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Language ideologies and the education of speakers of marginalized language varieties: Adopting a critical awareness approach

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Abstract

For over 40 years, sociolinguists have been demonstrating that all varieties of language are equal in linguistic terms. Yet vernacular varieties such as African American English and Hawai'i Creole are still generally marginalized and excluded from the educational process, with the result that speakers of these varieties are disadvantaged in education as well as other areas. This article discusses four interrelated language ideologies that contribute to this state of affairs. Then it describes the "awareness" teaching approach, which in opposition to these ideologies includes marginalized varieties in the curriculum. This is followed by an examination of the extent to which the awareness approach deals with the inequalities perpetuated by the prevailing language ideologies. The article goes on to argue that a critical version of the awareness approach is a more effective alternative.
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1. Introduction

Despite the progress made in sociolinguistics over the last 40 years, some varieties of language are still considered to be merely incorrect or degenerate forms of the "standard" language that is used in the mass media, in formal education and in formal written genres, more generally. These views are often held by the speakers of these varieties themselves, as well as by society in general. Thus, these varieties are marginalized, and considered inappropriate for use in public spheres

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such as business, government and schools. Such marginalized varieties include African American English (AAE, or Ebonics) and other social or regional varieties—for example, Australian Aboriginal English and Appalachian English—as well as creole languages such as those spoken in Jamaica and Hawai‘i. It is no coincidence that social groups who speak marginalized varieties are themselves often marginalized or disadvantaged in society.

Several different teaching approaches have been used over the years in attempts to help children who speak marginalized varieties to learn to read and write in the standard variety. This is seen as necessary for success in education and life in general. These approaches include: attempted eradication of the home language from the children's repertoire, teaching standard English as a second dialect, mainstreaming (i.e., not using any special approach), and bidialectal or bilingual education. However, each of these approaches has had problems ranging from inappropriate or boring teaching methods to lack of acceptance by communities (see Siegel, 2003). And it is clear that none of these approaches has succeeded in bringing children who speak marginalized varieties up to the educational level of children from other social groups. For example, on the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress reading assessment, 63% of African American 4th graders were reading below the basic level compared to 27% of their European American counterparts (Green, 2002, p. 228). As Winford (2003, p. 34) observes, "everyone knows that the methods currently used to teach reading, writing and language arts to African American children are an abysmal failure". Similarly, the figures given by Craig (2001) show that the percentage of students in creole-speaking countries or territories in Caribbean who eventually pass the secondary English examination ranges from only 3 to 28, with an average of less than 14 (see also, McCourtie, 1998).

Some educators believe that part of the problem is that the children's own language is not used as the foundation on which to build literacy skills. In other words, instead of following the common educational principle of moving from the known to the unknown, the curriculum ignores the language known by the students. With regard to AAE, this was recognized over 25 years ago in the 1979 "Black English trial". Judge C.W. Joiner, in his judgement in the case, directed the Ann Arbor Michigan school district to "identify children speaking 'Black English'. . .as a home or community language and to use that knowledge in teaching such students how to read standard English." (Memorandum Opinion and Order, Civil Action No. 7-71861, U.S. District Court, East District, Detroit, MI, p. 42). Yet AAE continues to be excluded from the educational process, and further proposals for including it have been subject to ridicule and public outcry, as was seen following the Oakland School Board's 1996 resolution to use Ebonics (AAE) in the classroom (see, for example, Rickford & Rickford, 2000).

Similar negative reactions have been expressed with regard to the use of Hawai‘i Creole (locally known as "Pidgin") in education—for example: "Pidgin ranks right up there with ebonics. It's broken English. And when something is broken, you fix it." (letter to the editor, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 12 October 1999). In the same vein, a suggestion that Jamaican Creole be used in the classroom led one journalist to write: "I draw the line when anyone suggests that this disfigurement of speech be officially recognised as a tool of communication in our institutions of formal education." (Jones, 2001, quoted in Christie, 2003, p. 43).

More recently, a proposal in 2005 for a new program including AAE in the curriculum for children in the San Bernardino City Unified School District (Lemus, 2005) has come under fire. For example, one commentator (Gadbois, 2005) writes: "This decision by San Bernardino City schools represents another brick being pulled from the once strong foundation of American public education." A spokesperson for an African American group, Project 21, referred to the plan as "a disservice to the black community that will severely limit our children's skills in the job market" (Hunter, 2005).

Why do such views persist? Some authors, such as Hill (2001), argue that negative attitudes towards AAE are not really about language *per se*, but rather a reflection of racist culture in the USA. In this article, I suggest that the continued denigration of AAE and other marginalized varieties—and by implication their speakers—can at least be partly attributed to the unchallenged existence of various intertwined ideologies related to language. These are discussed under four headings: (1) egalitarian pluralism, (2) equal opportunity, (3) standard language, and (4) monolingualism. Following this discussion, a teaching approach is described that attempts to circumvent these ideologies by bringing marginalized varieties into the educational process: the awareness approach. The article goes on, however, to examine the extent to which the awareness approach actually deals with the inequalities and barriers to education perpetuated by these ideologies. It concludes with a discussion of how and why a critical version of the awareness approach (e.g., Clark, Fairclough, Ivanič, & Martin-Jones, 1990, 1991; Fairclough, 1992a; Janks & Ivanič 1992) may offer a greater potential.

2. Ideologies concerning language

2.1. Egalitarian pluralism

Current mainstream educational policy is partly based on a particular ideological position about society in general. This is characterized by a belief in "democratic egalitarianism" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 29) and "integrated pluralism" (Giroux, 1988, p. 123), or to combine these terms, "egalitarian pluralism". It is thought that despite differences in race, ethnicity, language, values and life styles, there is a basic equality among different cultural groups and with mutual respect and understanding, they can live happily together. Part of this view is that all language varieties, including marginalized ones, are legitimate linguistic systems with their own rules. Knowledge of the standard variety, however, is seen as a different form of linguistic resource, and it is believed that access to and attainment of this knowledge will lead to the skills, resources and influence that go along with it. Thus, according to this view, a major role of the schools is to give all students access to the standard.

This position can be criticized for ignoring differentials in advantage and privilege between various social groups—that some groups are clearly dominant over others in terms of the skills, resources and influence they possess, and that subordinate groups may suffer from injustices (for example, see Giroux, 2001). Thus some groups have advantage and privilege while others are disadvantaged or marginalized.

One area of privilege has to do with language. The varieties of language spoken by different social groups may be equal in linguistic terms, but as Bourdieu (1991) has shown, they are not equal in social or practical terms. The varieties spoken by the upper middle classes, upon which the standard is based, are the target of education; the marginalized varieties of disadvantaged groups such as African Americans generally have no role in the curriculum. The standard variety is praised as being pure and logical; marginalized varieties are denigrated as being incorrect or sloppy (see below). Varieties close to the standard are shown to be appropriate for education, high-level employment and formal occasions; marginalized varieties, if recognized at all, are shown to be appropriate only for casual conversation, joking and informal occasions (see Fairclough, 1992b). As Sledd (1969, p. 1310) put it many years ago: "No dialect, they keep repeating, is better than any other—yet poor and ignorant children must change theirs unless they want to stay poor and ignorant." So the message is clearly that varieties of language spoken by some social groups are inferior to those spoken by others.

This lack of equality of language clearly contributes to a lack of equality in the schools. Children from dominant social groups who come to school speaking varieties close to the standard can use their own language without fear of correction or denigration. Children from marginalized groups are often not allowed to express themselves in their own variety of language, and research shows that this is detrimental to cognitive development (Feldman, Stone, & Renderer, 1990). Children from dominant groups learn in and about a language and culture that is familiar to them; children from disadvantaged groups do not. Knowledge possessed by children from dominant social groups is valued and used in the educational process; knowledge possessed by children from disadvantaged groups is not. As Corson (1991, p. 239) points out with reference to Bourdieu: "while the cultural or linguistic capital that is valued in schools is not equally available to children from different backgrounds, schools still operate as if all children had equal access to it."

2.2. *Equal opportunity*

Closely related to the view that schools offer a "level playing field" is the belief that anyone can be successful in education (and in life in general) if they work hard and acquire the standard variety. This is what Lanehart (1998, p. 125) calls the "ideology of opportunity".

This ideology has two facets. The first is that anyone can learn standard English if they just try, and by implication, that people who do not speak standard English are just ignorant or lazy, and not interested in the opportunities available to them. But research on second dialect acquisition (e.g., Chambers, 1992) demonstrates that after the age of 7 years, the capacity for perfect learning of a new dialect diminishes, especially in phonology, and it is virtually absent after the age of 14. In other words, there is a sensitive period for the acquisition of a second dialect (see Siegel, 2003, 197–202), and after age 7 it is not a simple matter of trying hard. People who can switch effortlessly from their first dialect into the standard are generally those who had access to it starting from a very young age (Lippi-Green, 1997, 41–52).

The second facet of the ideology of equal opportunity is that any person who learns the standard will have the same opportunities for educational and economic success that members of the dominant, standard-speaking group have. But this too is questionable. For example, there is the infamous case of a well-educated and experienced meteorologist in Hawai'i who spoke Hawai'i Creole. Although he had become bilingual in standard English, he was not given a promotion which involved reading weather reports over the radio, ostensibly because of his Hawai'i Creole accent (Sato, 1991; Lippi-Green, 1997). Ogbu (1978) argues that equal opportunity in the USA is a myth, and that because of "caste-like" barriers, members of disadvantaged groups such as African Americans cannot get certain high-level jobs, despite their qualifications or proficiency in standard English. (See also, Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 179).

Similarly, Wiggens (1976, p. 250) comments: "as if by some spell of magic, learning to speak standard English will relieve Blacks of the burden of racism and of economic and political deprivation", and continues: "It is no more valid to assume that bidialectalism will affect the soaring trend in unemployment among Blacks than it is to assume that the institution of racism would crumble to bits were Blacks to suddenly take command of the middle-class dialect." Of course, these views support Hill's (2001) point about racism being the basic issue.

2.3. *Standard language*

Not only does current mainstream educational policy fail to provide a level playing field, but it also serves to perpetuate and reinforce inequality and the dominance of some social groups

over others. This is especially true with regard to language. Giroux (1988, p. 134) observes: “Within dominant educational theory there is no sense of how language practices can be used to actively silence some students, or how favoring particular forms of discourse can work to disconfirm the traditions, practices, and values of subordinate language groups. . .” Yet, at the same time, Fairclough (1989, p. 3) points out that “language has become perhaps the primary medium of social control and power”. For dominant groups to continue to dominate, they need to convince subordinate groups that the status quo is the natural order of things. Thus, they promote certain views or ideologies, which appear to make common sense, and therefore are rarely questioned.

Most relevant to this discussion is the “standard language ideology” (Lippi-Green, 1997; Silverstein, 1996; Winford, 2003; Wolfram, 1998). This is the pervasive belief in the superiority of the abstracted and idealized form of language based on the spoken language of the upper middle classes—i.e., the standard variety. The perpetuation of beliefs about the superiority of the language of dominant groups, and the inferiority of the language of marginalized groups, is of course maintained by the dominant groups to promote their own interests. This is done through the institutions controlled by dominant groups—such as the media and the education system.

The media’s role in denigrating and stigmatizing marginalized varieties in the past can be easily seen. For example, in publications starting from the 1920s, Hawai‘i Creole was labelled with negative terms such as “lazy”, “ungrammatical”, “faulty”, “sloppy”, “slothful” and “ugly” (Da Pidgin Coup, 1999, pp. 6–8). Despite the many sociolinguistic studies over the last 40 years showing the legitimacy of all vernaculars, the media have continued to denigrate marginalized varieties, as was obvious during the Ebonics debate. At that time, journalists applied a variety of negative labels to AAE, such as “mutant English”, “fractured English”, “mumbo jumbo”, “slanguage” and “linguistic nightmare” (Rickford & Rickford, 2000, p. 195). In the recent controversy regarding the San Bernardino schools (mentioned above), one opinion piece (Hutaff, 2005) illustrates the fine line between pejorative comments about a marginalized variety and blatant racism:

> After all, rambling incoherently and showing adverse reactions to proper grammar, spelling and pronunciation isn’t a language, it’s an abomination. Its legitimization by Oakland was and is a shameful attempt to convert illiteracy into a cultural and social asset. Trust me—there is nothing cultural about being a dumbass.

The education system also perpetuates the standard language ideology. Children who speak marginalized varieties are taught that the standard is superior in both structure and importance (e.g. for getting a good job). At the same time their own speech varieties are shown to be inferior if not by denigration, then by being excluded from the educational process. This pertains not only to language but also to other aspects of marginalized groups’ culture and history (see, for example, Ogbu, 1978, p. 141). By implication, their own social groups are then being excluded from the institutions of power. But a large number of people in these marginalized social groups also accept this ideology, even though it disadvantages them. Thus, belief in the inferiority of marginalized varieties is a major reason for the current educational practice of keeping them out of the curriculum, and this practice helps to perpetuate the belief that these varieties are inferior.

This is the “hegemony of ‘The Standard”’ (Silverstein, 1996, p. 286). Following, Gramsci (1971 [1948]), the concept of hegemony is seen as the exercise of control on the basis of wide-ranging consent or agreement—“the dominated become accomplices in their own domination”. Corson (1991, p. 235) points out that “in their language usages the non-dominant adhere to the linguistic norms created by dominant groups while not recognising that they are being ‘voluntarily coerced”’.

2.4. Monolingualism

A closely related hegemonic ideology, especially prevalent in English-speaking countries, is that of "monolingualism" (Silverstein, 1996; Wiley & Lukes, 1996). This sees monolingualism as the normal condition—and monolingualism in standard English, of course, as the ideal. The use of a language variety other than standard English is seen as an impediment to communication as well as being divisive (as seen in the English-only movement in the USA). This belief is another reason for varieties other than the standard not being allowed any role in the education system.

Because of the ideology of monolingualism (and monoculturalism), some speakers of AAE, for example, object to linguists' characterizations of their language as being unique and substantially different from mainstream standard English. As Green (2002, p. 222) remarks: "For some, the characterization could suggest that, once again, African Americans are being set apart from other Americans, and this could mean buying into, if not providing more evidence for, the claim that African Americans are inferior, and language is just another deficiency."

Closely connected to this is the idea that people can have only one language or culture—that they must choose between one or the other. It is well known that marginalized varieties have their own covert prestige and are an important part of their speakers' social identity. But because of the ideology of monolingualism, many speakers feel that to learn and use another variety, such as the standard, they would have to give up their own vernacular identity. They do not realize that people often have complex identities that involve the knowledge and use of more than one language variety—in other words, that they can become bilingual or bidialectal and still maintain their vernacular identity.

Thus, Fordham (1999) describes how African American youths who use standard English are accused by their peers of "acting white". Roberts (2004) quotes students in Hawai'i in the past whose friends made fun of their using "correct" English rather than the local creole, and called them "cultural traitors" or black *haoles* ('Caucasians'). Thus, students may fear that learning the standard is to abandon their own speech variety and thus risk being ostracized from their social group.

2.5. Educational implications

The poor academic performance of students from marginalized groups might have less to do with teaching methodologies than with the hegemonic ideologies perpetuated by the education system itself, and marginalized groups' reaction to them. First, if acquisition of the standard variety and success in the education system do not result in the expected increased level of economic and political benefits anyway, then why bother? Second, many students may not want to participate in an education system that not only denigrates their language and culture but also privileges students from upper middle class social groups. Thus, reluctance to learn the standard variety and the dominant culture promoted in the schools may be an act of resistance (Giroux, 1988, p. 157). Third, because of the ideology of monolingualism, many students feel they have to choose between their own language and culture and that of the dominant community. As Delpit (1990, p. 251) observes, children often have the ability to speak standard English, but choose "to identify with their community rather than with the school".

Furthermore, many students from marginalized groups seem to avoid not only acquisition of the standard variety but also overall academic achievement. They feel that since school in general is an institution of the dominant white upper middle class, success in this system is a characteristic of those from that particular social group. To be academically successful, then, is to turn your

back on your own social group (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). The African American sociolinguist Lanehart (1998, p. 132) writes:

> We have come to associate being educated and literate with being white. We have come to view speaking SE [standard English] as speaking correctly, speaking white. At the same time, we have come to view being uneducated and illiterate as being cool and more "Black" or less white. And indeed, Fordham (1988) finds that African American students who opt for academic success often develop a strategy of "racelessness"—that is, avoiding being identified with any particular racial group.

3. The awareness approach

A fairly recent teaching approach for speakers of marginalized varieties (and other groups as well) deals with some of the issues just described. This is the "awareness approach" (Siegel, 1993, 1999) or "dialect awareness" (Adger, 1994; Wolfram, 1999)—in which students' home varieties of language are seen as a resource to be used for learning the standard and for education in general.

3.1. Description of the awareness approach

The awareness approach has three aspects: a sociolinguistic component, an accommodation component and a contrastive component. In the sociolinguistic component, students learn about different varieties of language, such as social and regional dialects and creoles, and about how one particular variety becomes accepted as the "standard". As students are studying the sociolinguistic worlds around them, this aspect of the approach can be more like social studies than language arts. In the accommodation component, students study literature and music written in their own varieties of language, and are sometimes given the opportunity to express themselves in speaking and writing these varieties. Last, in the contrastive component, students examine the rule-governed phonological, morphosyntactic and pragmatic characteristics of their own varieties compared to those of other students' varieties and to the standard. This is sometimes called contrastive analysis (Rickford, 1999, 2002; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998).

One of the first educational programs using the awareness approach for speakers of marginalized varieties was the Afro-Caribbean Language and Literacy Project in Further and Adult Education, aimed primarily at immigrants in Britain from communities speaking Caribbean Creoles. It was established by the Language and Literacy Unit of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) in 1984, and culminated in the publishing of a book of language materials for teachers and students: *Language and power* (ILEA Afro-Caribbean Language and Literacy Project in Further and Adult Education, 1990). The awareness aspects of the book are described as follows (p. v):

> The book is based on the belief that a key part of the language curriculum for all students should be an outline of the social and political factors which helped to determine the development of Standard English. It is also necessary to make available to both students and teachers as much information as possible about languages in general and about the history and development of Caribbean Creole languages in particular. This includes an understanding of their grammatical structure, pronunciation patterns, vocabulary and idiom. The students themselves can contribute a great deal of this information, and their confidence will grow when their expertise in this area is acknowledged. Students' own knowledge and understanding of different languages and language varieties are an invaluable resource for

> language teaching. It is in this context that progress on the language issue in the multilingual classroom can be achieved, not just for students of Afro-Caribbean origin, but for students of all races and backgrounds.

Other programs using the awareness approach are now found in various parts of the world. In Australia, for example, "Two-way English" (e.g., Malcolm et al., 1999) is a program for students in Western Australia who speak Aboriginal English. It recognizes and explores cultural and linguistic differences as a rich educational opportunity for both teachers and students. It is also "about a sharing of knowledge, and of the power linked in with that knowledge" (Malcolm, 1995, p. 39). In Los Angeles, California, the Academic English Mastery Program (LeMoine, 2001) trains teachers to build a knowledge and understanding of various vernaculars and the students who use them, and then integrate this knowledge into instruction in standard English and other subjects. The handbook for this program, *English for your success* (Los Angeles Unified School District & LeMoine, 1999), outlines activities for contrasting African American English (AAE) and standard English (for descriptions of other programs, see Siegel, 1999).

In addition, Delpit (1988, 1990) describes the use of a similar approach for teaching speakers of "Village English" in Alaska. And Wolfram (1999) suggests that the "dialect awareness" method used successfully with regional dialects in the USA could be used for speakers of AAE (see also Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999).

3.2. Research on awareness programs

Some evaluations have been carried out on programs using the awareness approach as a whole, or at least two of its three components. These evaluations fall into two categories: evaluations of programs aimed at creole-speaking students and those for AAE-speaking students.

3.2.1. Programs for creole-speaking students

Hawai‘i's Project Holopono, which took place from 1984 to 1988, was a program involving approximately 300 students of limited English proficiency in grades 4 to 6 in 8 schools. Half of these students were Hawai‘i Creole speakers. The program included some awareness activities, such as looking at literature containing Hawai‘i Creole and contrasting features of the creole and standard English. The evaluation of the final year of the project showed an increase in oral proficiency in standard English among 84% of the students (Actouka & Lai, 1989).

Another Hawai‘i program, Project Akamai ran from 1989 to 1993. It involved more than 600 Hawai‘i Creole speakers in grades 9 and 10 in 11 schools. It also included the use of literature in Hawai‘i Creole and some contrastive activities. An evaluation of the final year of the project reported increases of between 35% and 40% on tests of standard English use and oral language skills (Afaga & Lai, 1994).

In the Caribbean, Elsasser and Irvine (1987) describe an experimental program to integrate the study of Creole and English in a college writing program in the US Virgin Islands. They report that the program led to increased interest in language in general, and to a greater "understanding of the role of grammatical conventions, standardized spelling, and the rhetorical possibilities of both languages" (p. 143).

In the USA, the Caribbean Academic Program (CAP) at Evanston Township High School near Chicago is an awareness program for creole-speaking high school students who have migrated to the area from the Caribbean. Both standard English and various Caribbean English creoles are used in the classroom for speaking, reading and writing, and issues concerning these languages

and standard English are discussed (Fischer, 1992a; Menacker, 1998). A study was done on the progress of the students involved in the program. In the 1991–1992 school year, 73% of the 51 CAP students were placed in the lowest of the four levels (or tracks) in the school based on academic ability; none of them were in the two highest levels. But after 1 year in the program, only 7% remained in the lowest level; 81% had moved up at least one level; 24% had moved up two or more levels; 26% were in the two highest levels (Fischer, 1992b).

3.2.2. Programs for AAE-speaking students

Pandey (2000) studied the effectiveness of a 6-week experimental program using what she called "the contrastive analytic approach" to teaching standard English as a second dialect. This approach had both the contrastive and the sociolinguistic components of an awareness program. The subjects were a group of AAE-speaking pre-college and first-year college students who were raised in the inner city and were basically monodialectal. Pandey found that the approach led to more relaxed attitudes towards learning, increased bidialectal awareness and marked improvement in performance on standardized tests.

A comprehensive evaluation of the Los Angeles School District's Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP), mentioned above, was conducted in 1998–1999 (Maddahian & Sandamela, 2000). The evaluation also had a pretest-posttest design, here using the Language Assessment Writing Test. Results showed "a statistically significant and educationally meaningful difference between experimental and control groups" with the AEMP program participants out-performing those who did not participate in the program (p. vii). The researchers concluded that the AEMP is "an effective program in improving academic use of English language for speakers of non-mainstream English language" (p. vii) and recommended that the program be continued and expanded.

Similar results from other programs are described in Siegel (1999, in press). Thus, in general the research seems to indicate that the awareness approach, unlike other approaches mentioned earlier, is successful in achieving higher scores in tests measuring reading and writing skills in standard English, and in some cases improvements in students' motivation and overall academic achievement.

3.3. Reasons for success

There are several probable reasons for the success of the awareness approach as compared to other approaches. First, the sociolinguistic component promotes acceptance of language (and cultural) diversity as "normal", and values students' home varieties. This can only lead to more positive attitudes in both teachers and students. Second, the accommodation component may increase students' motivation and participation by including aspects of their own language and culture in the curriculum. Third, the contrastive component makes learners aware of differences between their own varieties and the standard that they may not otherwise notice (Craig, 1966, 1983). In second language acquisition theory, Schmidt's "noticing hypothesis" (1990, 1993) asserts that attention to target language forms is necessary for acquisition; these forms will not be acquired unless they are noticed.

4. Critical examination of the awareness approach

It is clear that the awareness approach has had some success in increasing acquisition of the standard and improvement in academic performance, But does it succeed in challenging the

ideologies described above which serve to perpetuate the power and privilege of some social groups while disempowering others? Does the awareness approach do anything to empower speakers of marginalized varieties? Before answering these questions, however, we have to define what we mean by "power" and "empowerment" (see Pennycook, 2001, p. 27).

Of course, there are many views of what power is. At the risk of oversimplification, I will discuss two broad perspectives. According to the first perspective, power is seen as a commodity that can be acquired, possessed and distributed. It can be used to gain access to economic resources and political influence, and to impose one's will on others. It is often seen as belonging to one particular social group and as giving them the means to acquire more economic resources and political influence than other groups and therefore the means to be dominant in society. The particular forms of language that are used by individuals or groups who have power are considered to be powerful in themselves, or at least one of the keys to attaining and maintaining power. It is the standard variety that is considered the language of power.

Within this "power as a commodity" perspective, there are also at least two different views on empowerment. According to the first view, empowerment means the attainment of more of the commodity of power. Therefore, in the context of education, it is thought by some that speakers of marginalized varieties are empowered by attaining knowledge of the standard variety, by attaining more of the sociolinguistic resources that will enable them to be more successful in education and ultimately to obtain greater economic and political resources. So in this sociolinguistic resources view of the nature of power, the research described in the preceding section shows that the awareness approach has led to the empowerment of speakers of marginalized varieties by giving them greater knowledge of the standard, and helping them to attain better overall educational results.

However, according to the other view of power within the "power as a commodity" perspective, increased success in acquisition of the standard or improvement in academic performance alone do not lead to empowerment. This second view sees power more in relation to the larger structures of society. As we have seen, the differentials in power and privilege between groups in society are such that even if members of subordinated groups do acquire the language of power and are successful in the education system, they still may not be able to gain access to economic and political resources. Individual success in the existing system leads only to assimilation, and reproduces the repressive ideologies and social practices of the existing inequitable power structure (Giroux, 1988). The only way to change things to be more equitable is to transform the social order, including the education system (Pennycook, 1999). At the individual level, empowerment comes only from changes that can eventually lead to a change in the power structure.

This view is exemplified by the "critical pedagogy" perspective (e.g., Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1988, 2001). This perspective has two important aspects. The first is to give students their "voice", so that they are no longer silenced in the educational process. This involves bringing their histories, experiences and cultures into the classroom, and working with the knowledge they already have. The second aspect of this perspective is an emphasis on teaching both pedagogical skills and critical analysis—that is, the ability to analyze policies, practices and texts, including those of one's own culture, in order to identify ideologies and see, for example, how they may lead to privilege for some groups or subjugation for others. Students should gain the critical skills to become aware of the ideologies that support the current power structure, and thus have the potential to reject them.

These kinds of changes—teaching students critical analytic skills and giving them their voice—do not usually occur through the awareness approach. While students learn about the history that led to one particular variety becoming accepted as the standard, the approach does not necessarily emphasize the politics or language involved, or give students the critical skills

they need, for example, to deconstruct the standard language ideology. And while the use of literature and music lyrics in marginalized varieties (e.g., rap lyrics) may increase students' interest or motivation, it does not necessarily give students their own voice. Rather, their use may be "pedagogical practices that attempt to appropriate forms of student and popular culture in the interests of social control" (Giroux, 1988, p. 127). In other words, these activities may serve to perpetuate the inequitable educational system rather than changing it for the better.

I will come back to this structural view later, but now let us look at another, very different perspective of power in general. In this perspective, power is not seen as a commodity that can be acquired, possessed or distributed, and it is not defined as the ability to impose one's will over others. Rather, power is viewed as a constantly shifting effect of the interplay of various relationships in society. According to Foucault (1978, p. 93): "[P]ower is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society." So it is more appropriate to talk not about power in itself, but rather about power relationships between individuals or between social groups.

There are many definitions of this view of power, but I will follow that of Tew (2002, pp. 165–166):

> I would propose that power be understood as a *social relation* that *either opens up or closes off opportunities* for individuals or social groups. These may include opportunities to define and negotiate identities, to make or break connections with others, to express desires and feelings (and have these acknowledged), to satisfy needs or aspirations, to participate and contribute, to influence and make choices, or to engage in some form of transformatory action. [italics in original].

When one defines power in these terms, the term empowerment does not refer to acquiring or owning more power as a commodity, or to gaining power or control over others. Rather, according to Tew (2002, p. 169), it means "changing the terms of relationships and the modes of operation of power between (and within) people from limiting to more productive forms". In other words, empowerment is "not just about 'achieving power' within pre-existing structures, but is also about 'transforming it'. . .", and this may involve "shifts in identities, orientations and practices that open up, rather than close off opportunities" (ibid).

Thus, in both the structural view of power and the social relation view of power, the key to empowerment is change—change in individuals' orientations and changes in institutionalized practices. The awareness approach, as is currently stands, does not necessarily aim for such change, and thus according to these perspectives does not challenge existing ideologies or empower speakers of marginalized varieties. However, it does have the potential to do so if it adopts a more critical orientation.

5. The critical awareness approach

A critical orientation that is relevant to the education of speakers of marginalized varieties is "critical language awareness" (Fairclough, 1989, 1992a) or "critical language study" (Clark et al., 1991). This orientation recognizes the value of teaching the standard variety but only when it is done while critically analyzing the standard language ideology, the doctrine of "appropriateness" (Fairclough, 1992b), and "the systematic, socially legitimised stigmatisation of varieties" (Fairclough, 1992a, p. 15).

Speakers of marginalized varieties could be empowered by a "critical awareness" approach in three different ways. First, the sociolinguistic component could be used to enable students to

reflect on and interpret their experiences of language use and to explain these experiences by thoroughly examining the conventions and systems of beliefs, or ideologies, that exist in society and how these developed. As Fairclough (1989, p. 85) notes: "Ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible." For example, Murrell (1997, p. 28) emphasizes that negative media images of African Americans "ought to be deconstructed and exposed for what they really are—an assault on black cultural self-determination—so that these images do not become internalized by young people". With regard to language, examining how one particular variety became the standard to the detriment of other varieties, the standard language ideology and its denigration of marginalized language and culture, can be "deconstructed and exposed", thus reducing its chances of contributing to students' negative self-image or to their total rejection of the education system.

Second, the accommodation component could be extended to give students the opportunity to make more use of their own varieties of language in the educational process, especially in writing. This can be accomplished by critically examining the standard language ideology and the doctrine of appropriateness, and by encouraging students to voice their own experiences (Clark et al., 1991, p. 51). Janks and Ivanič (1992, pp. 323–325) also describe particular classroom activities such as risk assessment, simulation and rewriting, that help students establish their own social identities as writers. Murrell (1997, pp. 40–41) writes: "Freire would assert that ascription of differences that locate African American dialect and language as inferior promotes powerlessness, as people become voiceless when denied the tools with which they make meaning, communicate, think, and act, reflectively." Thus by implication, speakers of AAE and other marginalized varieties would be empowered by the use of their voice in the education system. According to Fairclough (1989, p. 217), empowerment is "developing people's capacity to explore the full range of what is possible within the given order of discourse, without actually changing it". Using a marginalized variety of language in a context in which it is not normally used is an example of "emancipatory discourse"—that is, "discourse which goes outside currently dominant conventions in some way" (p. 243). Thus, the accommodation component of the awareness approach could help students to "infringe" conventions of language use, without actually having to radically change them, by participating with their own voice in areas where they are normally excluded (p. 244).

The third way that a critical awareness approach could lead to empowerment is through the use of the students' own knowledge in the educational process. An important aspect of critical language awareness is that it is built on the language capabilities and experience of the students (Fairclough, 1989, 1992a). Thus, to be most effective, the contrastive component of the awareness approach should not only be presented by the teacher, but should also rely on students' knowledge of the implicit morphosyntactic and pragmatic rules of their own language. This would help to shift the power relations in the classroom, as the teacher is not the source of knowledge in this area, but rather a facilitator along with the students in making this knowledge explicit—for example, in having students discuss how something would be expressed in their language as opposed to other varieties. This knowledge, as well as the students' experience, could also be important in the sociolinguistic component which examines different language varieties and attitudes and practices towards them.

The critical awareness approach could also help students acquire more knowledge about their language and culture—for example about its literature, its history and its contribution to the language and culture of other social groups. With regard to AAE, students can study its use by African American writers (see Rickford & Rickford, 2002), learn about its African roots and how it is related to resistance to slavery (Morgan, 2002, p. 141). They can also discover for themselves the influence of AAE on other varieties—for example, that many words of African origin, such as *okra* and *jive*, may have entered standard English via AAE (see Wynne, 2002). And

more importantly, this could lead to reflections on how the direction of influence is not always from the powerful to the powerless. Murrell (1997, p. 42) writes: "The educational agenda for African American children is the development of a cultural and racial identity both to counter the hegemonic ascription of inferiority to their language, and to encourage literacy learning based on their abilities to recover substantive meanings and motifs of blackness."

This brings us back to the dual goals of critical pedagogy: "to empower people though a combination of pedagogical skills and critical analysis" (Giroux, 1988, p. 152). How would a critical awareness approach lead to the acquisition of pedagogical skills?

Most theories of second language acquisition agree that the affective variables of learner motivation, attitudes, self-confidence, and anxiety have some effect on attainment of the second language or dialect. We have already seen that speakers of marginalized varieties such as AAE and creoles often have a negative self-image because of the frequent denigration of their speech and culture in the schools. It may be that not just valuing students' varieties but also using them in a significant way in the educational process would result in positive values to these affective variables with regard to learning the standard and less resistance to the education system in general.

Certainly, many of the studies of awareness programs referred to above describe increased participation and enthusiasm in the educational process. As Skutnabb-Kangas (1988, p. 29) points out, when the child's mother tongue is truly valued in the educational setting, it leads to low anxiety, high motivation and high self-confidence, three factors which are closely related to successful educational programs. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998, p. 290) also point out that "there is now some indication that students who feel more confident about their own vernacular dialect are more successful in learning the standard one". In her discussion of awareness activities in the classroom, Baker (2002, p. 59) observes:

> As young people become less fearful of being manipulated or disrespected, I think they can become engaged in the study of their own language competence. They can weigh their options, choose how they want to speak and write in each new setting. In this atmosphere, the mechanics and usage of vocabulary of formal English no longer threaten to demean them.

Furthermore, it is possible that the inclusion of students' language and culture in the educational process could also have other positive effects on educational attainment. The first has to do with attitudes of teachers. For example, many studies have shown that both African American and European–American teachers have less positive attitudes towards AAE-speaking students than towards standard-speaking students, and lower expectations about their abilities and performance, and that this leads to lower results (e.g., Ogbu, 1978, pp. 133–135). (For a good survey of these studies and a discussion of the self-fulfilling prophecies spawned by these attitudes, see Tauber, 1997.) But because of the nature of the critical awareness approach, teachers themselves could become aware of the standard language ideology and the legitimacy and complex rule-governed nature of their students' language varieties, and therefore develop more positive attitudes to and higher expectations of their students.

Second, the affirmation and significant use of the students' own language and culture can lead to increased racial or ethnic pride. Smitherman (2002, p. 172) refers to unpublished research done in the 1980s demonstrating "that Blacks who were conscious of their own language as a legitimate system were more receptive to learning the language of wider communication [i.e., standard English]". Recent research by Smith, Atkins, and Connell (2003) shows that for African American fourth graders, higher levels of "racial-ethnic" pride correlated with higher academic

achievement, as measured by both scores on standardized tests of reading and mathematics and grades in school.

Third, it may be that the inclusion of marginalized groups' language and culture in the educational system would reduce the perception that it is an institution promoting only the language and culture of dominant groups. This has the potential to reduce marginalized students' resistance to the institution of education. Related to this is the fact that a critical awareness approach would also encourage students to critically examine hidden contradictions and ideologies in their own culture, not just those in the dominant culture. Thus, for example, African American students may critically examine the uncritical acceptance of monolingualism as well as the oppositional ideology in their own culture, as described by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Lanehart (1998), mentioned above, which leads to rejection of academic achievement. In fact, the research by Smith et al. (2003) also contradicts the notion put forward by Fordham (1988) that some African Americans find "racelessness" a necessary strategy for school success. Furthermore, Carter (2003) describes African American students who do not reject academic achievement in opposition to dominant white culture; rather they "resist the cultural default"—that academically successful students are those with "white middle-class standards of speech, dress, musical tastes, and interactional styles" (Carter, 2003, p. 137). With regard to the language aspect, this is reminiscent of Rampton's work (e.g., 1995, 2001) which reveals young people's rejection of essentialist categories of ethnicity and language use. Thus for some African American students who desire to be successful within the mainstream education system, it is important to minimize the use of the accepted standard variety and find more opportunities and contexts to use AAE (Morgan, 2002, p. 150). The critical awareness approach would provide some support in this matter.

Finally, from the social relation view of power, empowerment can apply to all social groups—dominant as well as marginalized. In a critical awareness approach, students from privileged communities could also learn to critically examine the hidden contradictions and ideologies of their own culture, and the limits and political consequences of their own culture's world view (Giroux, 1988, p. 151). Thus Wynne (2002, pp. 208–209) argues that the same approach should be used for both mainstream and marginalized children:

> By neglecting to teach about the beauty and richness of Black America, we also damage White children. . . . [B]y not recognizing Ebonics, we keep White children trapped in myopic visions of world realities. We give them one more reason to bolster their mistaken notions of supremacy and privilege. . . . [B]y discounting Ebonics, we keep White children oblivious to significant slices of their own country's history. We deny them the opportunity to look at their own ancestors and history in a way that might help them recognize their collective responsibility for injustices, as well as their collective potential for redemption. As Tew (2002, p. 169) notes: "Empowerment may thus be a mutual, interactive and generative process, one that is moving and challenging for all parties."

6. Conclusion

Four language-related ideologies contribute to the marginalization of language varieties such as AAE and Hawai'i Creole, especially within the formal education system. As a consequence of these ideologies, some speakers of these marginalized varieties themselves denigrate their own language and believe in the intrinsic superiority of the standard. Thus, they support the views of dominant social groups that their own speech varieties should be excluded from the educational process. Others see use of the standard as threatening their own ethnic identity, and therefore

resist the education system that promotes it. Still others are faced with what Ogbu (1999, p. 168) calls the "dialect dilemma"—recognizing that the standard has important practical benefits but feeling that it is a threat to their identity imposed on them by the dominant social group.

Research clearly shows that inclusion of marginalized varieties in the curriculum along with the standard—as in awareness programs—has clear educational advantages. Nevertheless, despite this evidence, the strength of the ideologies insures the continued non-acceptance of these varieties in the educational process. It has been suggested here that a critical examination of the ideologies may lead to the realization that knowledge of the standard can be gained without the denigration of these varieties and without the abandonment of the identity associated with them. It can also lead to the realization that using marginalized varieties more widely in the educational process can be beneficial rather than harmful to learning the standard while at the same time affirming the linguistic and cultural identity of marginalized communities.

Of course, it would not be easy to change the established orientations of many teachers in the first place, so that they would be willing to accept the use of a critical awareness approach. An initial step would be for linguists and educationists to take a more critical approach to language issues in both dealing with the public and educating teachers. Professional development and in-service training for existing teaching would also be needed (see Corson, 2001, pp. 84–85, 95–97). However, once teachers have seen through the language ideologies, and gained sufficient linguistic and sociolinguistic background, they would be more likely to recognize the educational benefits of a critical awareness approach. Such an approach also has an advantage in that it can be adopted by schools without having to wait for overarching changes in the structure of the curriculum or the educational system as a whole. Thus, while change from above may not be feasible because of the existing power structure, change from below has a greater likelihood of success.

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