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Elaborating the Grounding of the Knowledge Base on Language and Learning for Preservice Literacy Teachers

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Abstract

This purpose of this article is to present a qualitative inquiry into the genesis of sociolinguistic s and the contributions of eight sociolinguistic pioneers. This inquiry, based on an historical interpretation of events, reformulates the concept of validation as the social construction of a scientific knowledge base, and explicates three themes that offer a set of sociolinguistic constructs, questions, and propositions that can provide aspiring teachers with a frame of reference and set of guidelines for teaching language and literacy. An implication section, at the end of the article, illustrates sociolinguistic components that can be added to course syllabi in the preservice language and literacy curriculum.

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This purpose of this article is to present a qualitative inquiry into the genesis of sociolinguistics and the contributions of eight sociolinguistic pioneers. This inquiry, based on an historical interpretation of events, reformulates the concept of validation as the social construction of a scientific knowledge base, and explicates three themes that offer a set of sociolinguistic constructs, questions, and propositions that can provide aspiring teachers with a frame of reference and set of guidelines for teaching language and literacy. An implication section, at the end of the article, illustrates sociolinguistic components that can be added to course syllabi in the preservice language and literacy curriculum. Key Words: Knowledge Base, Sociolinguistics, Preservice Literacy Teachers, and Language and Learning

Introduction

During recent decades educational and linguistic researchers have developed empirical and observation procedures for recording actual events, including classroom spoken and written language text. Researchers who set out to represent teaching and learning in discourse dimensions frequently adopt a sociolinguistic framework across multiple disciplines, for the purpose of theoretical analysis of language as cognitive and social phenomena. In Stockwell's (2002) excerpts, from professional published studies between 1993 and 1998, the point is made that the potential scope for constructing a sociolinguistic framework is enormous. Researchers built their frameworks on the following key constructs:

- All language events consist of a piece of language in social context.
- Every different social context determines the particular form of language.
- The language used in particular situations determines the nature of that social event (Stockwell, 2002, p. 1).

Yet despite the potential contributions of sociolinguistics to education, the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, have frequently empowered legislators to frame literacy standards and texts of accountability in narrower rather than broader curricular terms. Current educational undergraduates are introduced to phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics as the basis of systematic and explicit instruction in language and literacy production and comprehension (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education [AACTE] 2002); National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS] 2002). However, this overemphasis on

language structure has frequently failed to recognize linguistic diversity and contextual conditions in studies of language and literacy learning (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

What continues to elude educators is how language structures work together to create a whole discourse or how the facts of language usage may vary in relation to social class, ethnicity, age, gender, and geographic region (Hargreaves, 2005). Strain (2003) continues this line of argument adding,

> Typically teacher education programs tend to spend too much time on acquainting teachers and teacher candidates with strategies for teaching basics related to literacy development and too little time on helping them understand why the strategies they are taught may or may not be useful. (p. 34)

Fairclough (1995) warns that such mainstream language study does not provide resources "to develop the capacities of people for language critique" (p. 259). Mainstream language study frames conventions and practices as objects to be described, in a way that obscures their political and ideological investment.

Shirley Brice Heath (2000) posits that to advance future study of language and learning, educators will need to build on the foundation of language research conducted since the 1960s. Strain (2003) would agree, arguing that a foundation built on the understanding of language in the lives of students begins with a disciplinary grounding and thorough understanding of sociocultural perspectives on language and even on thinking itself (cf. Strain, p. 36). Without a foundation, says Heath, the link to learning is weak.

Heath (2000) suggests that a sociolinguistic knowledge base is essential for investigating the interconnections between languages and learning, if researchers are to claim that learning is taking place. While teacher organizations such as AACTE and NBPTS dictate content for instruction, the research on teaching has yet to support the link between instructor content knowledge and student achievement (Shulman, 2002).

To reconstruct the foundations of language and learning, we postulated that it was possible to trace the origins of a sociolinguistic knowledge base, the acknowledged canon and tenets that have come to define the field. However, as historians have long pointed out, investigators must present a set of historical sources that actually address the thesis formulated in an academic argument (Rael, 2004). Our aim was to build an argument that the epistemological issues and concerns of the early founders can be identified and are available for informing present-day literacy practices. Fortunately, organizers of the 1997 Summer Institute of Linguistics had the foresight to produce a set of primary source presentations related to understanding the content, cognition, and context of language in use. The scope of these primary sources include the memories and reflections of scholars of the very first generation of sociolinguistics, compiled and recorded in an edited volume, *The Early Days of Sociolinguistics: Memories and Reflections* by Christine Paulston and G. Richard Tucker (Paulston & Tucker, 1997).

Language and Education

The argument set forth in this article is that the construction of the sociolinguistic knowledge base has implications for the preparation of preservice teachers. As teacher educators in a university literacy and social science and education program, we support a curriculum that offers an understanding of language learning in social contexts and recognizes the political and professional contexts that drive current educational trends and literacy practices. If individuals preparing to be teachers are to place significance on current practice, they will need to recognize the knowledge bases that shape and continue to define language, including the sociolinguistic tradition.

By presenting an analysis of issues, considerations, and perspectives posed by sociolinguistic pioneers, we show how educators can build on a set of well-established principles to incorporate into a contemporary curriculum for prospective literacy teachers. The individuals whose work established a new angle to the study of language and significantly shaped the field now known as sociolinguistics are: William Bright, Susan Ervin-Tripp, Charles Ferguson, Joshua Fishman, Allen Grimshaw, John Gumperz, Dell Hymes, and William Labov.

The eight pioneers selected were chosen because they are: (a) scholars of the first generation of sociolinguistics who had never heard the word in their own training, but took part in the creation of the field, (b) scholars who had a lasting influence on the development of sociolinguistics, as evidenced in their own publications and in the reference lists of present day publications, and (c) scholars who represented "the various disciplines which have contributed to sociolinguistics: primarily anthropology, linguistics, sociology, and social psychology" (Paulston, 1997, p. 5).

Methodology

Overview

The plurality of perspectives on qualitative research and the hegemonic nature of its paradigms have led social science scholars to articulate the iterative processes used to examine their assembled data (e.g., Frechtling & Westat, 1997; Klingner, Scalon, & Pressley, 2005). However, to gain insight into events that have shaped a professional vision of language and learning requires viewing qualitative research as a process of confronting the assumptions individuals bring to their own work, and articulating their awareness of the long struggle that has taken place to create legitimacy for work in applied fields such as education (cf. Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Nagel (Nagel, 1961) anticipated a representation of the struggle faced by social scientists decades ago.

> Controlled investigation consists in a deliberate search for contrasting occasions in which phenomenon is either uniformly manifested (whether in identical or differing modes) or manifested in some cases but not others, and in the subsequent examination of certain factors discriminated in those occasions in order to ascertain whether variations in these factors are related to differences in phenomenon…are introduced by the scientist

himself, or whether such variations have been produced "naturally" and are simply found by the [researcher]. (pp. 452-453)

Because the nature of qualitative data is more embedded and less easily rendered, in distillable forms, than quantitative data, examples of relevant pieces of data are essential. One example of a relevant piece of qualitative data is "a comment or cluster of comments from a focus group" (Frechtling & Westat, 1997, Chapter 4, p. 1). Paulston and Tucker describe how they accomplished collecting relevant pieces of qualitative data in their introduction to *The Early Days of Sociolinguistics: Memories and Reflections*. The key informants they selected received a topic guide and a list of sixteen discussion areas that met the criteria for determining values, interests, and historical trends in document studies (Frechtling & Westat, Chapter 3, p. 13). Participants were told they could choose to address what they considered germane. An example of an open-ended statement included, "Tell us a little bit about the 'communication networks' that were working in this 'new domain' of sociolinguistic interest in the 1960s and 1970s". The objective of this statement was to document how issues in the age-old study of language fell into place in the twentieth century as these scholars launched a new direction for inquiry. Paulston and Tucker made no attempt at assessment or analysis of ideas, acknowledging "all the weaknesses of oral history" such as "individual perception and distortion of facts" (Paulston, 1997, p. 4). The interviewers do, however, purport that the "book undeniably presents the view of the major participants as they in hindsight experienced it " (Paulston, p. 4).

Frechtling and Westat (1997) point to the methodological problem we undertook in our consideration of the pioneers' comments. We needed to explore further the patterns and common themes emerging in the accounts of sociolinguistics as a new label and a new angle to the phenomenon of "an intersection and interaction of language and society." (Paulston, p. 4)

Support for choosing our object of study was recently articulated by Klinger, Scanlon, and Pressley (2005). They consider explicitly stating the use and results of selecting, abstracting, and transforming data. "In the case of quantitative research, the standard has long been to report methods with enough detail that a reader could replicate the study" (Klinger et al., p. 16). In qualitative research, a detailed description of the methodology also functions to establish the trustworthiness of the work reported (Klinger et al.). Lincoln and Guba (1985) glossed the term trustworthiness two decades ago to persuade readers that naturalistic accounts of validation were worthy of attention. Later, Mishler (1990) extended Lincoln and Guba's view by drawing readers' attention to claims made by members "within a community of scientists who came together to share useful ways of thinking about and solving problems" (Mishler, 2000, p. 124).

Attending to Mishler's challenge, the content in the next section includes examining the cluster of comments from a group asked by Paulston and Tucker, to focus on how they did what they did to: (a) focus on language in its social contexts and (b) communicate the results of their work to one another. The methodology we used is based on the levels of analytical techniques for qualitative methods published by the National

Science Foundation Division of Research, Evaluation and Communication (Frechtling & Westat, 1997).

Levels of Selecting, Abstracting, and Transforming our Object of Study

Level One and Two: Data Reduction and Data Display

Tucker's identification of several convergent points in the primary source narratives of sociolinguistic scholars provided us with the starting point for our first level of data reduction. His framework on the issues that fell into place and continued to gather momentum over the decades that followed,

> included a cohesive group of individuals intrigued by the notion of substantive dialogue across disciplinary, institutional, and national boundaries; the increasing prominence of a number of social or educational problems in which language could be viewed as a critical ingredient; and a readiness of public and private sources to underwrite the costs of embarking upon a venture of substantial proportion to explore more fully various aspects of the multiple roles of language in educational, occupational, and social issues. (Tucker, 1997, pp. 323-324)

We used this perspective as a focus for selecting, abstracting, and transforming our object of study, which were the comments of eight pioneers who have made a sustained contribution to the anthropology and sociology of education (cf. Wallat & Piazza, 1988, 1997, 2000).

As Smith (1997) has pointed out, the occurrence of sharp debates and, at times, acrimonious exchanges over reading and language arts instruction, can be traced to the lack of histories of fields of inquiry across professional affiliations. Smith laments this neglect stating, "Unfortunately, because we lack (in general) seriously undertaken histories of our profession, I am left to only speculate about what happened and why it happened" (p. 8). Another contested matter is the proliferation of how-to-do versions of qualitative inquiry. Lack of attention to addressing the nature of qualitative data as primarily narrative data, or research subjects' own stories, continues the "widening chasms of inequality and elaborate systems for classifying and controlling the poor and powerless" (Sullivan, 1998, p. 385). To fill the gap, researchers can explore the "accounts of how they [the pioneers, in this case] defined problems, bounded their fields of inquiry, and collected and analyzed data" (Sullivan, p. 384).

In order to undertake a summary of the narratives presented by all eight pioneers, Smith and Sullivan provided us with a point of departure for our own data reduction and data display. As we read and reread the pioneers' essays we located comments that reinforced our own values of constructing histories of the qualitative turn in language studies in context, and the qualitative turn in representation of social contexts, and the construction of meaning as objects of study in human development research. Rather than presenting the complete narratives of the pioneers "in their own words" we have paraphrased and reported the narratives in the section on "themes." (For a complete set of narratives see Paulston and Tucker. For specific accounts of the data as selected and

reduced for the purpose of identifying themes and implications for teachers, contact the authors.)

Our data reduction reflects a convergence between pioneers' assertions and propositions and our own interests in the history of how social contexts are represented (e.g., Piazza, 1987; Wallat, 1984). We recognize that our data reduction is subject to conflicting ideological and epistemological issues surrounding "what the data say" (Apple, 1999, p. 343).

Level Three: Verification as a Method to Help Draw our Conclusions

The converging agreement among the pioneers, that the focus of sociolinguistics should be practices, has led to proposals to reformulate the concept of validation in qualitative methodology as the social construction of scientific knowledge (Mishler, 2000). Yet, methods for systematic study are still assessed for their consistency in producing trustworthy findings. "Trustworthiness is tested repeatedly and gains in strength through our reliance on … findings as the basis for further work" (Mishler, 2000, p. 137). In current day research discourse, discussion of scientific methods in the social sciences generally avoids terms as "produced naturally." Instead, social scientists such as Mishler (2000) propose that a hallmark of ethnographies, case studies, and analysis of oral and written discourse share the key problem of representing how individuals interpret events and experiences. Fortunately, Paulston and Tucker (1977) presented a starting point for our analysis of primary source commentaries. The following display of exemplary works by the eight pioneers attests to the continuing influence of their work in specifying analytic concepts and features of language in society, bringing us full circle to what we have come to appreciate as sociolinguistic research.

Figure 1. Exemplars created by eight pioneers and examples of acknowledgements of their work.

- William Bright- Editor, *International encyclopedia of linguistics*, Oxford University Press, 1992

- Susan Ervin Tripp- *Social interaction, social context and language: Essays in honor of Susan Ervin-Tripp*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 1996

- Charles Ferguson- *The Fergusonian impact. Volume 2: Sociolinguistics and the study of language*, Walter de Gruyter & Company, 1983

- Joshua Fishman- *The influence of language on culture and thought: Essays in honor of Joshua A. Fishman*, Mouton de Grnyter, 1991

- Allen Day Grimshaw- *Language as scial resource: Essays by Allen D. Grimshaw*, Stanford University Press, 1981

- John Gumperz- *The contextualization of language [A celebration of the work of John Gumperz]*, John Benjamins Publishers, 1992

- Dell Hymes- *Sociolinguistic metatheory [Discipline Matrixes of Dell Hymes]*, Elsevier, 1994

- William Labov- *Towards a social science of language: Papers in honor of William Labov*, John Benjamins Publishers, 1996

Level Four: Conclusions

Given the notion of sociolinguistics as a set of practices, we examined the narratives of the pioneers to illuminate their contributions and legacy to the study of language and learning. Three consistent themes surfaced to strengthen foundations in teacher education.

Theme 1: The Interdisciplinary nature of language and literacy

The first theme highlights how shared knowledge of disparate fields converged on similar linguistic themes. The dual emphasis of teaching literacy as a cognitive and socio-cultural process characterizes the multi-disciplinary nature of the field.

Although attempts to adopt a functional model of language as the basis for new primary school syllabi and master's programs in teacher education have not had a successful track record (Martin, 1997), building on well-developed perspectives of sociolinguistics in disciplines such as anthropology, cognitive psychology, English, and linguistics can open the door for future educators to advance the social nature of thinking and knowing in studies of literacy.

The multiple discipline nature of interest in understanding language socialization and cognitive learning was flagged in 1979 in the journal publication, *Discourse Processes*. Reflected in the journal was the work of Ervin-Tripp (1996) and Grimshaw (1994), linguistic and sociology scholars, respectively, who demonstrated first, that language acquisition and language socialization stretched across early childhood and into adulthood, and second, that advances in developing new perspectives on individuals' language education across the life span depended on moving beyond traditional discipline boundaries. Looking back on this ambitious research problem, the discovery of language-learning universals for communicating in diverse settings, Ervin-Tripp argues that conducting child sociolinguistic studies depended upon the traditions and hallmarks of psycholinguistic foundations, including field manuals developed for conducting ethnographies of communication: Also essential was giving equal attention to cross-cultural studies of the nexus of beliefs and practices regarding communicative competence (cf. Wallat, 1984, 2002). Ervin-Tripp and Grimshaw demonstrate how educators can envision the interdependence of language and learning by considering the hallmarks of the sociolinguistic paradigm across disciplines.

Grimshaw provides examples of courses, taken outside his field, that encouraged his work: syntax and phonology with Charles Bird and others, linguistic field methods with William Labov and Gillian Sankoff, textual cohesion with Michael Halliday, and conversational analysis with Harvey Sacks and Emmanuel Schegloff. Grimshaw (1997) sees "the sociolinguistic enterprise (to employ a cliché) as a route to stronger and better

sociologies and linguistics" (p. 109). Grimshaw was cognizant that he could not admonish his Indiana University students and his sociology colleagues for failing to attend to language in use unless he continued to learn about linguistics. He took advantage of Summer Institutes of the Linguistic Society of America, and service on the Social Science Research Council Committee on Sociolinguistics, to discuss the complex relationships between language structure and social structure. Grimshaw's accomplishments exemplify how discipline foundations in anthropology, linguistics, sociology, and social psychology provide additional expertise in new studies. The results of his five-year Multiple Analysis Project (Grimshaw, 1994) on professional conversation among peers, serve to illustrate how work on what is known across discipline foundations continually demonstrates "that dealing with problems and ambiguity is the constant which provides the study of humankind its continuing energy and expanding audiences" (Wallat & Piazza, 2000, p. 12).

When William Bright accepted a position in the Anthropology Department at University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1959, Dell Hymes' (1964) anthology, *Language in Culture and Society* was widely used in linguistic courses, including his own, and Bright believed that the text helped define sociolinguistics as a respectable interdisciplinary field. "The benefit of sociolinguistics is turning out to be that of making people in the areas of education, law, and medicine more aware of sociolinguistic phenomena" (Bright, 1997, pp. 59-60).

Courses called "Language and Culture" were offered as early as 1955 at Harvard, the University of California at Berkeley, and at the University of Pennsylvania. Cornell, Indiana, Michigan, Georgetown, and other universities trace the development of sociolinguistic sensitivities within their institutions to anthropology and sociology courses in the sixties (Shuy as cited in Paulston & Tucker, 1997). One distinguishing feature of these 1950s-1960s courses is their dependence upon prerequisite courses in descriptive linguistics.

Indeed, while the early scholars recognized the advantages of borrowing new perspectives from cross-discipline study of language and literacy, Fishman's (1997) memories and reflections suggest the potential difficulty faced by researchers in adopting a perspective rooted in diverse disciplines. In a 1966 special issue of Sociological Inquiry called *Explorations in Sociolinguistics* he pinpointed a major obstacle in the field -- the absence of linguistic training among sociologists and the absence of sociology training among sociolinguists. This lack of cross-discipline training remains a hurdle to be overcome by researchers and teacher educators.

The efforts of the early pioneers to define a new field that brought together interests and questions of researchers in many fields, began an historical trend that mediated against the compartmentalization of knowledge. Interdisciplinary vantage points underscored the shaping of discourse in and across settings by society and the shaping of society by discourse (cf. Fairclough, 1995). As the biographic descriptions of the pioneers suggest: (a) multiple perspectives flourished because of the diverse ideologies, backgrounds, and objectives collectively represented by the sociolinguistic pioneers and (b) the efforts of scientists to identify and describe multiple perspectives and orientations provided the potential to eventually form a scientific body of knowledge on social and cognitive phenomena such as language (cf. Reynolds, 1971).

Given the perspective of sociolinguistics as interdisciplinary study, several sociolinguistic contributions have continued to prove beneficial in thinking about a knowledge base for preservice teachers (cf. Wallat & Piazza, 1988). These are summarized by the following propositions.

- A relevant literacy curriculum involves background on the relationship of language, thought, and society.
- Decisions about the kinds of literacy opportunities students receive require an understanding of linguistic varieties in use in a community.
- In the study of first and second language acquisition, sociolinguistic research moves practitioners away from concluding that formal features of language matches "cultural trait" or individual student, and towards thinking about each individual's resources in the ongoing process of meaning making.

Theme 2: The sociolinguistic solutions to well-articulated and compelling social issues in language and literacy

Our second theme highlights the social issues related to vernaculars and language in the everyday life of various speech communities. Specifically, it underscores the importance of solving social problems in context.

Between the 60s and 80s, the social and political problems of the day, social reform, civil rights, poverty, and racial relations, captured the interest of researchers in fields such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and education. The interactions and commitments of the founders of sociolinguistics led to the social construction of a knowledge base for exploring new conceptualizations and problems of linguistic phenomenon. William Bright's (1997) original interest, conducting field studies that questioned the assumption that uniform linguistic structures existed in dialects, led to decades of continued support to disseminate work on historical change of language, and concurrence of variation and social situation. Ferguson's 1959-1994 papers on language in society (Huebner, 1996) provide a compilation of four decades of foundational work on speech communities and language situations, register and genre, variation and change, and language planning.

Interested in the relationship of social class and language, William Labov's study of language use in New York City created the linguistic turn towards using nonlinguistic data *and* linguistic data "for the study of multilingualism and social variation in the speech community" (Labov, 1997, p. 149). Labov continues to demonstrate that the social evaluation of linguistic variants (i.e., feelings) must be (and can be) included in study of social patterns. In addition his attention to feelings about individuals' linguistic features such as pronunciations and nominal references are part of a highly systematic structure of social and stylistic stratification.

Similar to Labov (1997), Grimshaw (1997) also discovered "the critical importance of language as both an obstacle to understanding of social life and a rich and neglected resource for the investigation of sociological questions" (p. 104). His interest in social patterns and processes and cross-societal social research was evident as early as 1961 when he went to India to study the response of an urban community (Poona-now Pune) to the traumatic effects of the devastating floods that occurred that year. Although

he already knew that construction of a sociology questionnaire had to take into account variations of *what* was appropriate to ask, he also learned that he must take into account variations on *how* to ask the question (cf. Briggs, 1986; Mishler, 1986). Grimshaw (1997) comments on the following implications.

> I soon realized that there [is] more involved in resolution of these problems than a search for lexical or conceptual "equivalence." That people with whom I was interacting had different notions about what it is polite to say, what are appropriate questions to ask, what possible answers are and what they "mean," and what are meaningful goals in life. (p. 104)

Grimshaw gives credit to Charles Ferguson, John Gumperz, and Dell Hymes with whom he took courses for his re-education on issues of language varieties, and social, economic, and political disadvantages suffered by speakers of socially disvalued varieties.

The social problems identified by anthropologists and sociologists were not limited to the field of sociology. The spread of interest to utilizing foundational work and constructs such as language contexts and functions of language, led by exemplars such as Dell Hymes (Heath, 2000), expanded the influence of sociolinguistics to education and learning and convinced many researchers that advances in knowledge were possible. The solution of a special class of problems on language and its role in learning, and the complexity of addressing how language works, how context counts, and how the interdependence of language, context, and socialization, can matter, were considered capable of resolution. Such prediction was possible as early as the 1980s because effective techniques and adequate resources such as guides to research topics for ethnographic study of speech use (Hymes, 1964) and taxonomies of miscommunication (Gumperz, 1982) were already available. Publication possibilities for reporting studies of language and social processes continued to open up with the 1988 creation of the journal *Linguistics and Education.* Clearly, the legacies of the sociolinguistic pioneers continue into contemporary times. We have summarized sociolinguistic contributions related to schooling into three propositions that we think contribute to current demands for research and evidence to improve pupil as well as teacher learning:

- Educators ought to be concerned about how a child's dialect variations and register affect literacy assessments.
- A literacy curriculum should address social challenges in education such as language learning among linguistic minority children.
- Fulfilling the promising directions established by sociolinguistic pioneers will require creating teaching strategies that raise preservice students' consciousness of how negative attitudes toward dialect differences reflect prejudices about the speakers of those varieties.

Theme 3: The construction of a sociolinguistic knowledge base

As evidenced by the pioneers' accounts, readers can easily recognize a third theme in conceptualizing the accounts of the pioneers; scholars who constituted an intellectual network and a socio-political process that involved professional organizations

and funding agencies, to support and promulgate the on-going conversations and in-progress work of the pioneers. Following Collins (1998) we define intellectual networks as: "social links among those thinkers whose ideas … pass along in later generations" (p. xviii).

Ervin-Tripp's reflections focused on the dynamics of social links and social structures that provided arenas for creating alliances that have continued to exist over decades. In her narrative on the early days of rethinking linguistic premises, Susan Ervin-Tripp (1997) frequently referred to other colleagues' contributions in building and sustaining an intellectual network that continued, and still continues, to explicate relationships between language and social context. Under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council, the linguistics and psychology committee in the 1950s, and the sociolinguistic committee work in the 1960s, public forums at universities and professional association meetings provided opportunities for researchers to debate ideas on the social correlates of linguistic features, the social setting of linguistic behavior, and language socialization.

In his first few years at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Bright planned a UCLA conference on sociolinguistics. The participants included "major players" or "the most influential sociolinguists in the 1960s" (Bright, 1997, p. 57): Charles Ferguson, Joshua Fishman, John Gumperz, Dell Hymes, and William Labov. The proceedings from this conference (Bright, 1966), even today, continue to introduce students to the field of sociolinguistics. Responding to the Paulston's and Tucker's request, identify a critical milestone that marks for you the beginnings of sociolinguistics, Charles Ferguson (1997) identified a 1963 American Anthropology Association Meeting as a foundations landmark. The proceedings published in the 1964 *American Anthropologist* special issue called *The Ethnography of Communication* (Gumperz & Hymes, 1964) continue to be available from Holt, Rinehart, and Winston as *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication* (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972). Both publications identify topics that scholars from the fields of anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology, and philosophy continue to use as a lens for looking at human behavior in communities, schools, and other institutional organization settings. Joshua Fishman (1997) states that his defining moment for the birth of sociolinguistics in the United States was the 1964 Summer Linguistics Institute at Bloomington, Illinois. The Hymes, Gumperz, Ferguson, Labov, and Ervin-Tripp papers from the *Ethnography of Communication* session at the 1963 American Anthropology Association meeting were available as typescripts by the time of the Summer Institute. In his own words, Fishman applied for participation at the Institute because "I was always on the lookout for sociologists with language interests of any kind" (Fishman, p. 91). From a personal point of view, the landmark 1963 Summer Institute considerably helped him: The Summer Institute launched or confirmed several sociologists' work on language-related pursuits and created social and intellectual interaction networks that have lasted to this day (cf. Fishman, pp. 94-95).

Gumperz (1997) credits the development of his perspectives on sociolinguistics to the opportunities he had for talking with distinguished linguists and social scientists about his ongoing research. Such opportunities spread across his 1950s postdoctoral research in India with the Cornell University interdisciplinary project on rural development. During this time, he formed collegial relationships with Charles Ferguson, Dell Hymes, Erving

Goffman, Susan Ervin-Tripp, and Charles Frake. Conversations with William Labov and Dell Hymes, when all were members of the Social Science Research Council in the 1960s, further influenced his work. Although our theoretical interests differed, Gumperz (1997) notes the similarities.

> We all shared the premise that sociolinguistic research of all kinds must build on the ethnographer's insights into the everyday life of speech communities. The difference was that Labov was interested in communities as human collectives; while Hymes and I were concerned with language use or (to use a more current term) communicative practices as based on shared individual knowledge. (p. 115)

Clearly, the development of a sociolinguistic knowledge base was a socio-political process that involved the interaction and melding of individuals from various fields who defined a new interest. This far-reaching influence of the early sociolinguistic pioneers continues in current day research networks that advance the topics and questions of sociolinguistics in professional journals and in university courses and syllabi. The passage of ideas over later generations is evident in recent celebrations of the thirtieth year of the journal *Language in Society*, the 20th year of the journal *Discourse Processes*, the 25th consecutive Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development, and the 25th consecutive Annual Ethnography in Education Research Forum at the University of Pennsylvania. These intellectual networks continue to provide the social settings for reassessments of available methodological and theoretical approaches. Acknowledging that socio-political alliances are a means of constructing a knowledge base remains a major contribution of the sociolinguistic pioneers, as summarized in the following propositions.

- The creation of meaning occurs in an interactive and collaborative learning environment.
- Language is used to negotiate for power within a learning community.
- Language reflects the socio-political process that defines a field at a particular historical moment and influences or manipulates social situations to cultivate public opinion.

The Currency of Sociolinguistics in Education

In studies of how people put words together (structure), how particular combinations of words yield variable interpretations (meaning), and how school children interact with the nontransparent aspects of social practice (functions), sociolinguistic pioneers brought attention to new perspectives on the nature of language. A second generation of scholars rooted in the traditions and contributions begun by the sociolinguistic pioneers successfully mapped the territory that conceptualized classroom language in action and in context (See Heath, 2000, for descriptions of work by sociolinguists of the second generation). Many second-generation scholars on language use across the institutions of family, school, and organizations, continued to depend upon the anthropology, linguistics, and sociological foundations provided by Dell Hymes,

Allan Grimshaw, and John Gumperz (cf. Wallat, 2002). One illustration of acting on this belief is that of Joshua Fishman, who accepted an invitation by the U.S. Office of Education to participate in developing an agenda that outlined research priorities for children's language and its relationship to school success. The conference led to publication of *Functions of Language in the Classroom* (Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1972). The publication includes Fishman's explication of social repertories and addresses the question, "What has the Sociology of Language Say to the Teacher" (Fishman & Lueders-Salmon, 1972). The content of the text on functions of language was instrumental in developing the ten-year federal funding of research projects on Teaching as a Linguistic Process (Berliner & Richardson, 1983). Yet, in spite of the rapid growth of sociolinguistics, scholar contributions over four decades ended with the conclusion that current knowledge foundations on the relationship between language use and learning across contexts had made little substantial influence on teacher training (Heath). Though it was commonplace to locate professional literature illuminating and conceptualizing teacher actions and classroom discourse as "sociolinguistic," less was known about the connection of these actions to learning. Heath, in her Harvard Educational Review publication, points to the need for studying sociolinguistic paradigms across disciplines to better understand the links between concepts of language in use and concepts of learning. "We now understand the embeddedness of language in systems of meaning, situation, and ideologies surrounding the medium most accessible to scrutiny — language" (Heath, p. 58). Although Heath calls for educators to move the study of language in education beyond description of everyday events and social interactions, she recognizes that for empirical investigations to link language to learning, educators must delve into key concepts, typologies, and subject matter representing the knowledge base of sociolinguistics. (See Wallat & Piazza, 1988 for an example of how Heath's recommendation can be acted upon.)

"That language is our tool to explore reality has application to all research" (Nielsen, 1995, p. 4) was an assertion appearing in a 1995 publication *Literacy as Cultural Practice* in the top tier journal *Educational Researcher.* This acknowledgement of language as ubiquitous clearly communicated that the possibility existed for writing a genealogy of the foundations to professionalism in the study of language and learning. A legacy of what questions to ask about the value concept of culture and what claims to make and on what grounds, can be sketched back several decades.[1]

Implications for a Preservice Language and Literacy Curriculum

Any curriculum that converges sociolinguistic knowledge should help to answer students' and educators' questions on the antecedents of the field (Shuy as cited in Paulston & Tucker, 1997). It would seem that the pioneers' contributions would be an

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[1] In 1961 Nagel produced a seminal work on the Structure of Social Science. He pointed to Weber's 1947 articulation that the concept of culture is a *value concept* as one example of the neglect of social theory foundations. It appears that the extensive criticism of how the term multicultural education has been operationalized in policy and practice may have been circumvented through scholarly critique of the Weber's frame of reference that empirical reality becomes 'culture' to us because and insofar as we relate it to value ideas. It includes those segments and only those segments of reality that have become significant because of this "value-relevance" (Nagel, 1961, p. 485).

important first step to remedying the lack of a language focus in teacher education. "The term sociolinguistics conjures up different things to different people. The reason for this is quite simple, "it is many different things to many different people" (Shuyas as cited in Tucker, 1997 p. 29).

Although the pioneers "themselves had never heard the word [sociolinguistics] in their own training, less read anything under that rubric" (Paulston, 1997, p. 5), multidiscipline work and scholarly networks emerged around common interests about how language, and its use, worked interdependently for individuals with diverse cultural, linguistic, and class backgrounds, in various social contexts.

In the pioneers' spirit of continuing to meet the challenge of articulating cross-discipline study of language or discourse (cf. Wallat & Piazza, 1988), addressing social problems in schools, and understanding the socio-political process that gives rise to current day thinking, we conclude with a few guidelines on what might constitute an appropriate sociolinguistic education for prospective teachers. Knowing that the space in any education curriculum would be limited for the teaching of sociolinguistics, subtle modifications could be implemented in an existing literacy curriculum without developing new courses.

Along the lines of a multi-disciplinary thrust, preservice curricula for reading might focus on the cognitive and social determinants of language development and the nature of language so that children learn and use language associated with different discourses (Shulman, 2002). For instance, current courses on methods of reading could draw on the cognitive and socio-cultural aspects of language. A sociolinguistic component to the study of phonology might mean going beyond sound-symbol correlations for decoding, to understanding pronunciation patterns as related to social class, ethnicity, regional accents, and dialects. Word formations, typically thought of as inflectional or derivational endings, could include mention of the origins of language, and the ways in which morphological units signal formal and informal talk related to standard and nonstandard language (walkin/walking), status, age, and gender. Linking phonemic and grammatical units to a socio-historical context would give emphasis to the variation and arbitrary nature of language.

A sociolinguistic perspective of meaning might also extend the study of lexical items, frequently taught as vocabulary instruction, to language uses and functions across cultures. Halliday's (1973) mnemonic functions (expressions of information, and performance of interaction intentions and reactions) provide recognition that mastery of varying styles and registers is important to becoming effective communicators. Such recognition would provide direction in planning varied literacy contexts and opportunities across genres and school subjects.

Although prospective teachers would be introduced to explicit rules of sentence and discourse structures, sociolinguistics could uncover implicit irregularities and cross-linguistic differences based on social and cultural norms.

In regard to using literacy to solve social problems, preservice teachers might build on the work of the pioneers by considering problems underlying the nation's illiteracy rates as well as the lack of attention paid to developing the critical literacy of its citizens. A critical awareness of discourse dimensions identified, to date, would highlight

education practices that are part of producing and interpreting spoken and written text.[2] Instead of thinking about literacy as an entity (subjects such as phonics, grammar, discourse structures), preservice teachers might think about literacy as a social practice, thus asking what kinds of literacy one needs to participate in fully in the classroom and cultural community.

Like the sociolinguistic pioneers, teachers concern themselves with the pressing social problems in the schools. They face the challenge of increasing numbers of immigrants and diverse populations, whose linguistic needs are more than just phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Such challenges call for an understanding of not only universal and abstract representations, codified as language and diverse linguistic structures (Fillmore & Snow, 2000), but also of language functions within the socio-cultural context of their classrooms and community.

Finally, viewed in historical perspective, the pioneers socially constructed a knowledge base through political and intellectual networks. As the sociolinguistic pioneers have shown, advances will be made only through a cross-fertilization of ideas. Preservice teachers need to be aware of the constituencies that govern what they are learning and promulgating. Just as the tradition of being critical consumers of the literature must be valued, so too must the recognition that the politics of language will continue to affect schools. Preservice teachers will need to acknowledge their role as political agents of change, whether as teacher-researchers or as collaborative partners.

Summary

The themes and biographic accounts of the sociolinguistic pioneers highlight the contributions made to language, cognition, and representation; linguistic variation and social class; language and identity; and language and social structure.

Future teachers interested in language and learning can consider the origin of sociolinguistics including the multidisciplinary nature of the field and the compelling social issues that make the work problem-driven. They can also bear in mind the significance of vision, leadership, and academic outlets for communicating sociolinguistic ideas and interests.

Finally, the article helps educators consider the far-reaching influence of the pioneers. Guidelines have been offered for current course syllabi to reflect the contributions of the early pioneers (e.g., Campbell, 2004; Hargreaves, 2005; McGowan, 2004; Phillips, 2004). Acknowledging a knowledge base promotes substantive disciplinary grounding for educators to imitate in progressing towards an educational linguistics. One hope implicit in the teacher education approval requirements, created by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE, 2002) and The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), is that a set of common

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[2] Several recent publications provide details of the similarities and variations across these methodologies. Of special note are the following publications that effectively blend expository and narrative description of advances in these methods:*Applying Sociolinguistics: Domains and Face-to-Face Interaction* (Boxer, 2002); *Doing Discourse Analysis* (Wood & Kroger, 2000); *Investigating Classroom Talk* (Edwards & Westgate, 1994) ; Language as Social Action: Social Psychology and Language Use (Hargreaves, 2002); *Language, Society and Power* (Thomas & Wareing, 2001); *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis* (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000); and *Sociolinguistics Variation and Change* (Trudgill, 2002).

linguistic threads across the preparation and continuing professional development of education will enable newly trained teacher educators to demonstrate knowledge of both the language system and its variation in relation to social class, ethnicity, age, gender, and geographic region. Colleges of Education will have to demonstrate that students understand linguistic evidence that enables increasingly more complex literacy performances (AACTE). Articulating the mission of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in new partnerships with accreditation and certification institutions, Shulman (2002) argues that the direction for future study of both teacher learning and development is to accomplish new commitments to revisiting and renewing foundations of knowledge. Intentional efforts to explicate connections between educators' capacities and students' achievements requires finding "ways to shed the light of scholarship on many dark corners" (Shulman, p. 253).

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