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***Language in the Schools: Integrating Linguistic Knowledge  
Into K-12 Teaching***

Edited by Kristin Denham and Anne Lobeck

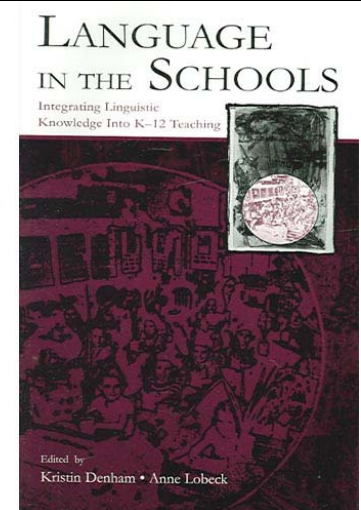
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***Reviewed by Jessamine Cooke-Plagwitz  
Northern Illinois University***



### **Introduction**

Kristin Denham and Anne Lobeck, the editors of *Language in the Schools: Integrating Linguistic Knowledge into K-12 Teaching* intend the book to be a resource for K-12 teachers (in all subject areas) to help them to understand and assist their linguistically diverse student populations. The editors note that classroom linguistic diversity simultaneously presents K-12 teachers with challenges and opportunities and that because many teachers have little to no training in linguistics, they need help in recognizing the nuances of culturally and linguistically varied populations. The book also aims to help teachers discover which linguistic topics are most suitable for classroom exploration and to learn what approaches to these topics will most successfully open communication and make classrooms as inclusive as possible.

### **Structure and Content**

The book is divided into two ten-chapter sections. Part 1, How Knowledge of Language can Inform Teachers in Multicultural, Linguistically Diverse Classrooms, focuses on theoretical aspects of linguistics. Some chapters in this section also provide ideas for classroom applications of the theories discussed. Part 2, Integrating Knowledge of Language into K-12 Teaching, connects theory to practice by providing practical illustrations of classroom activities designed to help K-12 educators raise linguistic awareness in their students.

The chapters in Part 1 deal primarily with issues K-12 educators are likely to encounter in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms and illustrate how these issues can, in fact, enhance classroom instruction. This section introduces K-12 educators to the linguistic theory behind current concerns in culturally diverse classroom settings, knowledge which, according to the editors, can greatly increase the level of understanding both between students and teachers and among students, themselves.

The section opens quite appropriately with John Baugh's chapter on linguistics in education in which he outlines the history of linguistic diversity in the U.S. and examines some of the regulations relevant to language minority students. Baugh includes illustrations of the improved student motivation and success that can result from teachers' respect for diverse languages and cultures. His chapter provides an excellent introduction to the topic and to the chapters that follow.

Chapters 2 and 3 address the topic of pragmatics and are especially useful for the teacher with little to no prior knowledge of linguistics as they provide very clear introductions to the subject. In chapter 2, Jin Sook Lee outlines those aspects of pragmatic theories most relevant to teachers and includes some simple activities involving rules of speaking which allow students and teachers to discuss their understanding of how language works. Building on Lee's introduction to pragmatics, Burt and Yang's fascinating chapter on language shifting considers the complexity of the cultural and linguistic issues facing immigrant students, both in the classroom and at home.

Chapters 5, 9, and 10 continue from Burt and Yang's examination of Hmong culture by further exploring issues pertinent to linguistically varied populations. On the theme of cultural diversity, Alicia Beckford Wassink considers the language of the Creole-speaking student, while Patricia MacGregor-Mendoza studies the topic of bilingualism using linguistics to dispel a number of common myths on the subject. Robert Bayley and Sandra Schechter deal as well with immigrant populations as they study the complexities of Spanish language maintenance and English literacy. Finally, Lynn Mancini reflects on the use of ASL in the K-12 classroom, citing a variety of advantages, not only for the hearing-impaired student, but for other student populations as well.

Questions of language structure and meaning are the focus of chapters 4, 6 and 8, with Kathryn Remlinger's chapter on language and gender, an examination of linguistic analysis and language structure by Jean Ann and Long Peng, and a discussion by Anne Lobeck of some of the weaknesses of the traditional approach to grammar teaching (or lack thereof) in public schools.

Part 2 links theory to practice by providing examples of classroom activities that can help teachers and students better appreciate issues of linguistic diversity. Teachers with minimal knowledge of linguistics and linguistic theory will doubtless find the practical ideas in this section to be particularly useful. Each chapter in Part 2 demonstrates the integration of linguistic concepts into regular classroom discourse. For example, in chapters 11 and 12, Anne Curzan and Kristin Denham illustrate ways in which languages evolve; Curzan uses spelling to irregularities in English to discuss the history of the language, while Denham focuses on language death, providing a variety of discussion topics on the subject. In chapter 13, Janet Higgins provides a step-by-step guide to building classroom activities that help students use metaphor to evaluate the ways in which they view other people and their physical environment. Likewise, in chapter 15, Kirk Hazen illustrates how teachers can help their students understand not only how language works, but also how it is often responsible for our concepts of "difference."

Linguistic tools are the focus of chapters 14 through 20. In chapter 18, Tony Hung provides a guide for using corpus linguistics as a teaching tool not only for non-native speakers of English, but for native speakers as well to help them to learn and understand more about their own language. Rebecca Wheeler reflects on codeswitching and contrastive analysis to compare African American Vernacular with Standard English in chapter 14, while Patricia Dunn and Kenneth Lindblom consider a variety of perspectives on grammar in the teaching of writing in chapter 16. The following chapter continues on the topic of writing as Donna Jo Napoli examines the role of linguistics in writing effective fictional dialogues. In chapter 19, Anca Nemoianu provides examples of inductive learning by students who worked with a lexicon of English words adapted into Japanese. Finally, in chapter 20, Anne Curzan's second chapter, she demonstrates how dictionaries can be used to examine more than the mere definition of words, but also how students can use them to investigate questions of language change.

### **Assessment**

*Language in the Schools* represents a significant contribution to the literature on linguistics by suggesting approaches to the integration of linguistic knowledge into K-12 curricula thereby increasing students' language awareness. Though the editors assert that the volume is best for readers who have had at least some rudimentary exposure to linguistics, most chapters provide enough introductory information on the concepts addressed that readers with no prior knowledge of the subject matter will find the material reasonably easy to grasp.

Though the chapters are all more or less independent of each other, a more thematic arrangement of the material might be useful. As it is, the reader must skip around a fair amount in order to access thematically connected chapters. Indeed, for quick reference purposes, it might have been useful for each of the chapters to contain a brief abstract or outline of their topic (perhaps even a list of key ideas) so that teachers using the volume could more quickly locate the information they need.

Overall, *Language in the Schools* is a very useful and informative volume and the topics are relevant to K-12 teachers in a variety of classroom and school settings. This is in part because the authors venture beyond linguistic theory to examine its relevance to important social issues. Thus the questions and topics introduced and the activities provided represent a valuable contribution to teacher education and development by helping to increase awareness of the many roles language plays in today's linguistically and culturally diverse K-12 classrooms.

<p><b>Jessamine Cooke-Plagwitz</b> is Assistant Professor of German and Instructional Technology in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois. She has been working with language teachers for close to ten years, and teaching language for close to twenty. Her research interests include Computer-Assisted Language Learning, authentic assessment techniques and electronic portfolios.</p>
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