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ABSTRACT
        Linguistics has developed as an isolated discipline,
while language has historically been the central subject of
education. Linguistics need to begin contributing to the general
understanding of language by developing courses for the
non-specialist. A course conducted by the author for non-majors is
outlined. The title of the course was "Language and Society," with
two areas of study emphasized: (1) a linguistic analysis of the most
general aspects of phonology (e.g., sounds and sound classes) and
syntax (e.g., types of transformations); and (2) a sociolinguistic
consideration of variation in speech, de-emphasizing the existence of
a superior dialect. The tools of instruction for the course were a
compiled reading list, as opposed to a linguistics text, films, and
the highly developed use of the computer. The object of instruction
was to teach the complexity of language variants, as related by
similar underlying principles. The means used to teach this duality
was that of examining language variants, such as advertising
language, slang, Black English, literary language, systems of names
in different languages, and variations in gestures. The result of the
course was that the students received an accurate understanding of
language, and consequently, linguistics was used as a tool to
contribute to the education system and society. (LG)

Teaching Linguistics to Non-Linguistics Majors

W. P. Lehmann

Linguistics has been a rather isolated discipline. Instruction

has been carried on largely at the graduate level and designed for

producing further specialists. Taught at only a few universities

several decades ago linguistics soon developed a tightly concentrated

program of courses, and these in turn have come to be highly spe-

cialized. While specialists in the field identified themselves as

linguists a decade ago, today they use more restricted labels like

sociolinguist, psycholinguist, even syntactician or phonologist.

Such concentration leading to ever reduced specializations, has

brought with it various problems, the most painful of which may

result from the stringent job market; however important our dis-

cipline and however large our university systems, the number of

positions for typologists, experimental phoneticians and other highly

specialized professionals will be small.

On the other hand, language--the object of concern for lin-

guistics--has been the central subject in educational programs since

the first student sat at the other end of a log. In the medieval

period, grammar, rhetoric and logic made up the trivium--the

initial part of a student's program of courses. Even in our day the

language arts, which replaced two of the three R's, have not yet

been eliminated by courses in driving, sex education and the like.
If our concern is language, linguists should also contribute to this
central component of our educational system. One of our aims,
as Leonard Bloomfield noted in the first issue of the journal of the
Linguistic Society, should be accomplishment of our responsibilities
in the broad area he called "Linguistics and the Public Interest."

We may fulfill some of these responsibilities by beginning to
concern ourselves more actively with courses for the non-specialist.
The major expansion of linguistic training during the next decade
will most likely be such courses, which will be introduced increas-
ingly in universities, colleges, junior colleges and even high schools.

If we plan such courses we must consider their focus and their
content. I suggest that the focus be indicated by the course title I
selected: Language and Society. The title implies that such a course
be almost equally divided between attention to a linguistic approach
to the study of language and discussion of the purposes which language
meets in society.

We must also consider the role and aims of the instructor
and the assignments for the student. Since we are aiming to make
the course palatable as well as informative, we must use all the
pedagogical devices at our command, films, slides, discussion groups,

and probably most effective, the computer. Moreover, students

should be involved in linguistic problems that are real to them, not

in academic exercises. All of these proposals involve hazards,

as I will indicate on the basis of my experience with the preparation

of such a course this last year and its presentation this year. To

save time, I have reproduced the syllabus for the course and will

discuss problems I encountered in the three facets noted above:

course content, role of the instructor, role of the student.

Since linguistics has seemed formidable, almost forbidding,

I selected down-to-earth titles for the topics of the weekly class

programs, and for the lectures. Some of these may seem frivolous

to the withdrawn academician; in such matters everyone must follow

his own tastes. But I might mention that one of the least academic

titles--Milne's "Why don't you spleak painly?"--led a non-linguistics

major to look into child language, for he had been reading the Pooh

stories to his children.

More seriously, one must decide how much to teach about

language and current linguistic approaches to it. In making such a

decision we must remember that Junior High School texts and Senior

High School texts deal with transformations in their English courses.

Accordingly our students will have encountered transformational

grammar, whether well or badly presented, whether understood by
them or by their teacher. Not surprisingly, at least to anyone teaching
languages or linguistics, the earlier courses seem to lead to little
comprehension. Accordingly one must make a judgment whether
sociolinguistic discussions are to be based on a poor understanding
of linguistics and language, or whether a rapid introduction to a
linguistic analysis of language is to make up the first part of the
course.

I decided to use almost half of the course to present a lin-
guistic analysis. In this part of the course I repeatedly told the stu-
dents that I am not aiming to make them into linguists. I did however
insist that they learn to transcribe--with happy results. Students
who had taken a number of courses in linguistics, even a semester
course in phonetics, learned with great satisfaction in a few weeks
how to write English in accordance with a phonemic transcription.
We will hear more about the autonomous phoneme later. If anyone
considers the approach obsolete, I suggest that he look at the recent
publications of William Labov, or examine some of the studies of
experimental phoneticians, like Victoria Fromkin, or note the
remarkable findings of investigators of aphasia, like Hanna Ula-
towska. Phonology, like language in any of its components, is not

a simple system.   Accordingly, in our scientific statements we would

not present the phonological component of language as totally independent

of the other components.   But an introductory course in linguistics

has other problems.   We must divest our students of the notion that

spelling represents what they say.   We also do them a favor when

we equip them with an understanding of sounds and sound-classes

which will help them better to understand their problems in learning

a second language.

Syntax, by contrast, is simple and entertaining for most

students, possibly the most pleasant contribution of transformational

grammar.   Anyone can diagram a simple sentence like: It's easy.

Something pleases John.   Anyone can also draw a tree for such

sentences.   We run into problems, however, when we want students

to diagram sentences like:

John is easy to please.

John is eager to please.

By contrast with the problems encountered in diagramming such

sentences, drawing trees for the "kernels" is just as simple, whether

the sentences are high or low in the tree.   Students take to the

drawing of trees with great alacrity.   They become impatient,

however, when the transformations are presented in inordinate

detail. Accordingly one must avoid the temptation of the uncertain

to show off. One must also avoid the pedant's love of obscure terms,

though oddly some students seem amused by current linguistic

jargon--terms like gapping, tough-movement and the like. Mastery

of such terms is however no more essential to an understanding of

language than mastery of terms every linguist used to know, like

the names of the various laws which entrepreneurs in contemporary

jargon might well have difficulties discussing: Thurneysen's law,

or Porson's, or the several laws celebrating the name of Sievers.

Focussing on language rather than linguistics, not to speak of

arcane linguistics, also has important implications for choice of

textbooks. I know of no single textbook for a course entitled:

Language and Society; accordingly, I simply made out a reading

list without requiring the purchase of any text. You may propose

other textbook selections, or point out preferences. I will give

briefly my reasons for not including three books that may seem well-

suited for such a course. Langacker's Language and its Structure

(New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968) one of the most widely

used elementary texts, seems to me too greatly concerned with

accounting for linguistics, rather than explicating it or discussing

language. Wardhaugh's Introduction to Linguistics (New York:

McGraw-Hill, 1972) strikes me as workmanly, but too involved in

details rather than principles.   Chomsky's simplest book in my

estimation, Language and Mind (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovano-

vich, enlarged edition 1972) is to my surprise too difficult at this

level.

Other materials for the course, such as films, could also

be discussed at length. The MLA-CAL films are excellent, but

should be brought up to date.   Still, they give a graphic presentation

of certain topics which an instructor finds hard to equal with his

chalk and blackboard, or his overhead projector, or even a computer.

The most distinctive feature of my own course is the use of

the computer. Its facilities, as well as assistants and programmers,

have been made available by Project C-BE, which I would like to

credit here, as well as its principal investigators, John J. Allan III

and Joseph J. Lagowski.* Students have been greatly impressed

with their computer modules, even students with a humanistic bent

who were very skeptical of the machine. Seated at their computer

terminals, students receive direct and intensive instruction that is

hard to equal. I have no doubt that in a few years many courses in

the humanities and social sciences will be computer-based, as also

in the physical sciences and engineering. But there are hazards.

Among the most troublesome for the lordly instructor are

the constraints imposed by a temperamental machine. You can't

talk to it, yet; it only obeys programs. You thus must talk to the

programmer; but he too doesn't really control the machine--he

works with it. Programs have their limitations; materials must

therefore be devised which the programmer, the programs and

the machine will accept. The machine has a restricted memory,

and other limitations; moreover, it may collapse for numbers of

reasons. Still, the computer gives students guided instruction in

such matters as the derivation of sentences, and they can work at

their own speed--the course can be self-paced. Unless one sits at

a terminal, however, visualization of the possibilities may be

difficult, even from pictures of individual sequences on the CRT.

The possibilities however are so encouraging that in my opinion our

educational institutions will soon have computerized instruction at

all levels; and the same capabilities will shortly thereafter be

available for television sets in the home.

But there are problems. One problem results from opinions

on how the computer should be used. By one view the computer

with its CRT and other terminals will take over the role of all

teaching materials: textbook, blackboard, film, and virtually even

the instructor. By another view, the computer should be used for

only those purposes which cannot be as capably managed with the

help of films, slides, xeroxes, dittoed materials, and the like.

This second view, under which the course has been prepared, labels

all ineffective uses of the computer as page-turning. I can't really

define page-turning; but I can tell you that it's an unpardonable defect,

something like leprosy in Biblical days, or like perjury in political

life before the term "inoperative" was adopted. Because of page-

turning propensities we suffered various traumas in working up the

course; the objectors to one early proposed module may well have

been correct, because well-prepared films are indeed excellent for

teaching phonetics and phonology. If support continues, we will try

to prepare phonological modules which do a better job of involving

students in phonological study than do films, even a compelling film

like that illustrating the movements of the articulatory organs of a

speaker, a part of whose cheek had been surgically removed.

We also hope we may at sometime have ample computer

memory so that our grammatical descriptions are not modified, or

determined by the available hardware. Our current syntactic descrip-

tion is comparable to the grammar of Chomsky's Syntactic Structures

of 1957 rather than that of Aspects of 1965, let alone a later analysis.

I may still mention that the adjustment of grammatical descriptions
to computer possibilities is an exhilarating intellectual exercise
which dispels any notion that elementary presentations of linguistics
and language analysis lack challenge. I hope that the energies of
many instructors will come to be involved in such problems, for in
this way we may hope for improved solutions in teaching the problems
encountered in linguistics. Respect for man and for the capabilities
of the human mind will not be diminished by such activities.

I have spent most of our time on the linguistic problems rather
than the sociolinguistic problems. In a sense these are less difficult
to handle, except again for the need to restrict the topics for peda-
gogical effectiveness. My suggestions for term papers may illuminate
my aims in the course.

We have selected bilingualism as the topic for teaching
students to understand and accept variation in speech. This is one
of the greatest problems facing educators at present. It is frightening
to hear of university instructors who label variations from some pro-
posed standard as inferior; the proposed standard is generally their
own. Such an uninformed position on the use of language in society
is as devestating as is the treatment of Mexican Spanish, Chicano
English, Black English and other variant forms of language as inferior.

I might add that the contrasting view, that "anything goes" or that

in the literal sense "you should leave your language alone," shows a

similar misunderstanding of communication in society, and betrays

similar deficiencies in the education of its proponents. Yet it is

not so humanly and socially destructive as is the deprecation of the

speech of another person, especially a child.

A few minutes are totally inadequate for discussing some of

the most highly complex problems of contemporary society. Since

time is short, I will simply state that the devastating effects resulting

from downgrading speakers of Black, Chicano, German, Italian,

Portuguese or whatever variants of English result not because their

speakers have difficulties with so-called standard English, but because

human beings in positions of authority, such as teachers, indicate

that the variants in which a child expresses itself normally are inferior.

To convey to students in the course a notion of the complexity of

language, and yet of the similar principles underlying all forms of

language we will examine variants such as advertising language,

slang, especially student slang, variations of "language according

to uses" as in Black English, variations "according to use," such as

literary language, systems of names in different languages, and

variations in gestures. Here too we can only deal with carefully

selected topics. We would like to illustrate that just as advertising

language, or literary language, makes use of certain rules, so does

for example Black English.

Every speaker of English, deletes forms of BE when intro-
ducing adjectives. Thus the following sentence is derived by a trans-
formation involving the deletion of the copula and a relative pronoun:

>The students exemplary in carrying out their experi-
>
>ments were given scholarships.

This sentence is based on an underlying string which in fuller form
would yield:

>The students who were exemplary in carrying out
>
>their experiments were given scholarships.

And if adjectives such as 'exemplary' are not accompanied by a
modifier, we say:

>The exemplary students were given scholarships.

Every speaker of English produces utterances hundreds of times a
day involving this transformation.

A speaker of Black English applies a BE deletion transformation
in additional patterns when he says:

>She wow!   for   "She is wild."
>
>He gon' try to get up.   for   "He is going to try to
>
>get up."

We hope that in observing the variation of such transformations,

and in the application of linguistic processes like deletion, whether

by means of a transformational framework or some other grammatical

approach, students will achieve an accurate understanding of language,

the understanding one would hope to find in anyone claiming to be

educated. If the achievements of linguistics can be applied in this

way, linguistics will make great contributions to our educational

system and to our society. Carrying out such aims will also give

linguistics, and linguists, a great deal to do.