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AUTHOR Shuy, Roger W.
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ABSTRACT

The study of language variation has brought linguists closer to some of the problems which concern our schools, namely, the teaching of reading, writing, and speaking. Through variability studies, answers can be found to questions about how to delimit styles, how to effect acceptability in school writing and talking, how to appreciate the dynamics of variation in the language of others, how to sequence language materials, how people set themselves off from each other through language, or how subtle variation between spoken and written language forms can cause problems in composition and reading. Information about language variation may be used to help rethink the education of teachers, the development of instructional materials and techniques, and the building of educational programs of various sorts. Linguists must try to gain influence within the field of education if they want to participate in effective educational planning. Three plans are suggested by which linguists can work for change from within the existing education system: (1) infiltration, (2) the jealousy motif, and (3) management control. The study of variation will also help to broaden the training programs of linguistics students, thereby providing them with more versatility as they approach the job market. (Author/PM)

What is the Study of Variation Used For?

Roger W. Shuy
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A few years ago a group of English professors met in Columbus, Ohio to discuss the value of literary criticism in the academic arena. The basic question, put indelicately by one of the participants, was, "What is the point of all this time killing, anyway?". Despite heroic efforts on the part of many of the participants, the general conclusion was that the major function of literary criticism was to teach graduate students to become literary critics who will then teach other graduate students to become literary critics. As the chairman of one Big Ten University, English Department put it, "We are all playing an academic game and merely teaching other people to play an academic game."

One of the inevitable developments in any field of study is the tendency toward narcissism. Academic fields, perhaps even literary criticism, usually originate in a practical need, either in society in general or within an already existing field of study. The social sciences are a case in point. At one time, they were heavily service-oriented. But as social workers began to contemplate the details and complexities of their work, determining what was their territory and what was not, they quite naturally elaborated a theory of the social sciences leading, in some quarters, to an almost total separation of the theoretical phase, sociology, from the practical phase, social work.

In linguistics also there was great concern for practical problems in the forties and fifties, which could be characterized as a time of strong interest in real problems of language teaching, especially in teaching English to foreigners, Bible translation and interest in relating linguistic theory and research to the concerns of psychology and anthropology. The great period of theoretical concern set in during the sixties and is with us yet today. This emphasis on theory parallels what happened in the social sciences and in many aspects of the humanities in earlier days. Many academic fields which once addressed themselves to everyday problems in real life settings grew more and more detached from

these problems as the important work of theory-building took place. However necessary and desirable this theory-building was, it led to separations within the disciplines. Thus, sociology split from social work as academic entities, literature departments frequently developed a caste system which relegated service-oriented or "how to" courses to graduate assistants, to lower ranked faculty or to another department entirely. It is small wonder then, that on college campuses the recent renewal of interest in values, in services and in relevance has hit the theoretical phases of various disciplines very hard. They are being accused of elitism and of developing elaborate academic games which are to be explained and communicated only to the elite few, who, having scaled the required intellectual heights, can spend the rest of their lives as medical specialists in the third rib on the right, as literary critics with a specialty in George Herbert's later poems or, alas, as linguists who specialize in word-initial semivowel alternation in the Rigveda.

Apparently, there are simultaneous contradictory forces which are at work in the disciplines at all times: the need to solve a real problem versus the need to appear so independent of that problem as to seem to be self-sufficient. These forces provide many of the interesting paradoxes which ultimately embarrass the various fields. The field of linguistics has been embarrassed, for example, many times in recent years. It was embarrassed in the late fifties to be caught with a rather superficial theoretical base, with a focus entirely on phonology rather than grammar and a naive view of research design by which it was actually believed that by interviewing in depth one native speaker of a foreign language one could actually write a grammar which would describe the speech of all the native speakers of that language. More recently linguistics has been embarrassed by accusations of elitism.

One of the more exciting things that is happening in the academic world today is the small steps we are beginning to make toward destroying this elitism. Although the trend for many years was toward ever-increasing degrees of specialization with concomitant scorn for all that was not specialized, such a position is less well received in today's world.

In the January, 1971 issue of The Journal of Internal Medicine, for example, C. P. Kimball editorialized that the field of medicine has too long lived

in isolation from the lower socio-economic bracketed patient. He urged medical training of a sort that starts with the culture and language of a patient where he is, not where the physician is. He urged that the medical profession abandon its elitist, witch-doctor status if it is serious about its lofty aims of doing good for people who are unlike themselves.

The re-discovery that there is a larger world out there somewhere has been highlighted in recent federal government, management problems. Warren Bemis has observed that most of the younger Watergate witnesses look and act alike because they are really spiritual or ghostly doubles--dopplegangers--of their bosses. But the doppleganger effect is by no means limited to the federal government. Almost any bureaucracy produces it--corporations, universities, hospitals, even academic fields, where leaders tend to select key assistants, students or colleagues who resemble them for they feel that the verification, analysis and decision-making of kindred spirits will do a better job of furthering their own causes.

The major danger of such a practice is that the leader becomes over-protected as he receives complete loyalty and he develops the vulnerability that comes from such dependence. The ultimate implication of the doppleganger effect in the federal government has become widely known and it might serve as an important beacon to those of in academia. It was John Mitchell who unashamedly testified that all of his effort and concern was on re-electing Mr. Nixon to the neglect, in fact, of ethics, human dignity and, apparently, the law. Academic narcissism is certainly a parallel to Mr. Mitchell's loyal singlemindedness. The President's practice of surrounding himself with people like Mr. Mitchell and other dopplegangers most certainly must be questioned. Those of us concerned with language variation have already taken an important step away from such narcissism, for our origins are from a diverse set of fields, our concerns are by definition dynamic and pluralistic, our methodologies partake of the best aspects of several different fields of study, our unit of measure is the gradatum rather than an oversimplified polarity-set and our attitude is at least pointed in the direction of reasonable practicality. No accusation of the doppleganger effect can be made of a field which was born in such diversity (linguistic theory, ethnography of communication, creolization and dialectology,

to name a few) and which continues to bring together people from such broad interests. Controversies over methodology continue to rage, clearly indicating a healthy state of non-orthodoxy. The framework of static linguistics is clearly being affected by this recent flurry of interest on variation, realistic context and the re-examination of our assumptions and this is clearly one of the things that variation is good for. Linguistic theory, itself, will be one beneficiary.

Another area to benefit from a focus on variation is that of education. Historically speaking, it is reasonably safe to observe that linguistics has had, at best, only a minor influence on native language education in the United States. To be sure, teaching materials for beginning readers now are beginning to recognize that reading is a language processing operation and texts are beginning to be written in language which approximates more natural speech. Some language arts programs are even beginning to stress linguistic pluralism and place proper value on language variation, but much, if not most, of the focus of the linguist in American education in the past has been negative. That is, he has chosen to address himself to what is wrong with the system as it is rather than to enmesh himself in the question of what constructive contribution he can make to the field. The structural linguists' attack on traditional grammar in the forties and fifties was largely a description of what was wrong with the way traditional teachers were teaching about language. The stance was one of laughing at the atrocities of the stereotyped, old-fashioned, prescriptive school teacher and, however clear and accurate such criticisms were, they most certainly could not be considered tactful.

Teachers concerned with the preservation of traditional values also saw in structural linguistics a threat to the status quo. The linguists were loud in their rehtoric but were generally unable to compliment their criticisms with a positive program of replacement. This situation is not unparalleled in the field of educational change. The apparent excessive claims of behavioral psychologists, for example, have been under constant and often convincing attack by advocates of a cognitive approach but the cognitivists have yet to provide a convincing programmatic alternative to all of the idols which they are attempting to destroy. This is not to say that they are wrong in their criticisms--only that the process seems to call for attack and criticism before the development of a viable and tested alternative.

The advent of generative grammar in no way improved the interrelationship of linguistics and educational concerns. Almost before the structuralists had rallied themselves together to produce an alternative strategy for the application of linguistics to school problems, *the revolution from within* linguistics began to discredit any potential application. To make matters even more difficult, generative theory changed (and continues to change) very rapidly during the sixties and seventies making a shambles of any effort to relate it to the classroom. This is not to say that nothing from structural or generative grammar has proven useful to the classroom. On the contrary, a great deal has been learned about how language seems to work and about the undertakings and attitudes concerning language which a teacher might develop. In addition to factors such as those mentioned earlier, however, linguistics tended to focus its potential usefulness on language universals, deep and surface structure relationships and rules which generally characterized the innateness of native language. No one can doubt the usefulness of such study to linguists, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers, but one might seriously question the usefulness of such information to elementary and secondary school children. To put it another way, one might seriously ask what good it will do a child to learn how to talk about what he has already learned how to do. On the other hand, the general problems addressed by the teacher are concerned with helping children learn to write, read and speak better. The teacher might seriously question how information which explains extant competence might contribute answers to these problems. Naturally, a teacher might be expected to know these things, for it is her responsibility to know many things related to how a child has acquired his language, how language problems can be accurately diagnosed as well as the theoretical underpinnings of language production, but there is little reason to expect children to improve their writing, reading or speaking by studying how it is they know what they already know. It may contribute to their general knowledge of the universe but it is unlikely to have the immediate impact expected of the schoolroom.

With the relatively recent developments in the study of language variation we have come a bit closer to the sorts of problems which also concern the schools. This focus on variability makes a better match with the setting in which

a child can be found than its recent predecessors did. Most children in the U. S. are surrounded by people who speak with variation which stems from differences in social status, geography, sex, age and style. They are faced with conflicting pressures to conform to the norms of their peers, their parents, their school and their region. Often they are placed in conflict with a value system which contrasts to that of the school. In addition, some children are in conflict with the language and culture of textbooks and instructional strategies and the mismatch between their lifestyles and those of the educational process is too great for them to overcome. They may be placed in further conflict by developments of minority awareness which may militate against school of majority norms in a way in which they may become politically involved to their own disadvantage.

Research on variation which has been done recently in urban language in the U. S. (Labov 1966, 1968; Shuy, Wolfram and Riley 1967; Wolfram 1969, 1971; Fasold 1972), in language attitudes (Frender and Lambert 1972; Fishman 1971; Williams 1970, 1971; Tucker 1971; Shuy and Fasold 1973), in language planning (DasGupta 1970; Rubin and Jernudd 1972; Rubin and Shuy 1973), in the ethnography of speaking (Abrahams 1970; Bauman and Sherzer, in press) and in pidginization and creolization (Hymes 1971) are the types of research which bear more closely on the problems faced by the schools. One reason why such studies bear directly is that they all deal with concrete rather than abstract language situations, and that they face squarely the fact of variability and deal with it as a kind of systematic and predictable continuum.

The application of such research appears to be, once again, promising evidence of the applicability of linguistics to educational problems. An enthusiasm and optimism much like that of the early days of structural and generative grammar is once again upon us and now is the time to prepare for a strategy of planned application. We must avoid the overenthusiasm of the friends of linguistics who sometimes promise more than we can offer. We must avoid the temptation to be nasty or arrogant as we face the linguistic ignorance of the education system and we must be careful to build a complete strategy rather than a partial one.

The study of language variability gets to the heart of many problems involving writing, reading, and talking. It is in this area of variability that an-

swers can be found to perplexing questions about how to delimit styles, exactly how to effect acceptability in school writing and talking, how to appreciate the dynamics of variation in the language of others, how to sequence language materials, how people set themselves off from each other through language, or how subtle variation between spoken and written language forms can cause problems in composition or reading. Native language teaching must deal with these and similar issues, but has generally lacked the tools to do so.

Information about language variation may be used to help re-think the education of teachers, the development of instructional materials and techniques and the building of educational programs of various sorts. If linguists really have things to say about pedagogy, and if they can overcome the bad feelings caused by arrogance and over-promise of linguists in the past, they must do it by starting with the teacher's and children's problems, not with a stance of aloofness. Furthermore, they must plan to approach the problems of the classroom in many different ways and at many different levels at the same time.

One might hypothesize, for example, that what linguists should do is to pressure teacher training institutions to re-think their curriculum, placing language center at the center rather than as the peripheral stepchild. As fine as this might sound, reality will soon make very clear that it is very difficult for education departments at universities to change even if they know they must.

There are predictable reasons why it is difficult to work for change within the education system. Teacher training institutions, like other institutions, tend to defend against change. Drastic changes in teacher preparation (such as putting language at the core of the education of elementary teachers) suggest drastic staffing problems. How do we incorporate language training (general linguistics, language acquisition and language variation should provide the bare minimum) without overburdening the training staff and reordering certification requirements? And how do we deal with the buck-passing that ultimately stops with the teacher, who gets blamed for all the failures in her training and her bureaucracy simply because there is no one else to blame the failure on except the children? What do we do about the compensatory education advocates who claim that if children do not learn it is because they have not gotten up to the social and cognitive level of the school? Despite decades of saying that we

start with children where they are, the child is usually blamed for his own failure. Changing from within may be a great deal more difficult than even the most optimistic observer might suggest. The system may not admit that it is in trouble. To change it will involve subtlety far beyond anything linguists have suggested to date.

If the preceding analysis is accurate, the tactic for establishing a temper for innovation must be carefully and solidly built. Linguists who are concerned about education must go to education rather than expect education to come to them. But not only must they go to education, they must also become accepted by education. This observation is not a popular one among those linguists who hold education in particular scorn. To be sure, education has displayed many weaknesses and produced many failures. But the simple truth of the matter is that the field of education also has its value systems, its establishment and its pecking order. An outsider may be treated with dignity, even heeded, but the ultimate success of his suggestion will depend on political factors in education, just as it does in any other field of study.

One obvious strategy for establishing an entry for specialists in language variation in education is for such linguists to become accepted by the educationists as functioning members of their establishment. A linguist on a commission which deals with requirements for teacher certification is in a strategic position to suggest that language courses become central to the training of reading and language arts teachers. A linguist on the evaluation of early childhood education programs being developed by educational laboratories and research and development centers is in a strategic position to effect changes in the staffing and focus of such projects. A linguist in the administration of a city school system is in a strategic position for implementing changes suggested by his field in the humanizing of native language instruction. Not all linguists, of course, will be able or willing to accept such roles, even as a supplementary aspect of their primary activities in linguistics. But if linguistics is to gain influence within the field of education, it is likely that some linguists will need to be so motivated. Such a strategy will involve their going to education with their ideas, presenting these ideas from the viewpoint of education rather than linguistics, expressing these ideas in terms and concepts which will be likely to be

understood and valued, developing a tolerance for the naivete of educators about linguistics, and admitting their own naivete about certain understandings and skills held by educators.

In order to engage in effective educational planning it will be necessary for linguists to effect a rather major attitude shift in themselves. It has been popular, especially in the past decade, for linguists to delimit that which and only that which they, as linguists, are qualified to say. Perhaps this has come about as a healthy reaction against the overpromise of linguists in the forties and fifties. Perhaps it developed as a by-product of the attempt by linguistics to establish its own identity and territory. Linguistics as it was known in the fifties was very difficult to describe for it seemed to partake of many other fields and had little identity of its own. With the development of a more sophisticated theory came a natural abstractness which placed a gulf between linguistics and other fields as well as between practical concerns within linguistics. Meanwhile, there are always those who either, with naive altruism or with a more cynical opportunism, try to capitalize on the prestige of a field before its theory is well-enough developed or merely in an effort to make use of the current fads.

Regardless of its origins, however, this tendency of linguists to disqualify themselves from having anything to say about the educational relationships of linguistics has tended to widen the gulf that exists between the schools and linguistic knowledge. One predictable outcome of such a gulf is that the university course usually called introduction to linguistics is almost always set up for linguistics majors only. Those who major in sociology, psychology or education must approach the field just as linguists do in order to get anything out of it. In this, linguistics departments can be accused of a kind of compensatory education model in which the learner (in this case, the educator) is told that he must adjust to linguistics rather than causing linguistics to adjust to him. Many linguists have argued that educators frequently overlook one of the basic tenets of education--starting with the learner where he is. On the other hand, it appears that linguistics is often quite guilty of the same sort of practice. Likewise, linguists accuse some educators of dealing with children from different (often minority) cultures as deficient rather than different. Yet a linguistics which per-

ceives the objectives and methods of educators as deficient rather than different from the objectives and methods of linguistics is surely deserving of the same sort of condemnation. The application here is that if linguists are really concerned about relating their field to other disciplines such as education, they must set aside old biases against non-linguists and accept the vulnerabilities and insecurities involved in operating out of their own depth. For too long linguists have assumed the role of isolative egotism, sitting in critical judgment of other fields but not venturing out to them with what linguistics has to offer.

It has been argued that the study of language variation in real social contexts stands a better chance of being useful to education than any other focus in linguistics. It has also been noted that major handicaps to any progress in this area have come from the linguists' own attitude toward education, from skepticism stemming from past atrocities and over-promise of linguists and from educational entropy. An illustration of this entropy may be seen in the current situation involving standardized tests in reading. A great deal of pressure has been placed on test manufacturers to change their tests to conform to more modern findings. Certain publishers respond with mild interest but explain that their tests still sell very well and that they do not intend to stop producing a good seller. The only strategy to get these tests changed is to lobby for boycotting the test--an economic solution to an economic problem. The educational planning involved in such an issue is that which addresses itself to consciousness raising, organizing and communication of the problem to the appropriate opinion leaders. Similarly, vested interests in education departments will continue to hamper change there. If it is true that innovation comes either from the realization that one is in trouble or from the jealousy of neighboring products, the strategy for change becomes clear. Either we convince the educators that they are in trouble or we build on their tendency toward jealousy of their neighbors.

Both strategies tend to plan from <u>within</u> the system. An alternative approach would be to devise a teacher preparation program totally outside the conventional education department framework. One such program which stresses language variation is currently being developed at The University of California

at San Diego, under the direction of Hugh Mehan. The program is currently in its very beginning stages and it is still too early to evaluate either its success or its potential for impact. In essence, a select group of future teachers is being trained for certification in the content areas most relevant to elementary teaching in the U.S. (mathematics, social studies, language arts, and science), while the more traditional education courses are brought in as supplementary services. The base is in the content areas, two of which, language and social studies, are heavily sociolinguistic in orientation. Such a program bears careful watching for, if it is successful, it may signal an efficient method of overcoming the educational lock-step in teacher preparation which is caused by the self-perpetuation of vested interests.

Perhaps the more difficult task is one which tries to work for change from within the existing education system. There are predictable reasons why it is difficult to work for change within the education system. In the United States teacher training institutions are just that--institutionalized entities. Drastic changes in teacher preparation (such as putting language at the core of the education of elementary education majors rather than at the periphery) suggest drastic staffing problems.

On the assumption that teacher preparation institutions either do not realize that there is a problem or that their commitment to the status quo is too great to permit changes which would allow easy access to training in sociolinguistics, at least three plans are available for working within the system: infiltration, the jealousy motif and management control.

(a) Infiltration. This plan puts the major pressure on the linguist. He must utilize his training and manage to fit into an already existing educational system (in this case, a teacher training institution) by adjusting his concerns to the expectations and needs of the department in which he works. This means that a person trained in linguistics may also need to teach courses in educational methods, philosophy and research for which to this point he has been only marginally prepared. The major problem is in being hired in the first place. A second problem is in deferring his gratification or in waiting for change to come about slowly. In this, linguists as a whole have had little experience, at least until the recent job market decline. In many departments, such as Eng-

lish literature, well trained specialists may have to teach general introductory courses for several years until their departmental seniority allows them the privilege of teaching the area of their specialty. This has not been generally true of linguists until rather recently, largely because the field was expanding as a field and new graduates found little difficulty teaching their specialty almost as soon as they were hired. Today we have a different situation. Like the literature specialists who are forced to teach freshman composition (for which they were poorly prepared, if prepared at all), linguists are forced to teach in fields only marginally relevant to their training. My point here, however, is training in language variation is closer to educational concerns than apprenticeship early-teaching areas usually are for specialists in other fields. To be sure, the training of linguists might well gear itself to this eventuality.

In terms of long range planning, however, the strategy of infiltration will be a slow and arduous one. Its success will probably depend on how seriously the task is taken by the linguist, how well he can survive in an "alien" climate, how well he is accepted by his colleagues and how well he does his job.

(b) The Jealousy Motif. One of the major motivations for educational innovation is one in which a system changes primarily because another system which has status has already implemented that change. Innovation in suburban schools systems in the U. S. frequently follow this model. If the schools of Winnetka, Illinois, Shaker Heights, Ohio or Montgomery County, Maryland innovate in a certain manner, it can be expected that other school systems will be sure to follow. In an effort to test the jealousy motif as a model for educational planning involving sociolinguistic concerns, various sociolinguists at Georgetown University have been working with in-service education in the Norfolk, Virginia public schools. In practice, the project was to assist in the desegregation effort of that school system by providing teachers, especially white teachers who had not previously encountered black children, with knowledge of the communication system of minority children. Less obviously, it was an attempt to build positive attitudes on the part of teachers toward children whose language and culture were foreign to them. For the purposes of educational planning, however, the project served as an experiment in testing

the jealousy motif in a new and interesting manner. The question was: Can educational change be brought about in local teacher training institutions by building into a major school system's in-service program features which are seen as desireable, therefore transportable, to the pre-service programs? In other words, the strategy was to provide such an attractive in-service program that the local universities will want to modify their curriculum to keep up with Norfolk's expectations.[1] It is still too early to evaluate the success of this experiment in utilizing the jealousy motif, but there are many early signs that much of our in-service work will be continued by local institutions in the future.[2]

(c) Management Control. A third type of planning for educational change in sociolinguistics is one which observes the importance of the well-known principle of innovation which recognized that for successful innovation, the innovator must be protected by those in authority over him. The process of educational innovation may begin at any place in the system, but unless the people in control understand it and at least tolerate it, the innovation is not likely to survive. An example of past error, now rectified, in this matter may be found in much of the U. S. Office of Education support of Title XI summer workshops to upgrade the knowledge and skills of teachers. Many of these workshops were crash courses in linguistics for teachers who had been trained before the newer findings were made available. Typically, workshop directors selected only those teachers who were the brightest, youngest, most flexible and daring. In short, they usually selected innovators who absorbed the information, returned to their schools and were considered wildly radical in every attempt at implementing what they had just learned. They were in no way protected in their innovation and often became discouraged, if not embittered. Different planning might have yielded better results. But, as everyone who has labored with educational administrators knows, this is a difficult group with whom to work. For one thing, they are pressured by groups of various sorts, many of whom are political in their concerns for education and are obsessed by a complex with which linguists are thoroughly familiar.

To this point we have addressed ourselves to plans for reaching teachers and plans for changing both pre-service and in-service training. Obviously the planning suggested is only suggestive and is by no means comprehensive or

complete. But mention must also be made of strategies to implement sociolinguistic principles at other levels. These strategies for extending the influence of sociolinguistic principles to the schools involve the achievement of power. Occasionally the educational system will look to "outsiders" for advice but to assume implementation of that advice one must become, as it were, a part of the establishment. The ineffectiveness of the major critics of education who advocate its complete overthrow displays a sharp contrast to the power exerted in the area of consumer rights by Ralph Nader, whose strategy has been to work more or less from within the system. The strategy being suggested here may not be as dramatic as the one generally used by Nader, for there is considerably less public dissatisfaction about quality education than there is about faulty manufacturing; but it is closer to his approach than to out and out revolution.

In addition to the preparation of teachers, linguistics has many things to offer the education process in the area of teaching materials. If the influence of language variation in the schools follows the examples set by its predecessors, structural and generative linguistics, we will soon be seeing a spate of programs labelled the sociolinguistic approach to reading, sociolinguistic language arts, the sociolinguistic approach to oral language, etc. It would appear that now is the time to plan the potential usefulness of language variation to the development of educational materials before the field becomes faddish and the opportunists swoop in with still another set of lofty but unrealizable claims.

It would seem obvious that the impact of linguistics on the development of materials geared to improve the written composition of children from various minority groups would hinge on a number of factors: effective and accurate research, selection of an appropriate vehicle for dissemination, an assessment of the potential public reations to such materials (Will they be thought to exploit, single out or degrade the potential audience?) and a clear estimate of how such materials might differ from or be similar to materials developed for the non-target audience. Fortunately, linguistics has already come to grips with some aspects of these situations both in the teaching of standard English and in the teaching of reading. Although controversy still rages among linguists con-

cerning whether or not the schools should offer to help speakers of nonstandard English or any type (including Vernacular Black English) learn to speak English according to school norms, all indications from research surveys (Cazden 1969; Hayes and Taylor 1971; Taylor 1973) show that minority communities favor such acquisition.

One last area in which language variation can play an important role in education is in the area of evaluation, particularly in standardized testing. The United States is in a national mood which stresses accountability in education and this accountability is frequently determined by measurements such as nationally-normed standardized tests. Such tests frequently ignore expertise which linguistics can provide in order to offer a more accurate and fair assessment of the child's skills and cognitive abilities. Several specialists in language variation are currently at work on such concerns and their work will be of great assistance to educational evaluation in the future.

To this point we have stated that the study of variation is good for the field of linguistics itself and for the field of education. The third area of usefulness is one which, though essentially selfish, grows naturally out of the other two. It deals with our very employment and employability.

The interim report of the Manpower Survey conducted for the Linguistic Society of America by the Center for Applied Linguistics set out to determine the present and future needs for linguists. The rather discouraging results of this survey indicate that there will be little or no job market for linguists in established linguistics departments during the next decade. The report points out that over 65% of linguists working at colleges and universities teach other subjects in addition to linguistics. Any increase in demand for linguists during the next five years is likely to be highest at institutions offering no degree or concentration in linguistics.

This report concludes with a series of recommendations ranging from the need to restrict the number of linguists being trained to the broadening of training programs in order to provide out students with versatility as they approach the job market. The latter strategy seems most helpful to me for it is a natural outgrowth of recent developments in our field. To restrict the number of our students, though humanely motivated, is defeatest and possibly un-

ethical. I can think of few scholars who are more excited about their field than linguists. We can only speculate what we might be doing if we had been forced our second choice and we can only wonder about our right to make that decision for someone else. A more reasonable tack would be for us to put our minds to creating the market, a task which we have hitherto considered demeaning if, indeed, we have considered it at all. Yet the study of language variation offers the best opportunity for providing this versatility to our students in that the study of language in realistic contexts necessarily involves our knowing at least something about psychology, anthropology, sociology, mathematics and philosophy. With only a small gulp more, we can also be immediately involved in education. Foreign language and anthropology departments still need linguists, despite our divorce from these fields in recent years. The market in sociology has been largely untapped, while psychology has developed its own breed of linguist--usually a static type. There probably won't be much of a market for linguists in math or philosophy departments but the fields of education, English and speech are certainly ripe for infiltration. The greatest issues tearing these fields apart today involve the inability of their practitioners to distinguish between pathological and socially realistic variation in the behavior and language of children. Likewise, linguists have disgraced themselves in English departments, offering grammatical theory and Old English structure to future high school teachers of English whose major concerns will involve problems of systemic interference and the need to develop stylistic variation and appropriate switching.

The question will ultimately be asked, "Is the sacrifice of curriculum to minors in education or anthropology or French feasible in light of pressures brought about by the explosion of knowledge in our field?". That is, can we trade off technology for such a functional benefit? A brief answer to this question might be seen in a similar situation in medical schools today. Recent research in the communication between doctor and patient has revealed shocking evidence of what happens when a field ignores function at the expense of technology. Although 95% of the potential success of medical treatment depends on obtaining accurate information from the medical history interview, little or no attention is given in medical schools to the training of physicians in inter-

viewing techniques or the language and culture of patients from different socio-economic, racial or ethnic backgrounds. Likewise little or no attention is paid to the dehumanizing process of females in OB-GYN settings. The medical profession is undoubtedly the most secure one of all and even here we are seeing the beginnings of a consumer rebellion. Linguistics does not now have, and never has had, security remotely similar to that of medicine. The choice is to refine the curriculum in such a way that our graduates are versatile enough to be hireable in several markets or to restrict our enrollments. I find the latter alternative elitist, if not unethical

In summary this paper has argued that the study of language variation is our best way of making use of our current natural resources. The study of language variation is, by definition, an avoidance of the doppleganger effect. It is well suited to avoiding the dangers of elitism. It has led us to new vistas in theoretical matters. It makes a good match with current educational concerns and it offers hope for a way out of the increasing job-market problems which the discipline is currently facing. If we play our cards right, have a little patience and develop a charitable attitude toward the diverse set of ideas that cross-fertilize and feed the field, we stand a good chance of making progress unprecedented in the past.

NOTES:

[1] A complete description of the Norfolk Project can be found in "Sociolinguistic Strategies for Teachers in a Southern School System" (R. Shuy, 1972), Proceedings of the Third International Congress on Applied Linguistics (Copenhagen, in press).

[2] Norfolk State University and Old Dominion University, for example, are offering similar work. Likewise, the University of Virginia Extension Program is now offering work in educational anthropology and sociolinguistics.

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