involve combinations of all of the above.

Regardless of the exact definition of literacy used, however, there is no question that (a) literacy, like language, is often experienced first at home and (b) also like language, there is no one "natural" way to be literate. As Heath (1986) puts it, "ways of taking from books are as much a part of learned behavior as are ways of eating, sitting, playing games, and building houses" (p. 97). But these "learned behaviors" are learned in ways very different from the ways subjects are often taught in school. As Gee (1990) points out, "one does not learn to read texts of type X in way Y unless one has had experience in settings where texts of type X are read in way Y" (p. 43; see also Gee, 1998).

As with language acquisition, children growing up in different communities may be exposed to very different literacy practices. In her famous study comparing family's literacy practices in three nearby communities in the Carolinas, Heath (1983, 1986) demonstrated the

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potential differences in literacy practices, even in the same geographic area. As early as 6 months old, children of white, middle-class families from "Maintown" focused on books, acknowledged questions about books, and lived in rooms decorated with characters from books. From the time they could talk, these children were encouraged to engage in conversations about books and book characters, even when they were out in the "real world", and after the age of two they told imaginary stories and transformed real people and events into fictional stories. By age 3, children also learned to listen and wait as an audience when adults read to them, and preschool children learned that books and book-related activities were entertainment and announced their own factual and fiction narratives. .

Literacy practices were different for children in "Roadville," the white working-class community Heath (1986) studied. Parents in this community chose books emphasizing nursery rhymes, alphabet learning, Bible stories, and animals, and they directed their children both to repeat from and to answer factual questions about the content of the books. Children learned to see "stories" as either factual accounts of real life or as accounting from a book. In Roadville, according to Heath, " any fictionalized account of a real event is viewed as a *lie*; reality is better than fiction. (p. 111).

In the black working-class neighborhood Heath studied, literacy events were different from those in either of the two white communities. In contrast to the fiction-filled homes of Maintown nurseries or the story-as-account environment of Roadville, babies in Trackton

> come home from the hospital to an environment that is almost entirely human . . . Infants are held during their waking hours, occasionally while they sleep, and they usually sleep in the bed with parents until they are about 2 years of age . . . [T]hey eat and sleep in the midst of human talk and noise from the television, stereo, and radio.   Encapsulated in an almost totally human world, they are in the midst of constant human communication, verbal and nonverbal. . . (p. 112).

Children in Trackton grew up in the midst of adults reading a wide variety of materials (newspapers, mail, the Bible and other church related materials, political and community newsletters, parent notices from school, and advertisements), but there were no reading materials specifically for children, except for those from Sunday school, and adults did not ritually read to children, either during the day or at bedtime. The types of questions adults asked children also were quite different from those in the white neighborhoods. Instead of questions eliciting

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information that adults already knew, children were asked analogical questions calling for comparisons, such as "what's that like?" as well as genuine requests for information not known by adults, such as "Where'd you get that from?" "What do you want?" and "How come you did that?" (p. 115). The ways in which children told stories was different too. Preschoolers in Trackton almost never heard "Once upon a time " stories, because the assumption was that the audience itself would be able to understand the context with proper cues in the story. Also in contrast to literacy in the white communities, one child did not hold the floor for an entire story, as storytelling was a competitive enterprise: "everyone in a conversation may want to tell a story, so only the most aggressive wins out" (p. 116).

The differential ways of using language that Heath's work displays constitute one aspect of what has come to be called 'emergent literacy'—the many practices and capabilities of preschool-aged children that can be seen as early points on the trajectory toward conventional reading and writing. In addition to using oral language in 'literate' ways, some children arrive at school knowing a lot about letters, able for example to recite the alphabet, recognize most letters, and write many recognizably. Some children have had lots of practice in writing their own names, and perhaps also in doing 'pretend writing' (making a shopping list with Mom, writing 'thank you notes', labeling artistic productions), and even invented spelling. Such children have experiences that map well onto the expectations of kindergarten and first grade teachers, whereas others may have acquired emergent literacy practices that are puzzling to their teachers (e.g., not handling books for fear of soiling them, writing only words they know how to spell correctly, copying in preference to writing stories, reading by memorizing rather than sounding out). Skilled literacy users, like skilled language users, have many different modes of interacting with text—recitation for some texts, expressive interpretation for others, reading for fun sometimes and for serious purposes sometimes, reading some texts to get information and others to assess writers' opinions, reading some for guidance about action and others for guidance about beliefs. All children arrive at school understanding and able to engage in only a subset of these literacy activities; school is meant to ensure that they all leave with a complete set.

Teachers also need to know that additional emergent literacy capabilities that some children develop before school and others only in kindergarten or first grade include an understanding of how letters represent sounds, which presupposes an understanding that words

can be analyzed into smaller units of sound. The notion that the words *dog, log, fog, sog, bog, cog, hog* and *jog* all share two sounds and differ in one represents a huge insight. This insight is key to profiting from phonics-based literacy instruction and to figuring out the nature of the alphabetic system. It is an insight that can be taught to children, or that some may discover on their own, particularly if they have lots of words in their vocabularies to work with. Successfully learning to read in the grades one and two requires putting together the insight about letters representing sounds with the capabilities to analyze sounds in words correctly, to recognize letters reliably, to remember how different sounds are spelt, to access the meaning of the words being read, and to do all this rapidly and effortlessly. Successfully reading in the later elementary and secondary grades means being able to do this with complex texts and novel words, and to learn from the texts furthermore. It presupposes not just good primary level reading, but wide vocabulary knowledge and considerable knowledge of how things work in the world. (For more about what teachers need to know about reading, see the CTE companion volume on reading, XXXX.)

        Heath's work, along with the work of others, shows that literacy practices in *all* communities have distinct potential advantages for engaging in learning in school and later on in life. For example, in Heath's study, the black working class Trackton children, when they *started* school, already had the narrative skills rewarded in the *upper* primary grades, including sophisticated analogical reasoning and an understanding of the ways in which story telling can be related to play (Heath, 1986, p. 121). However, schools in the United States have traditionally valued a relatively narrow set of literacy practices, matched closely with those of white, middle class families. For example, according to Heath, Trackton children found themselves penalized in the early grades when they were unaccustomed to labeling shapes, colors, sizes, and numbers; answering questions adults clearly know the answer to; and participating in other literacy events that some students have been practicing almost since birth.

        What teachers need to understand is that there is not one type of universal or "natural" literacy, that schools often value only a narrow set of all the literacy practices potentially powerful for learning, and that students can only bring to school the literacy practices they have been exposed to at home and in their communities. In the classroom, such an understanding is essential in order for teachers to realize that (a) students are not in any way cognitively or

linguistically deficient just because they have not mastered a particular set of literacy practices to which they have not been exposed, and that (b) if schools are going to continue to value certain literacy practices over others, it is the responsibility of teachers to help create the conditions necessary to foster the development of these practices.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY PRACTICES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

While literacy practices begin at home and are either challenged or supported at school (or both), teachers need to understand that a wide variety of literacy practices continue to develop throughout children's lives *outside* of school as well (Hull and Schultz, 2001). After John's son Matthew begins school, he will also, either at home or elsewhere, surf the internet, communicate via e-mail, and participate in computer games requiring quite sophisticated and challenging literacy. He may decide to keep a journal, write poetry, or even experiment with graffiti. He will probably participate in clubs, activities, and religious organizations, each with its own literacy practices. Increasingly, he will participate in community service, either as a volunteer or to fulfill school or statewide graduation requirements. Some children, especially those from particular religious and/or immigrant communities, attend Saturday or evening school, sometimes in languages other than English. Many older children hold part-time jobs, either to earn extra income for themselves or to help their families make a living, and some accompany their parents to family-run businesses, late-night office cleaning jobs, and early morning paper routes. For students who are learning English, these activities are especially important language opportunities, either to help develop English or to help maintain students' heritage languages as they also learn English.

Clearly, then, school is not the only place that students are "doing" literacy. In fact, many studies have documented how children struggling *inside* of school may be simultaneously quite successful using literacy *outside* of school in a wide variety of different contexts. For example, research has shown students who are struggling in school will often spend hours learning and succeeding in computer games that require interaction with complicated, text-rich information, and at least one case has been documented with a student diagnosed with attention deficit disorder who spent an entire night learning how to crack a computer code in order to cheat on a game (Gee, 2003a). Researchers have described how children ages 9 through 11 at a community

center in an inner-city African American neighborhood use a parking ticket as a literacy event, "problem solving, analyzing the ticket and sorting through strategies for dealing with it," and in so doing "draw on various literate and discursive strategies to find a way to obviate its influence—trying out scenarios, studying the artifact for information and directives, enumerating and questioning options" (Hull and Schultz, 2001, based on a study by Knobel, 1999, pp. 593-- 594). Heath, Soep and Roach (1998) have described how students in a community-based arts program "engage…in learning, both for themselves and for others, through highly participatory projects that encompass listening, writing and reading, as well as mathematical, scientific and social skills and strategies" (quoted in Hull and Schultz, 2001, p. 595).

Being aware of the diverse literacy practices in which students participate outside of school can help teachers (1) envision alternative ways for students to access content and demonstrate content knowledge and (2) create the conditions under which students will be able build on the literacy skills they are developing elsewhere to learn and use the language of school power.

ADDING THE LANGUAGE VALUED AT SCHOOL

In school, students who have not grown up using language and literacy that is valued by schools are confronted with two challenges: (1) accessing content and demonstrating what they have learned in that content and (2) adding the language and literacy valued by school to their repertoire. In order to create a context in which the language that students bring to school can be enhanced, teachers must understand enough about language itself so that they can recognize the ways in which their students are already extraordinarily healthy. They must also gain a greater awareness of the types of language demands that are made on students by the teaching and learning process, so that they can help create the conditions under which students will have access to the essential content of instruction and opportunities to develop the language used in school to talk and write about that content.

In this section, we offer a brief overview of the types of language demands that schools make on students and conclude with some suggestions about ways that students can be helped to develop what we will refer to as academic English. In most classrooms, for example, students need to:

- understand explanations and presentations of classroom/school rules, routines, and procedures
- understand explanations and presentations of subject-matter information
- respond to questions about explanations and presentations
- ask questions about explanations and presentations
- understand and participate in class discussions
- work in small groups
- understand texts and materials
- complete written assignments based on explanations and/or text materials
- complete projects
- demonstrate learning through oral presentations
- demonstrate learning through written examinations

Although there are many grade-level and subject matter differences in the ways that students might be expected to participate in what we are calling here "class discussions," the kinds of language that students need to develop in order to participate in such discussions are outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Language demands made by class discussions

Type of Interaction	Language Demands
whole-group, teacher-led discussion • students take brief turns • students take extended turns	Students must: • follow points made in discussion • self-select (bid for the floor) • display information • express opinions • agree or disagree with others

Once one identifies what students must do with language, one can then analyze the ways that students might best be helped in developing the appropriate language. The rules for self-selecting or bidding for the floor, for example, are very highly constrained in most classrooms. Some teachers allow students to speak out, while others require students to raise their hands and

be recognized before they can take the floor. Once recognized students must (1) get to the point and offer their contribution and (2) use a register and style considered appropriate or correct in the school context. In many classrooms, teachers spend a great deal of time teaching students how to self-select and reminding them to do so at different points. It is just as possible for teachers to model ways in which to express opinions or to disagree with others that are typical of academic or intellectual discussions (e.g., *I am not sure that I agree with Charles. I would argue that there is another perspective.*) Expecting that students learn and display the sociolinguistic rules for participating in such discussions enhances their development of school language in general (see figure 3: In the Classroom: Modeling the Language of Academic Discussions). It may not, however, immediately result in students' eliminating all traces of their own vernacular or English learner varieties. A native speaker of English could very well say, "*I would argue that he done did that on purpose,*" and a second language learner could still say, "*I would argue that she explain me the lesson.*" Depending on the time available to the teacher to focus on form, s/he might wish to attend to such details. However, some scholars maintain that with enough sustained participation in such discussions in which there are other students present who use standard forms, both speakers of vernacular varieties and English language learners will slowly acquire and begin to use those forms as well. These scholars (Brown, 1997; Brown and Campione, 1994, 1996; Brown et al., 1994**,** Rutherford, 1995) also suggest that students can be taught that scientists, or mathematicians or historians, speak in particular ways about their subjects. The inner city African-American students who worked with Brown and her colleagues, for example, eagerly presented results of their scientific investigations using good approximations of presentations that they themselves had heard.

Figure 3

In the Classroom: MODELING THE LANGUAGE OF ACADEMIC DISCUSSIONS

Ms. Jones teaches fifth grade in a diverse elementary school in New York City. Her classroom consists of primarily African American students who, as speakers African American Vernacular English (AAVE), use features of language which differ from those used by many white students. Ms. Jones understands that children from different backgrounds use different kinds of language for different kinds of purposes, and her goal is NOT to get her students to stop speaking AAVE. Rather, one of Ms. Jones goals is for her students to engage in scientific discussions in a variety of settings: with partners during labs, in small discussion groups, and in whole-class discussions. Ms. Jones realizes that for many fifth

grade students, regardless of the variety of English they speak, the language expected in scientific settings often uses different vocabulary and sentence organization that students may be unfamiliar with. To expand her students' academic language repertoire, and to promote the kinds of discussions that Ms. Jones believes "real" scientists engage in, she herself uses this language and encourages students to use it as well. To assist students in doing so, she places posters around the room, each featuring phrases which can be used for particular purposes. Ms. Jones discuses with students the ways in which specialized language is used in a variety of settings student may be familiar with, including politics, religion, advertising, and sports. Students are encouraged both to use the language of the scientific phrases and to add new ones when they are encountered either in class discussions or in readings. Below are some examples of the posters around Ms. Jones's classroom.[1]

Expressing an Opinion
I hypothesize that _____
In my opinion _____
It seems to me that _____

Reporting results of an experiment
We were surprised to find that _____
Predictably, we observed that _____
Our results indicate that _____

Asking for Elaboration and/or Clarification
Could you say more about that?
In other words, you think that _____
Could you give me an example of that?

Disagreeing
I don't really agree because _____
I see it in another way.
My understanding of the results is different.

Reporting What a Partner or Group Member has Shared
_____explained to me that _____
_____pointed out that _____
_____emphasized that _____

Disciplinary Literacies

As students progress across their school careers, the demands of using language in oral and written communication, as well as comprehending language, particularly in written texts become more specialized. In K-12 education, these issues crystallize in the secondary school curriculum. While many assume that adequate preparation in reading

[1] Adapted from Kinsella, K. (1998). Content literacy development for college-bound ESL/EFL students. Unpublished materials from TESOL Academy 1998, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD. Alexandria, VA:

and writing in the primary grades will lay the foundation for future success, assessment trends in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) suggest otherwise. On the most difficult reading tasks, those requiring the comprehension of complex texts, the vast majority of 17 year olds do very poorly, as illustrated in Figure 4 below:

Figure 4   Percentage of Students Meeting the Standard

	African American	Latino	White
Understands complicated information	17	24	46
Learns from specialized materials	1	2	8

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1999 NAEP Summary Tables. See also Education Trust, xxxx.

The language registers of the academic disciplines and the kinds of speech events typical of the school based work of these disciplines are often distinct and distant from the everyday experiences of students, regardless of social class or ethnicity. They pose distinct challenges for native speakers of English across language boundaries defined by ethnicity, social class, and region. These challenges may be even greater for English Language Learners. These challenges are certainly compounded by poor preparation in reading, composition, and a formal understanding of the grammar of the language.

By the grammar of the language, we do not mean understanding issues like subject-verb agreement in ways defined by the prescriptions of academic English. These prescriptions categorize the use of the habitual be, for example, by speakers of African American English (as

in he be there all the time) as incorrect English. Rather we mean understanding that sentences in English, regardless of the variety of English, involve either single or groups of words together that tell us who or what we're talking about (i.e. the subject), the action – which can be passive or active – carried out by the subject (i.e. the predicate), the word or words that answer the question 'what' after the predicate [John throws what?] (i.e. the direct object), and the word or words that answer of the predicate the question 'to whom' or 'to what' [John throws Mary the ball]. Other individual or groups of words can be placed around any of these core parts (i.e. subject, predicate, object, indirect object) to answer questions such as what kind, which one, or how many (i.e. adjectives); or to what extent, how (i.e. adverbs), where (prepositions). And finally that relationships between subject-predicate clusters or subject-predicate-object clusters can be expressed through words that define the nature of the relationship (because, although, if, after, before) – i.e. conjunctions [I arrived at the party late because the babysitter had not arrived].

Examples:

Lincoln (subject) signed (predicate) the Emancipation Proclamation (direct object).

John (subject) gave (predicate) Mary (indirect object) the ball (direct object).

This certainly sounds like a lead into a boring and irrelevant grammar lesson. However, the ability to read complex disciplinary texts often requires that the reader be able to draw on such knowledge in order to make sense of the reading. In history classes, students should be able to read documents like the Declaration of Independence, or original documents that capture the political debates among the early U.S. colonies as to how power was to be distributed across the newly established states in the newly established nation (such as The Federalist Papers), or first person narratives of enslaved Africans that were so important to the communication of the abolitionist movement (such as The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass). The entire opening paragraph of the Declaration of Independence is one sentence. There is little research to suggest that students in even the best high schools learn to read such texts, nor that students from more affluent white families learn to tackle such texts through either their dinner time conversations, their joint storybook reading, or their visits to the museum.

If the reader is able to comprehend such texts on his or her own, based on a rich understanding of the content on which the text is based and a long personal history of reading such documents, the reader need not draw on the kinds of technical knowledge of grammar that we have described. Meanings will more or less flow. However, if either one does not have extensive declarative or prepositional knowledge regarding the topic, and one does not have much personal history in reading such texts, then the reader definitely needs such meta-linguistic knowledge as one of the tools in his or her reading comprehension toolkit. Unfortunately, this is the case for many students entering high school, especially in urban and rural high schools in low income communities. This problem becomes exacerbated when teachers presume – perhaps because of low reading comprehension scores on basic skills standardized assessments – that some students do not have the capacity to tackle such texts. These assumptions are often rooted in several misconceptions: (1) a belief that students who speak a national language or language variety other than academic English do not have the linguistic resources to even begin such intellectual endeavors; (2) a belief that students who enter high school as struggling readers will only be able to tackle texts with very simple language (in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure); (3) a belief that the kinds of meta-linguistic knowledge we have described can only be understood intuitively; and (4) a belief that knowledge of English grammar is at best useful to improve written composition only.

We will illustrate how a reader might use a formal knowledge of English grammar to understand several complex texts in science. The science example is from Charles Darwin's Origin of the Species. Each represents the kind of primary source document that high school students should be able to understand and should have repeated opportunities to read and examine. One could argue these texts, and others like them, provide a knowledge base on which participation in contemporary civic debate in this democratic society could be based.

The selection below is taken from Charles Darwin's The Origin of the Species. AAAS standards in science recommend that high school students should be able to read and understand such primary source documents in science. This single sentence from the text is used to demonstrate how complex and specialized are the language demands of making sense of this sentence, let alone a significant chunk of the text or the text as a whole.

We have good reason to believe, as shown in the first chapter, <u>that</u> changes in the conditions of life give a tendency to increased variability; and <u>in the foregoing cases</u> the conditions have changed, and <u>this</u> would manifestly be favourable to natural selection, by affording a better chance of the occurrence of profitable variations.

In this single sentence, knowledge of sentence structure and semantics is required to understand
- the word "that" signals what follows is the same as what "we believe;"
- that the single noun "conditions" points back to the earlier reference to the "conditions of life."

The subject is "we."   The predicate is "have good reason to believe."   The word "that" signals an object expressed as a clause which tells the reader what it is that we have good reason to believe.   The argument being made offers a proposition ("We have good reason to believe … that changes in the conditions of life give a tendency to increased variability." The argument is complex because it is linguistically truncated. Its details are not explicitly stated in the sentence, but assume extensive prior knowledge. The argument applies the proposition to a set of cases ("in the foregoing cases the conditions have changed"). It then goes on to articulate a second proposition which is a consequence of the first proposition — i.e. the changes in conditions of life "would manifestly be favorable to natural selection." It then goes on to offer a warrant for both the first and the second proposition, namely that changes in the conditions of life are favorable to natural selection by "affording a better chance of the occurrence of profitable variations." Additionally, being able to deduce the two propositions, the exemplar, and the warranting of the claims are only meaningful if the reader also understands the specialized meanings of the terms "conditions of life," "variability," and "natural selection" in the topic of evolution in the domain of biology. Most students will have difficulty understanding what is entailed in these specialized vocabulary terms without extensive authentic and language rich experiences, comparable in many ways to the kinds of experiences children require in situ to learn their native language. This includes an extended amount of time, opportunities to appropriate the meanings to experiences that are familiar, and opportunities to play with the language in ways that will likely demonstrate the same kinds of "errors" young children make as they deduce the rules of their first language (for example, applying the rule for regular plurals to

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irregular plural forms). In science and mathematics, it is possible that students who speak a language with Latin origins, such as Spanish, Portuguese or French, may have greater access to terms in the sciences and mathematics with Latin roots. However, teachers would need to help students explicitly make such connections.

In addition to the problems of sentence structure (and by extension text structure) required to understand and summarize complex disciplinary texts, students also face problems of vocabulary. In science, literature, history and mathematics, words take on specialized meanings quite different from everyday informal language.

The problems we have identified so far tend to be localized within texts. However, to grasp the overarching claims or potential claims being made in a text, the reader also needs to understand the structure of argumentation within each of these subject matters. The student needs to understand how these structures of argumentation are taken up and used to what ends in texts they read. Students must also learn to communicate, both orally and in written forms, both what they understand and what positions they take on these arguments. Arguments that students create are expected to reflect the norms of the subject matters. These subject matter norms for argumentation may not be singular. For example, in the study of literature, various theories of literary criticism value different sources to warrant claims about what a reader thinks a work is trying to communicate. However, in no instances is reasoning within the subject matters synonymous with the kind of everyday argumentation we engage in at the dinner table.

The problems of high school disciplinary literacy are real and pose huge hurdles for many students. However, there is the additional challenge to teachers to understand how to teach students to understand and overcome these problems. In many respects, the process of learning to understand the sometimes obtuse ways that language is used in disciplinary texts and specialized ways of reasoning reflected in different subject mattes is very much like learning a second language. Some have argued that learning academic discourses involves issues of identity and certainly many supported opportunities to practice in authentic ways. This suggests the need for a relatively consistent pedagogical approach across the high school curriculum that allows students to try on these new roles and receive feedback, to experience the kinds of failures and adaptations of the language that all second language learners experience. We are not arguing that high school students will become experts in the ways of using disciplinary language that,

say, professionals in the discipline achieve. However, we are saying that if high school students are to gain access to the texts such as <u>The Federalist Papers</u>, Lincoln's "A House Divided Speech," <u>The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass</u>, in order to engage in civic debate that is warranted in this country's history; if students are to read the works of Toni Morrison, William Faulkner, and Sandra Cisneros, in order to grapple with the dilemmas of the human condition with which these authors wrestle; if students are to read Darwin and the evolutionists who followed him in order to take their own positions regarding Creationism and their own perspectives on how science has been and can be used for social ends – then schools must prepare students with the tools they will need to engage these texts and the kinds of argumentation that surrounds them.

Just as one cannot learn to use a second language in everyday speech in real settings simply by memorizing vocabulary words, learning correct pronunciations, and learning a descriptive grammar (i.e. when to use "vouz" and when to use "tu"), so students cannot learn the second languages of the disciplines through rote memorization of rules.

In-service and pre-service teachers are expected to meet the academic standards of the subject matters by apprenticing students into modes of reasoning, ways of using language, and problem solving that are characteristic of each subject matter. At the secondary level, coursework is normally taught by subject matter specialists who have expertise in the subject matters, but little formal training in the reading and writing demands of their disciplines, and even less formal training in the systematic ways that acquiring such reading and writing skills are intimately linked to issues of language acquisition and language socialization. As illustrated in earlier sections of this chapter, the research literature makes a strong case for the language demands of emergent and novice readers and writers in the primary and elementary grades. However, there is less representation of these issues for older students in the research literature, and very little in the required coursework of those training to become secondary subject matter specialists (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999; Alvermann, & Moore, 1991).

In the second language teaching field, scholars often speak of "interlanguages" or "approximative varieties" to talk about the characteristics of learners' speech at different points in their acquisition of that language. What is useful about looking at students' language from this perspective is that there is an underlying expectation of change over time. The learner is seen as

temporarily being at a particular stage of development. For many teachers, the shift from viewing children as bundles of deficiencies and problems to youngsters who are engaged in the remarkable process of language development will involve taking this very same perspective. This language development perspective will also lead teachers to realize that students need opportunities to hear and use as much language of the variety valued by schools as possible. Students need to be placed in situations where they have maximum exposure to the higher-level academic conversations happening in schools, rather than removed from them while their "problems" are "treated".

Working with English Language Learners

In working with English language learners (who are also sometimes referred to as bilingual students, non-native English speakers, limited English proficient (LEP), English as a second language (ESL) students, and students of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), it is essential for teachers to know that a single label often refers to students who are very different from each other in terms of their English language proficiencies. For example, English language learners may be newly arrived students who have very little knowledge of English. These students are described in Figure 5 as Incipient Bilinguals. The term English-language learner may also be used to refer to intermediate learners of English who can comprehend quite a bit of English but who are limited in their production of the language. The characteristics of these students are described in Figure 5 as Ascendant Bilinguals. Finally, the term English language learner is, unfortunately, also used to refer to fluent-functional bilinguals who are not identical to native speakers but who are, strictly speaking, beyond the "learner" stage. These individuals, described in Figure 5 as Fully Functional Bilinguals, like monolingual English-speaking students, will continue to grow in their development of English, but they have already acquired high levels of proficiency in the language.

Figure 5: Characteristics of Students Known as *English Language Learners*

Incipient Bilinguals	Ascendant Bilinguals	Fully Functional Bilinguals
Comprehend very little oral English	Generally comprehend oral English well. May have problems understanding teacher explanations on unknown topics.	Are native-like in their comprehension of oral English.
Comprehend very little written English	May have trouble comprehending written English in textbooks as well as other materials. Have limitations in academic and technical vocabulary.	Well-prepared students have no problems in comprehending most written English materials. At risk students (like at-risk monolingual English speakers) who have trouble reading have reading problems and not language problems.
Produce very little oral English	Produce English influenced by their first language. May sometimes be difficult to understand. May have trouble expressing opinions, explaining statements, challenging others.	Produce oral English effortlessly. Can carry out presentations and work effectively in groups. Can challenge, contradict, explain, etc. Traces of first language may be detected in their accent or word choice.
Produce very little written English	Written production may contain many "errors" that make it difficult for teachers to focus on students' ideas. Completion of written assignments and tests take longer.	Depending on students' previous experience with writing, written production may contain errors typical of monolingual basic writers. Disfluencies reflecting first language influence may still be present.

Ordinarily, students who are incipient bilinguals should not be placed in mainstream subject-matter classes (math, science, social studies) within which teachers must attend to their needs as well as to the needs of either monolinguals or more advanced bilinguals. Giving such students access to the curriculum requires special training. Specially designed instruction in

which content is combined with language, sometimes referred to as "sheltered instruction" or "specially designed academic instruction in English" (SDAIE), is generally recommended only for students who are at the intermediate level of language learning. When faced with one or two incipient bilinguals in their classrooms, teachers should insist that the school provide additional support for these students in both subject matter and language. This support may include native language support, newcomer centers run by trained staff, two-way immersion programs, or other options (see Genesee, 1999, for a description of a variety of options). Stop-gap practices in which teachers ask other students to translate materials or instructions to newly arrived students are seldom effective in giving students real access to the subject. Students asked to translate may not do an adequate job of communicating what is essential. More importantly, however, students asked to translate are often distracted from their own learning.

When working with intermediate students, those labeled in Figure 5 as Ascendant Bilinguals, the most important task for teachers is to determine exactly how much classroom materials students can understand. Rather than relying on standardized test scores, they should carry out informal assessments of their ELL students to see if they can follow a class explanation, understand the instructions on a work sheet, read assignments in the time allotted, etc. Once they have this information, they can reflect on strengths and weaknesses of lessons for ELLs of various language levels, and design ways to provide greater access to the lesson to ELLs WITHOUT compromising access to academic content and language. Teachers' greatest struggles will involve designing ways of assessing student knowledge in ways that do not penalize ELLs for their limitations in oral and written English production. Teachers must understand that learner errors persist for quite some time. As students have an opportunity to interact with more English speakers, and to learn through English, these errors will slowly disappear. It is not the case that more instruction in English grammar will make a significant difference. Rather than focusing on errors, teachers will want to emphasize ways of speaking and writing in the classroom or in the discipline and offer many models of both written and spoken language that students can imitate.

In the case of fluent functional bilinguals, teachers need to be especially careful. They can make few assumptions about them without taking the time to find out about their previous schooling and preparation. If such students have academic problems, it is important that teachers

not assume automatically that these problems are due to their incomplete acquisition of English. As is the case with other unprepared students who are native speakers of English, when fluent functional bilinguals have trouble reading, they need remediation in reading. If such students are basic writers and have received no instruction in organizing texts or in editing their own writing, they need instruction in these areas. Moreover, even well-prepared fluent functional bilinguals will display non-native-like features in their written and spoken English. This does not mean that they should be sent back to ESL or sheltered classrooms. Most classroom teachers are quite capable of helping all students to become better readers and writers It is the responsibility of classroom teachers to help all students become better readers and writers, especially as it pertains to the subject matter being taught (see 4.2: Supporting Students' Writing Development) .

The most important advice that can be given to teachers who have English language learners placed in their classrooms is that, with some effort and attention, it is quite possible to incorporate ELLs at the intermediate level and beyond in mainstream classes. What needs to be remembered is that there are many differences in background and preparation among English language learners. Teachers must make a special effort of getting to know these students' strengths as well as their weaknesses. Teachers will often find that in contributing to ELL's language development (e.g., providing models of good narratives, explaining how to write a lab report, modeling a good classroom presentation, giving instruction in reading word problems) they will also foster the development of the academic language of monolingual students in their classrooms.

Box 4.2
In the Classroom: SUPPORTING STUDENTS' WRITING DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Martinez teaches social studies to 7th grade students, predominantly Latino, at a middle school in central California. Some of Mr. Martinez's Latino students, like Mr. Martinez himself, come from families who have lived in California for several generations and speak only English. Some students were born in the United States to parents who immigrated from Mexico and use predominantly Spanish at home. Other students were born in Mexico or El Salvador and have lived and attended school in the United States for several years. Because of their diverse backgrounds, Mr. Martinez's students are at different levels of English language proficiency, ranging from English monolingual speakers to students who are still in the process of acquiring the language. However, in these mainstream classes, all the students can use oral English to communicate with their peers and to participate in class discussions.

Using English for *writing* in social studies, however, is much more challenging for Mr. Martinez's students. Although he is not an English teacher, Mr. Martinez values students' ability to write a persuasive expository essay and takes responsibility for his students' development as social studies writers. Because he understands that writing is a skill that is not necessarily learned along with oral language, Mr. Martinez understands that not all of his students' writing errors are a feature of second language acquisition. Many problems encountered by both his monolingual students and second language learners are the same problems faced by all inexperienced writers of expository texts, such as difficulty maintaining consistent verb tenses throughout an essay or using vague pronoun references.[2] He recognizes other errors as potential features of second language acquisition, such as students' difficulty using articles correctly or their consistent misuse of particular verb forms. Mr. Martinez also realizes that while it is important to address both general writing errors and those specific to second language development, neither kind of error always detracts from his students' ability to write effective social studies essays.

What does detract from his students' ability to write effective social studies essays is a lack of exposure to the kinds of expository essays increasingly expected of middle school students, such as assignments that call for students to compare and contrast social phenomena, to construct persuasive arguments regarding political beliefs, or to explain historical events. Mr. Martinez realizes that unless they can read and analyze models of the kinds of texts they are expected to write, his students will not be able to write them. Therefore, at the beginning of any assignment which calls for a new kind of social studies writing (compare and contrast, persuasive, explanatory, etc), Mr. Martinez shows on an overhead projected a sample essay of the kind students will be writing. He elicits comments from students on what they notice about the organization of the text, and he highlights key features such as introductory paragraphs, topic sentences, and the organization of supporting evidence. Mr. Martinez then passes out a rubric students will use to guide their own writing, and students judge the model essay based on that rubric. Next, Mr. Martinez leads the class in writing a sample paragraph together. Suggestions are elicited from the students, and Mr. Martinez serves as scribe on the overhead projector as the class discusses the suggestions, edits them, and creates a sample paragraph together. With this exposure to a model, a rubric, and practice as a class, students are then free to begin to construct their own individual essays.

Language as an Act of Identity

Teachers must also remember that language is an act of identity, which means that even with their good faith efforts and supportive environment in which to develop additional varieties of language, students may not automatically incorporate new school varieties of language into their linguistic repertoires. A large number of factors influence how students choose to use or not use the varieties of language valued in schools at any given moment. Especially at early ages, most students desire to please their teachers and be seen as good students, but they also may resist school language norms at times and/or decide they would rather maintain solidarity with

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[2] Lunsford, A., & Conners, R. (1989). *The St. Martin's handbook.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

friends who do not use language in the ways schools demand. Students use language in sophisticated ways both to work within school language norms and to resist them, at times doing both simultaneously. In fact, students sometimes use school language to resist the very norms it represents, as when one member of a class mocks the disciplinary talk of their principal, or when speakers of AAVE use "standard" English to make fun of their white teachers. And as we have seen above, students' language development continues to be influenced throughout their school years both by experiences at home and other places outside the school.

This section has argued that adding the language of school involves much more than learning a particular set of vocabulary or mastering the grammatical structures of English. This does not mean, of course, that teachers are ill-served by understanding the more formal aspects of language. Particularly since academic language needs to be acquired by almost everyone largely through reading, helping students with strategies for analyzing the texts they are reading in order to help them understand those texts, infer meanings for words used in such texts, and reflect on the grammatical forms that one encounters in them can be very helpful (Fillmore and Snow, 2002; CTE companion reading volume, 2005). Furthermore, understanding something about grammar and discourse can be a big help in assessing and improving students' writing.

Enhancing the Development of Students' Language: A Summary of Big Ideas

All teachers, no matter what subjects they teach, are engaged in the process of enhancing the continuing language development of their students. In this chapter, we have presented a number of big ideas that are basic to teachers' understanding of language differences.

- Speakers of English, like speakers of every other language in the world, use many different varieties or dialects depending on their regional and class origins. Teachers, even in classrooms consisting of all monolingual English-speakers, will encounter students who speak differently from each other and from the teacher. With a basic knowledge of regional and class language variation, teachers can understand that such differences are a natural result of human language development, and not a "problem" to be rectified.

- Dialects of English known as "standard" English also vary. Speakers of standard English from different parts of the country (e.g., Georgia, Kansas, Boston, New York City) and the world (e.g., Ireland, Australia) will use a standard language that reflects their regional

origin primarily in pronunciation and vocabulary but, in some cases, also in grammatical structure as well. In the classroom, the fact that a particular student's language is different from the teacher's or other students' does not mean that that student is speaking "substandard" or "non-standard" English. Teachers who understand that there is variation among standard English may be less likely to alienate their students by attempting to change their own standard dialects.

- Children come to school as competent speakers of the varieties spoken in their homes and communities. In the classroom, there is no such thing as a student who has not developed his own native language (although there may be students who have not developed *literacy* in their native language). Teachers who understand the nature of language development may be less likely to view their students as deficient.

- Like speakers of all other languages, speakers of English use many different registers and styles of English in their everyday lives. These styles and registers make up their speech repertoire, and speakers draw from these repertoires to carry out different types of communicative activities. In the classroom, this means that all students will use language differently according to the context in which they are using it. Teachers who understand the nature of register variation can focus on expanding students' repertoire to include the styles of various academic conventions, such as a written paper or oral presentation, without expecting students to abandon styles appropriate for other contexts, such as collaborating with a colleague, seeking advice from a teacher, or socializing with a friend.

- For most children, enhancing children's language in school will involve helping them to expand their linguistic repertoires to acquire the ways that students are expected to speak and write in school in order to discuss ideas, to understand texts, and to demonstrate their learning. In the classroom, this means that students who come from language and literacy backgrounds different from those dominant in schools will need opportunities for modeling, practice, and feedback in using language for academic purposes in ways consistent with the expectations of schools.

Preparing Teachers

As we have argued throughout this chapter, without an understanding of the big ideas about language, future and current teachers may make decisions that, unwittingly, do much harm to children and their opportunities to learn. Teachers who do not understand dialectal differences send the message to the entire class that children from certain backgrounds do not speak as well as others, or, even worse, that they do not think as well. Teachers who do not understand the multiple variations of language that every speaker is capable of may criticize or even punish students for using languages or varieties of language that may be completely appropriate in the context in which they are being used. Teachers who do not understand that students expand their school repertoire by hearing and using the language of school may segregate some students from the very language needed for them to develop that repertoire. Teachers who do not understand the unique language demands of the disciplines they are teaching may not be able to support students in learning appropriate ways to talk or write about what they are learning in that discipline.

If teachers are to see language as a central concern of their teaching and not as an "add-on" requirement for dealing with "those students" outside the mainstream, then the language education of teachers must be integrated throughout their teacher education and professional development experiences. Language must become one of the basic strands of teacher preparation parallel to traditional foundation courses on human development and teaching and learning. Additionally, an understanding of language that will allow teachers to function as communicators, educators, evaluators, educated human beings, and agents of socialization (Fillmore and Snow, 2002) must be carefully woven into other areas of teacher preparation including domains of knowledge and skill that directly support the teaching of content. Ideally, a language strand would become an integral part of the required program for all teacher candidates. Such a strand would include a specially designed introductory course in linguistics that focuses on questions and concerns central to teaching and learning in schools and that is carefully planned to support students understanding of oral language development and both reading and writing. The language strand would also be carefully woven into existing courses in the curriculum in a variety of ways.

In the sections that follow, we include suggestions for such a course, an example of a class project that has been successful in helping students to reflect on language, a list of useful texts, and a brief discussion of ways in which language information can be woven into existing courses in the curriculum.

<u>The Introductory Linguistics Course</u>

An introductory course for teachers will ideally be taught within schools of education or, if taught in a department of linguistics, by individuals who understand the practice of education well and who also understand the key issues facing educators in American schools. Such a course could begin with an introduction to noticing and talking about language, addressing questions such as what it means to know a language and how language is used in everyday life. The building blocks of language would then be introduced, including the sound system (phonology), the structure of words (morphology), and the structure of sentences (syntax). The second half of such a course would cover first and second language acquisition, language variation, and the relationship between language and literacy.

These topics to be covered in an introductory course for teachers, like those in the first portion of the course, are very similar to those covered in all introductions to linguistics. The difference is that, in covering each topic, applications to language issues that arise in connection with teaching and learning are directly made. In teaching the sound system, for example, teachers would immediately apply what they have learned to the role of phonological awareness in reading, as well as to regional differences in pronunciation and "accents" among non-native English speakers. Similarly, in learning about syntax, they learn the difference between grammatical sentences (those sentences generated by internalized rules of grammar) and notions of good school grammar, and they consider how syntactic rules are similar and different across languages. When studying morphology, they consider how the structure of words matters in teaching.

These same basic concepts are underscored in the study of first language acquisition when prospective teachers examine the developing grammars of children at different stages of acquisition. They also examine first language development at home and at school. By focusing on language variation, they are encouraged to understand why people, themselves included, speak differently at different times with different people and to reflect on the styles of speaking

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and writing that characterize the discourse communities of which they are a part. They consider the implications of language variation for teaching. When studying second language acquisition – the process of becoming bilingual – prospective teachers consider the processes of learning language in everyday interactions as well as in classrooms, and they study the different processes of learning to speak, read, and write in a second language, examining the implications for teaching second language learners.   Ideally, an introductory course for teachers will include course projects, such as the one included below, that will require students to carefully examine language.

Sample Course Project[7]

The following class project entitled "Gathering Language Samples" was used successfully with groups of beginning English teachers who enrolled in the course outlined above.

Box 4.3
Gathering Language Samples

Your purpose in gathering language samples is to bring a greater awareness of how language works. For your class project you can choose to record (always with the permission of the speakers you record) any type of language interaction which occurs naturally in a specific setting. Ideally, you will choose to focus on a type of language which particularly interests you. For example, in carrying out your teaching duties, you may wonder how you sound when you teach as opposed to how you sound when you talk with your friends. Therefore, you would record yourself teaching and interacting with friends. Similarly, you might become intrigued with the variety of English spoken by some of your students, or your fellow teachers. You could ask permission to record them under a set of conditions that preserves the naturalness of their speech. What and who you record is wide open. What is important is that you get close to some aspect of language that interests you. Examples of types of interactions and language you can record are:

1. Child language
Do you have a young child who is now acquiring language? Record your interaction or someone else's interaction with the child. Record different activities, different situations. Place a recorder near the bed when you child is falling asleep.
2. Adolescent speech
Are you intrigued with the slang used by adolescents? How creative is it? How is it used to exclude or include. Record your students. Talk to me about how you might go about this.
3. Regional varieties
Have you gotten interested in how people from different places speak? Record a speaker of a variety that appears to you to be different from your own.
4. The English spoken by non-native speakers of English

Have you become aware of special characteristics of the English of speakers who are learning English? Record a speaker who is the process of acquiring English.

5.Professional or occupational jargon
Are you aware that special groups of people use jargon? Record jazz enthusiasts, baseball fans, etc. talking about their narrow interests.

The types of language/interaction you can record are almost limitless. For example:, you can record:

- talk between intimate friends (telephone talk, gossip)
- talk in the classroom
  - teacher to student
  - teacher to whole group
  - student to student
- talk in school
  - principal talk
  - teacher to teacher talk

Transcription and Analysis
For your project, select a portion or segment of your sample. (Roughly 15 minutes of taped interaction). Transcribe, that is type out a segment of your taped recording word for word. You should use regular standard English orthography for writing out what you hear on the tape. You may wish, however, to reflect the flavor of certain kinds of features (fast speech, casual speech, southern accents and the like) by modifying the regular spelling of the items in question.
For example, you might reflect casual teen-age speech as follows:

    1.Tom: Whatcha doin Tom?
    2. Pete: Nuttin (nothing)
    3. Tom: Ya gonna
    4. Pete: Wha..?
    5. Tom: go to the game?

Notice that in this example, an interruption was indicated in Tom's utterance in line #3 by splitting this utterance with line # 4. This is pretty fancy, though. The general rule you should follow is to decide whether or not a particular feature is central to your analysis. For example, if you are interested in interruptions, you would certainly want to show where and when they take place.

Examine your sample (especially the transcribed segment) and using the information discussed in class, describe what is going on, what you hear, why, what it means, and what implications it might have for teaching and learning.

Suggested Texts and Resources

        In teaching an introductory linguistics course for teachers, the choice of texts is

particularly important and would most likely include types of texts such as the following:

<u>Box 4.4</u>

An introduction to linguistics accessible to beginners
Examples:

Linguistics for non linguists: A primer with exercises (Parker and Riley, 1999)

Texts describing children's language
 Examples:

Children's language and learning (Lindfors, 1987)
Language and learning: The home and school years (Piper, 2002)
The language of children and adolescents: The acquisition of communicative competence (Romaine, 1984)
Ways with words: language, life and work in communities and classrooms (Heath, 1983)

Texts that focus on educational issues regarding English language differences and dialects
Examples:

English with an Accent (Lippi-Green, 1997)
Out of the Mouths of Slaves (Baugh,1999)
Talking and Testifying (Smitherman, 1986)
Standard English: the Widening Debate (Bex & Watts, 1999)
Dialects in Schools and Communities (Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999)
English for your success: A language development program for African American Children, Grades Pre-K--8: A handbook of successful strategies for educators. (LAUSD & LeMoine, 1999).

Texts that focus on educational issues regarding second language acquisition and speakers of languages other than English:

How Language Are Learned (Lightbown and Spada, 1999)
Second Language Acquisition (Ellis, 1997)
Educating Language-Minority Children (August and Hakuta, 1998)
The Power of Culture: Teaching Across Language Difference (Beykont, 2002)
Learning and Not Learning English: Latino Students in American Schools (Valdés, 2001)
Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy (Brown, 2001)

Texts that focus on other aspects of language important to teachers
Examples:

Language Myths (Bauer & Trudgill, 1998)
Using Language (Clark, 1996

Introducing Language Awareness (van Lier, 1995)
Linguistics for Teachers (Cleary & Linn, 1993)

Other Resources
Examples:

American Tongues [Videorecording] (Alvarez & Kolker, 1986)
Language policy in schools : a resource for teachers and administrators (Corson, 1999).

Weaving Language Awareness into other Curricular Strands

A course such as that outlined above will provide teachers with a solid foundation that they can use to support the general intellectual and subject matter competencies of all their students. This core knowledge, however, must be further strengthened by a continuing exploration of language in other foundational courses as well as in courses focusing on particular subject matter areas. For example, in a course on child development, a unit or module or even a set or readings on the role of language in cognitive growth or of the role of language in the development of academic skills might be included. In a course on the sociological foundations of education, materials could be included that examine the symbolic significance of language (e.g., Bourdieu, 1991). A course on learning theory might explicitly state that most existing theories of learning are based on the investigation of monolingual individuals and invite students to consider the implications of this fact given that the majority of the world's population speaks more than one language. Finally, a course on assessment could include among other topics the problems raised by the use of standardized tests with non-English speaking populations (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994), the difficulties surrounding the measurement of language (August & Hakuta, 1997), and the importance of taking language difference into account when developing classroom assessments.

In the case of classes focusing on curriculum and instruction in particular subject-matter areas, language must clearly be given attention. It is important for students to make connections between what they learned in the introductory course about discourse communities and the particular discourse community of which they, as professionals and as teachers of particular subjects, are a part. They must examine how their particular disciplines (math, science, social studies) use language, and they must become aware that ways of speaking and writing in these

disciplines –in addition to the specialized vocabulary used in the discipline—make particular demands on students. For example, as Gee (2003b) points out, there are obvious linguistic differences which make it easy to pick out from the following two statements the one more appropriate for a science class: "hornworms sure vary a lot in how well they grow" or "hornworm growth displays a significant amount of variation." It is not enough, however, for teachers to learn the linguistic differences between the two statements. Teachers must also understand that the more scientific sounding of the two statements is recognizable as scientific because it applies not only to the speakers' actions (for example, observing hornworms), but rather because it also appeals to the activities, norms, and values of a particular discourse community, in this case the discourse community of biologists. In order for students to succeed at sounding like biologists, they must (a) understand how the communicative functions of biology match up with the social practices of biology and (b) view themselves as part of a biology "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For teachers, discussions about the implications for language use in their particular disciplines make most sense not as part of an "additional course" in an already-overcrowded schedule, but rather as integrated throughout their core course in curriculum and instructional practices in their subject area of expertise.

Teachers must be taught how to become aware of these particular uses of language, and they must be taught how to bring them to the level of awareness of their students. In preparing to teach math, for example, teachers must engage in the examination of the demands made by reform-oriented mathematics on children's language proficiencies. As Moschkovich (1999, p. 6) points out, in such classrooms, it is no longer enough for students to acquire technical vocabulary, to read and comprehend their textbooks, and to develop strategies for understanding word problems. Students "are now expected to participate in both verbal and written mathematical discourse practices, such as explaining solution processes, describing conjectures, proving conclusions, and presenting arguments." As will be evident, in order to succeed in such classrooms, all children must be supported in their efforts to participate in the discourse of mathematics, and all teachers must be prepared to scaffold both the development of mathematical language and conceptual development.

Elementary and secondary level teachers, whether they teach English or social studies or science or all primary-school subjects, must be prepared to create communities of learning of the

type described by Ann Brown and her colleagues (Brown, 1997; Brown and Campione, 1994, 1996; Brown et al., 1994). Such communities include activity structures that support research activities, children teaching children, and sharing information. They carefully take into account the centrality of discourse in communities of practice and the importance of distributed expertise in acquiring deep content knowledge. In order to create such communities, teachers must understand how language and discourse practices mediate learning in their classrooms and the ways that such practices can include and exclude particular children. Ideally, prospective teachers will have the opportunity to observe and assist in classrooms that model these strategies, as well as to analyze classrooms with a range of practices and outcomes.

Beyond student teaching, another way of developing this kind of applied understanding is modeled at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst where an emphasis on praxis in the learning process for teachers involves preservice teachers in a number of collaborations with practicing teachers. In a variety of courses, teachers undertake projects to improve the learning of language minority students. For example, in a course on *Assessment, Testing, and Evaluation*, one group of pre- and in-service teachers worked to develop culturally responsive ways of preparing linguistically diverse students for the mandated statewide standardized test. Another group worked with teachers and students in a local school to address the academic and social needs of Cambodian students who were not successfully engaging in academic work. In a course on *Teaching Heterogenous Classes*, teachers worked in teams with practitioners in local schools to design curriculum for linguistically diverse classrooms, including schools serving Hmong, Russian, and Spanish-speaking students that experienced different language and literacy concerns and posed different problems for teaching (Gebhard, Austin, Nieto, & Willett, 2002).

Within teacher education programs, attention to language cannot be limited to content and pedagogy courses intended for teachers of language arts or even to required courses in reading in the content areas developed for secondary teachers. In order for new teachers to attend to language consistently over the course of their careers, they must have modeled for them a consistent awareness of language by their instructors. New teachers will only become aware of the language demands made by their particular curriculum if they are guided by members of their own discipline in analyzing the kinds of receptive and productive language that is normally taken for granted in ordinary teaching. They must, therefore, be invited by their instructors to

constantly problematize language and to examine the kinds of oral and written proficiencies that are required for their students (1) to access textbooks and other written material; (2) to comprehend teacher explanations; (3) to participate effectively in group discussions; and (4) to demonstrate what they (the students) have learned in class, on classroom evaluations, and on formal assessments. Since language demands are unique to each discipline and curriculum, this can only be done in the context of students' work on their area of specialization. Preparing to teach math or English or science must also involve understanding what counts as "good" language in particular classes for particular purposes. Student teachers can only be prepared to enhance what Lindfors (1987:25) called "the remarkable continuing language development of children" if a strong and well planned language strand is meaningfully woven into every aspect of their teacher education experience.

NOTES

[1] Material for coaching language adapted from Heath (1994).

[2] These examples are from Morgan (1998)

[3] According to Smitherman (2000), the oral style of young African-American speakers is part of a complex and rich tradition that includes folk sayings, verbal interplay, and cultural rituals involving talk. Contemporary rappers, for example, build on traditional rhetorical qualities of African-American discourse including exaggerated language, mimicry, proverbial statement, punning and plays on words, spontaneity and improvisation, metaphor, braggadocio, indirection, and tonal semantics. In Smitherman's words (p. 217), "A black rap can [include] one, all, or any combination of these. Rappers must be skillful in reading the vibrations of their audience and situation, for the precise working depends on what is said to whom under what conditions." For additional information on African-American language, see Baugh (1999, 2000), Morgan (1998), Mufwene et al. (1998) and Smitherman (2000).

[4] Examples here are drawn from Lindfors (1987).

[5] Examples in this section have been adapted from Wolfram et al. (1999) and Smitherman (1986).

[6] Much confusion about the role of the first language in the education of English language learners has been generated by recent anti-immigrant and anti-bilingual education initiatives

around the country. Educating students who do not speak the societal language is a complex endeavor that involves making difficult decisions about providing them access to the curriculum during the period that they are acquiring English. For information both about controversies surrounding the prohibition of bilingual education, see the website of the Linguistic Minority Research Institute (http://lmri.ucsb.edu/index.htm) as well as to the Center for Applied Linguistics (ttp://www.cal.org/pubs/bilinged_p.html). The following works provide information about the education of linguistic minority children in general: Arias and Casanova (1993); August & Hakuta (1997, 1988); Valdés, 2001.

[7] These samples were taken from a course – 245B – taught at UC Berkeley by Guadalupe Valdés in 1991.