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ABSTRACT
        The teacher working with second-dialect students
requires knowledge of the phonology used by his students to deal, not
primarily with their pronunciation problems, but, with their reading
and writing problems. In language classrooms, priority should be
given to the aspects of language used by children that identify them
as nonstandard speakers. Grammatical differences appear to be more
significant than do differences in pronunciation both in the spoken
language and as the child is learning to read. Several works on the
phonology of Black English which are available are listed here.
(VM)

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Phonology: Its Role in the Second Dialect Classroom

Before beginning this discussion, it is necessary to
confess relief that scholars are not liable to the conven-
tional penelties for false advertising. Those who might
have read the abstract for this presentation are aware that
the original intention was to present arguments both for
and against the notion that pronunciation ought to be taught
in the second dialect classroom, and if so, how. In the
process, however, of reviewing relevant literature past and
present, the evidence became overwhelmingly convincing that
the teaching of pronunciation should not be a major concern,
at least in application, of the second dialect teacher. I
do contend, nevertheless, that a knowledge of second dialect
students' phonology is necessary to the full understanding,
on the part of the teacher, in dealing with second dialect
students' reading and writing problems.

Examples of problems and techniques in second dialect
pedagogy discussed here will be directed toward the language
learning problems of speakers of what has been termed Black
English since the bulk of current literature on second dia-
lect pedagogy has dealt with this speech. For the benefit
of visitors or non-specialists unacquainted with sociolinguistic
premices or terminology, it is sometimes necessary to remark
that Black English as a technical term is cultural not racial
in import.

Returning to the discussion, the claim that attention
paid to phonology by the second dialect teacher should not
be directed to the teaching of pronunciation, but to an in-
creased ability to discriminate between symptoms and causes
of learning problems, implies neither that phonological dif-
ferences do not exist nor that they do not have significant
social consequences. Rather, this decision has been made
on the basis of classroom priorities. In the time available
to the second dialect teacher, which structural divergences
demand the greater portion and in some cases the totality
of the teacher's attention?

In Chicago, as a consulting linguist, I worked with a
psychologist and three classroom teachers designing experi-
mental materials for an elementary language-arts program,
Early in our work, reported in (Davis et al, 1968: 2),
we decided:

> ...priority should be given to the aspects of
> the language used by the children that identify
> them as non-standard speakers. The staff was
> aware that differences exist between the two
> languages in pronunciation, vocabulary and gram-
> mar. Differing vocabulary was eliminated from
> consideration because of its short-lived nature

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and its great variation regionally. In consider-
ing pronunciation and grammar the staff felt
that in American Society there is less tolera-
tion of grammatical differences than of pronun-
ciation differences.

Other linguists suggest a similar relative priority between grammar
and pronunciation. (Labov 1969, 31) suggests a priority list of eight
items.[1] Pronunciation ranks at the bottom of his list below that of mastery
of standard grammar in written English. Later (61), after presenting several
examples of reading problems both phonological and grammatical, he directly
states his view of the relative importance of directing attention to phono-
logical and grammatical interference respectively:

> We have two distinct cases to consider. In one case,
> the deviation in reading may be only a difference in pro-
> nunciation on the part of a child who has a different
> set of homonyms from the teacher. Here, correction
> might be quite unnecessary. In the second case, we
> may be dealing with a boy who has no concept of -ed
> as a past tense marker, who considers the -ed a
> meaningless set of silent letters. Obviously the
> correct teaching strategy would involve distinguish-
> ing these two cases, and treating them quite
> differently.

Reporting on research into reading errors, (Shuy, 1969: 130-1)
relates:

> ...the greater the difference between Standard and non-
> standard grammatical items, the more likely the inter-
> mediate child is to have developed an ability to read
> it successfully aloud. Conversely, the less basic the
> difference, the less importance it appears to have for
> the child. This seems to suggest the notion that
> sound-symbol relationships are ultimately less basic
> than grammatical features, since the readers appear
> to work harder at greater differences and ignore
> smaller ones.

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1. The priority list referred to, (Labov, 1969, 31), in complete form
includes:

a.	Ability to understand spoken English (of the teacher).
b.	Ability to read and comprehend.
c.	Ability to communicate (to the teacher) in spoken English.
d.	Ability to communicate in writing.
e.	Ability to write in standard English grammar.
f.	Ability to spell correctly.
g.	Ability to use standard English grammar in speaking.
h.	Ability to speak with a prestige pattern of pronun-ciation (and avoid stigmatized forms.)

(Stewart, 1969: 174-6) gives detailed arguments against the view that reading problems stem from the great divergence between the phonology of the second dialect speaker and the phonologies of various standard dialects. In a later section, (178-182) Stewart contends, as those I cited earlier, that grammatical divergence[2] is a more crucial barrier to the mastery of reading and writing skills than phonological divergence.

Some might consider reading as a concern principally of the elementary classroom, but both from past experiences in a developmental college program and from conferences with colleagues in similar programs, I have found, as doubtless many here who have had like experiences, that entrance into a secondary or college program by no means guarantees mastery of reading skills and consequently no absolution from responsibility, on the part of those given charge of language-arts training of second dialect speakers, to attend to reading problems.

Stewart, in the article previously cited (176), writes:

Now, it is undoubtedly true that sound-spelling-meaning correspondences between spoken Negro dialect and written standard English are less regular (or, at least, less obviously regular) than between spoken standard English and written standard English. Still, they are by no means neat in even the latter case... Yet, most speakers of standard English do not seem to be hindered very much by such sound-spelling-meaning irregularities when they are learning to read...Indeed, even relatively inexperienced readers seem to be able to cope with a fair amount of sound-spelling irregularity, provided that they are familiar with the spoken forms of the words and are able to get sufficient cues for associating the written and spoken forms from the lexical and syntactic context.

Stewart suggests later in his discussion (177-8) that, even when phonological differences would seem to interfere with reading comprehension, this might not be so if the differences were regular enough. The correspondences thus set up by a non-standard speaker of English would be different, but possibly as effective.

Supporting this conclusion are two investigators who arrived at their conclusions independently and from diverse theoretical viewpoints. Working within the framework of Generative Transformational phonology, (Fasold, 1969: 68-85) advances the idea that the underlying phonological structure of Black English and the standard language are not significantly different[3] despite the great diversity in surface realizations. After a discussion of the relation of orthography[4] to abstract phonological representations, Fasold concludes (85):

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2. In (Hoffman, 1970a), I presented concrete examples of major consequences resulting from neglect of attention paid to divergence in a second dialect classroom.

> ...in the main, convential English orthography is as
> adequate for Black English speakers as it is for Standard
> English Speakers.[5]

Working within the Framework of Aspectual Phonology which claims
three systematic levels[6] of phonology as outlined by (Smith, 1968). I
reached a similar conclusion in the anlysis of the speech of a number of
Black people in Buffalo (Hoffman, 1970b: 110):

> This dialect, on the basis of its phonological structure,
> does not differ significantly at any phonological level from
> familiar dialects of English to warrant being considered anything,
> but another dialect of English.[7]

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3. After presenting rules which related what she termed Standard
White English to Child Black English of Florida, (Houston,
1969: 604) asserts:

> ...the input to the rules should properly be some
> abstract level of phonological representation
> which underlies both Black and White English phono-
> logy.

4. Aspectual theory with concerns and methodology rooted in earlier
structural linguistic theory is based upon premises different
often directly contrary to those of generative transformational
theory. Yet, a similar conviction is held in regard to the
relation of English orthography to English phonology. (Smith,
1968: 37) writes:

> It has long been the practise among linguists
> and layman alike to point out the incompleteness of the
> English writing system... However, if we see it as based
> on morphophone and graph rather than on phoneme and
> grapheme, the fit is quite surprisingly good.

5. This viewpoint is echoed more forcefully and in a slightly different
context in (Wolfram and Fasold, 1969: 42).

6. The utility of a three-level phonclogy in Generative Transformational
theory is being reexamined by at least one investigator (Schane,
1971).

7. As contrary as it may seem--the above conclusion does not preclude,
in my opinion, the analysis of such speech as a separate language
based on morphological and syntactical considerations.

(Goodman, 1969: 20-23) admits that phonological differences exist that cause learning problems, but suggest that it is worse, from the standpoint of effective learning, to ask people to read in a manner quite unnatural to them. Like Goodman, (Johnson, 1969: 152-155) finds grammatical divergence more crucial than phonological divergence more crucial than phonological divergence and also, like Goodman, recommends not teaching pronunciation for motivational reasons.

By now, some here might think this redundant refrain of recommendations to be the unrealistic product of academicians detached from the classroom situation. Any casual observer is aware of the social stigma attached to certain non-standard pronunciations used by speakers regardless of ethnos--extended sometimes even to the pronunciations of standard speakers of a regional dialect other than that of the listener.

But structural interference is not the sole problem. Johnson, earlier in his discussion (151), suggests that, trying to motivate someone to learn something before a need is recognized by the learner, is not likely to be successful. His argument does imply, however, that the teaching of any aspect of the structure of standard English to a motivated student is worthwhile.

(Labov, 1969: 32) reminds us that problems of the second dialect classroom are not only linguistic. He distinguishes between two kinds of interference:

(a)   Structural conflicts of standard and nonstandard English: interference with learning ability stemming from a mismatch of linguistic structures.

(b)   Functional conflicts of standard and nonstandard English: interference with the desire to learn standard English stemming from a mismatch in the functions which standard and nonstandard English perform in a given culture.

Dealing with both second language and second dialect learning problems, (Saville, 1971: 11-20) discusses four types of interference. One termed linguistic interference corresponds closely with what Labov in the earlier citation termed structural conflict. Labov's latter category, functional conflict, if I interpret both Saville and Labov correctly, resembles Saville's cultural interferenc. Saville adds two others: Psychological Interference and Educational Interference.

(Nonstandard Dialect, 1968: 2) lists several obstacles to motivation for the second dialect learner:

--Self-consciousness about the language of family, friends, community and socioeconomic class.
--Pressure exerted by adolescent peer groups against deviation from their accepted language pattern.
--Past censure of pupil's language which they have interpreted as rejection.

--Variations in different teachers' language patterns, resulting in confusion for pupils needing a standard model.
--Past experience with negative correction of isolated items of linguistic behavior instead of positive teaching within a total system.

(Goodman, 1969: 19) reminds us not to overlook divergence which is developmental rather than structural.[8]

Only the individual teacher can decide on his or her priorities. A possible decision is to ignore phonological considerations wherever possible and to concentrate in other areas. Alternatively, the choice might be made to devote attention to phonological matters: either to teach pronunciation despite such arguments presented here against its teaching or to follow the proposal I made earlier: that a knowledge of second dialect students' phonology is necessary to the full understanding, on the part of the teacher, in dealing with seond dialect students' reading and writing problems.[9]

Those who feel motivated, in either case, to improve their understanding of Black English phonology are referred to the following souces: (Shuy, 1969: 121-124) includes a discussion of the relation of phonology t? reading problems. (Stewart, 1919: 191-6) offers a discussion of the relative merits of various orthographies in second dialect reading instruction. (Wolfram, 1969: 57-133) presents a discussion, rather teachnical for the lay person, but with less technical summaries (94-5, 108-9, and 118-9) and a general conclusion (119-29) which are very informative in regard to how quantitative and qualitative considerations, in the selection of phonological variables, relate to social consequonces, social information, and social perception both on the part of the speaker and the listener. (Labov 1969: 33-61) is probably the most abundant single source: a valuable introduction to the more sensitive areas of Negro or Black English speach problems (33-7) prefaces a detailed inventory of phonological and other structural divergences relevant to learning problems (40-60).

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8. I wish I had had the benefit of Goodman's advice some years earlier. Two out of four sets of pronunciation excercises, which I wrote in Chicago at the request of classroom teachers, turned out later to have been problems of development rather than conflicting structures.

9. Although considered essential by many authorities to an understanding of various second dialect learning problems, an acquaintance with current research into the relationship between othography and levels of phonology is likely to be of substantial value to the teacher of English to both native and other language speakers. In this regard, the following might be read to advantage:

(McDavid, 1969: 11-2, 67).
(Goodman, 1969, 15, 20-3).
(Sustakoski, 1969: 63-73).

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