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 Edited by Kristin Denham and Anne Lobeck
 Excerpt
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Introduction

Kristin Denham and Anne Lobeck

Over the past thirty years, research in linguistics has led to a deeper understanding of language, and linguists have developed better analytic tools for describing the structure of words, phrases, and discourses – better theories of grammar. The scientific study of language, linguistics, has provided us with greater understanding of how languages are acquired, how they develop over time and space, what it means to be bilingual, how languages are similar to each other, and what accounts for their differences, among many other aspects of this uniquely human phenomenon. Nevertheless, the advances of linguistic science have remained largely confined to the academy, and many of us who teach linguistics still find that our students know very little about language. This lack of knowledge of language is unfortunate but not surprising; though some teacher education programs include courses on linguistics, linguistics is not comprehensively integrated into teacher education, and is thus largely absent in the K-12 curriculum. The chapters in the book show, however, that this tide is starting to turn; linguists are becoming more and more active in K-12 education in a variety of productive ways. You will also see from the chapters in this book that there is no “right” way to integrate linguistics into K-12 education. If we do have one message, it is that we linguists can’t do this alone; we need to collaborate with practicing teachers and work in partnership toward the common goal of improving language education.

The need to bridge theory and practice

Much research has been conducted to identify ways in which raising awareness of language can be of use to K-12 teachers, and thus of benefit to their students. For example, the study of sentence structure (syntax), word formation (morphology), sound patterns (phonetics and phonology), and meaning (semantics) can aid in understanding and analyzing oral and written language (and sign language). Knowledge of syntax, phonology, and morphology deepens understanding of and provides tools to analyze distinctions among literary genres, stylistic choices, and cultural literacies, spelling patterns and irregularities, accent and pronunciation, etymology and vocabulary.

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Knowledge of these fundamental areas of linguistics can be an important tool in analyzing reading and writing development and patterns of error. Knowledge of semantics, pragmatics, and discourse helps teachers identify and understand different conversational patterns and narrative structures (in oral, written, and signed language). Knowledge of differences in cross-cultural conversational practices can be of use in mitigating miscommunication that impedes learning. Knowledge of language acquisition can be applied in analyzing developmental patterns in writing and literacy in both first- and second-language readers and writers, and can help teachers distinguish between actual language disorders and what are perceived to be disorders that can in reality be attributed to second-language learning or dialect difference. Knowledge of language change and variation helps teachers respond in informed ways to differences between academic and home speech varieties in reading, writing, and speaking. Understanding that language varies and changes systematically helps situate “standard” and “non-standard” varieties of English in the classroom in reasoned rather than discriminatory ways. Studying language change and variation deepens our understanding of language as a dynamic system, expressed by shifts in word meaning, syntax, and pronunciation (the latter reflected in the English spelling system). Studying language as a social tool helps dispel myths and stereotypes based on language and fosters linguistic equality in an increasingly multicultural society. (See research compiled in Denham and Lobeck 2005; as well as in Adger, Snow, and Christian 2002; Baugh 1999; Wheeler 1999a, 1999b; Andrews 1998, Mufwene *et al.* 1998; Smitherman 2000; Delpit 1988; among others)

Educators are also acutely aware of the need for language study, though the goals for its integration and implementation in the classroom are typically different from those of linguists. These goals include accountability requirements that demand that students demonstrate high level literacy skills (Abedi 2004), an increased focus on writing which calls for expert control of text and sentence structure, as well as vocabulary, and state assessments that demand expert reading skills. Further, although some of the unique linguistic demands associated with the content areas have been identified (e.g., Lee and Fradd 1996; Abedi and Lord 2001), educators’ lack of understanding of language leads to inaccurate assessments of and responses to English language learners and other students whose academic language skills lag behind their social language skills (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, and Christian 2004; Heath 1983; Short 1994). Improving teaching and learning for these students often involves revising linguistic practices, texts, and knowledge about second language learning (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short 2004). In addition, the possible role of dialect differences in the persistent achievement gap between Black and White students is often mentioned but

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not well understood. Indeed, there is a high degree of politicization with respect to language use in school about which the public, including teachers, is often naive, as witness conversations during the Oakland Ebonics controversy that referenced myths about dialects more often than scientific information (Vaughn-Cooke 1999). Teachers therefore need a broad understanding about the structure of language and its use to help their students understand how language works so that they can use it well for reading, writing, and speaking in the increasingly multicultural and multilingual classroom (Fillmore and Snow 2002). Nevertheless, though widely used English Education textbooks in the US (Christenbury 2000; Atwell 1998) include chapters on dialect diversity and discuss the value of home language, it appears that primary and secondary teachers continue to rely on traditional approaches to language, approaches that are inconsistent with what we now know about language structure, variation, change, acquisition, and use as a social tool.

Some roadblocks

Given linguists' and educators' joint commitment to the importance of the study of language in the K-12 curriculum it is perhaps surprising that research in linguistics has had only a minimal impact on school teaching. The reasons for this state of affairs are complex. Linguistics is a donor discipline to English language arts. In addition to supplying knowledge about the subsystems of language, it has helped to shape the knowledge base on reading, writing, speaking, and listening (e.g., Farr and Daniel 1986; Labov 1970; Wolfram, Adger, and Christian 1999). But the connection between linguistics and English language arts has not been as strong as it should be, particularly with regard to grammar, a language process that underlies language production and comprehension. Linguistics' decades-long focus on generative syntax (e.g., Chomsky 1965, 1981, 1995) has had little impact on grammar study in colleges of education and in schools. Linguistics and English language arts have had different views of what grammar is and should be, and different goals for its use. Linguists have sought to build a grammar that would be adequate for describing the language, and English language arts has sought to apply a grammar that is already constructed. It is perhaps not surprising that there continues to be longstanding debate over the efficacy of teaching grammar in primary and secondary school, based on early controversial studies that claimed that grammar teaching was ineffective in teaching writing (see discussion cited in Hartwell 1985 and, for updates, Weaver 1996). Connections between linguistics and other curricular areas (history, social studies, science) are virtually non-existent, largely because of the public resistance to identifying linguistics as a science, and because, with a few

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notable exceptions (publication in 1995 of Steven Pinker's popular *The Language Instinct* and the weekly commentary by linguist Geoffrey Nunberg on National Public Radio), linguistics remains largely confined to the academy (Battistella 2005).

The importance of an eclectic approach

It is our belief that in order to truly integrate linguistically informed instruction into education, we must approach the task from all angles: targeting teacher preparation, developing and implementing practical applications of linguistics in both primary and secondary classrooms, partnering with classroom teachers, working to change state and national standards with respect to language education, writing textbooks (at all levels), pursuing funding, among other approaches. In short, we will advocate for both a top-down and a bottom-up approach to integration of linguistics into the school curriculum, an approach illustrated by the contributions in this volume.

Variation in local and/or national educational standards with respect to language education makes it especially important to approach the task from every possible direction. So, for example, in the states/districts/provinces in which at least one linguistics course is required for prospective teachers, linguists can develop course curricula and materials that help teachers productively apply linguistics in their classrooms. However, in places in which there is no linguistics education for teachers, the task must be approached in other ways – by developing materials that are easily accessible for non-specialists, by sitting on regional/national standards boards, by developing materials and course modules that can be used as continuing education credits, by becoming involved in textbook and other materials development, by pursuing grants that bring together linguists and educators. At the same time, working from the bottom up (locally) can also effect broad-reaching change by exposing teachers to the benefits of linguistic knowledge, by developing assessment tools that demonstrate how important linguistic knowledge is, and by developing materials and lesson plans that can lead to linguistically informed teaching and learning.

The chapters in this volume also highlight the importance of teaching linguistics “in and of itself” in the classroom. Too often, linguistics is seen within the field of education as relevant only to teaching writing or reading (as part of the “language arts”), even though the applications of linguistic knowledge reach far beyond these borders. Several contributions in the volume will address the benefits of engaging students in the scientific study of language in and of itself, an area of study that enriches the curriculum in ways unavailable to more narrow approaches.

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[More information](#)**A call to action**

The target audience for this volume is linguists, whom we hope to inspire to participate in this important work. We hope this volume will also be of use to teachers, teacher educators, and others interested in the integration of linguistic knowledge into primary and secondary education. Although the volume does include some ideas for implementation of linguistics into K-12 education it does not focus on educational/pedagogical theory (other than as it arises in the vignettes by teachers, in Part III). Rather, the focus is on successful ways to improve education about language, and how linguists can make a difference in this regard. We focus primarily on the projects in the US, simply because that is the system we are most familiar with. However, there are important examples from the UK and from Australia as well.

There are some common themes in each chapter, some threads that weave the chapters in this volume together. We mention them here, so that each author can get right to the substance of each chapter's topic and avoid redundancy. Those shared themes are the following:

- There are many reasons why linguistics is valuable in education as a topic in and of itself, as well as integrated into other disciplines.
- There are known barriers to curricular change: teacher preparation and the structure of educational programs, assessment pressure, prescribed curricula, lack of materials.
- Collaboration between linguists and teachers is crucial in order to reach curricular goals. Linguists need to really work *with* teachers, as many of the contributors to this volume are doing.
- Linguists need to get more involved in the integration of linguistics into primary and secondary education; let the chapters in this book serve as a call to action.

Regardless of the differences between the two fields, linguists and educators share a common goal, namely to integrate the science of language into K-12 pedagogy in ways that raise awareness of the workings of language. Successful collaboration between linguists and educators has begun to emerge. It is these successful collaborations, both from the bottom up and the top down, that you will read about in this book.

Acknowledgments

The theme of this book is collaboration; as each chapter makes clear, it is only with the cooperation, support, and expertise of practicing teachers that linguistics can gain any kind of foothold in the schools. We therefore thank, above all, the many teachers who have taken the time out of their already demanding days to work with us on the projects chronicled here. We also thank their

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students, whose ingenuity, enthusiasm, and linguistic intuitions inform the projects highlighted here in invaluable ways. And a special thank you to our colleagues in linguistics for persevering in this sometimes difficult but always ultimately rewarding work. It is through all of these efforts that we collectively extend the reach of linguistics beyond the borders of academia into “real life.”

We were very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with the fine editors and staff at Cambridge University Press in preparing this book for publication. We are forever grateful to our very patient editor Helen Barton, whose support for this project never waned, even when we were far past our original deadline. We thank Christopher Hills, Jodie Barnes, and Penny Wheeler for excellent copy-editing and other help, and the reviewers for their insights and excellent commentary. Some of this material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 0536821.

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Part I

Linguistics from the top down: encouraging
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Introduction to Part I

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The chapters in Part I provide historical background on linguistics in education, in the form of discussion of successful (and not so successful) projects that have resulted by working mainly from the “top down.” The contributors discuss diverse ways to integrate linguistic knowledge at the institutional level, through national or regional curricula, standards and assessment, and teacher training and collaboration, and by working to change ideologies about language and its place in education. Authors also address challenges they’ve encountered in their work, which may help others avoid such stumbling blocks in the future. Below we outline each chapter, and highlight recurring themes among them.

Edwin Battistella’s chapter addresses the public misperceptions about linguistics and the role those misperceptions play in shaping language education; linguistics is irrelevant and academic, descriptivism promotes the elevation of non-standard dialects, and so on. He draws parallels with public perceptions of biology and visual art, both of which have faced resistance for similar reasons. Battistella highlights what we can learn from the challenges faced by other fields and how we can use those lessons to change perceptions of linguistics and encourage institutional change.

Wayne O’Neil’s chapter discusses the failure of a “top-down” approach to institutional change in the 1960s (Project English in Oregon State). The rise and fall of this project provides us with important insights into what it takes for large-scale, top-down curricular change to succeed, and what stumbling blocks can arise along the way to derail such projects. O’Neil outlines a project that began as a successful, university–K–12 collaborative project, the core of which was teacher training and materials development, and which involved piloting and experimentation. For a number of reasons, this project devolved into turning out textbooks that were intended to “run on their own.” Gone was the university–schools connection, and all that was left were “inert” textbooks. O’Neil continued his work on creating and piloting educational materials that promote the science of language, and recounts the story of his and Maya Honda’s ongoing and very successful collaboration with Seattle school teacher David Pippin (see Chapter 12 in this volume by Honda, O’Neil, and Pippin). He reminds us of the importance of nurturing queries from teachers, because what

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begins as a simple exchange can lead to the kind of university–school collaboration that he believes is essential to curricular change.

Richard Hudson's chapter outlines a successful model of "top-down" curricular change in England, emphasizing that such comprehensive change takes the collaboration not only of linguists and teachers, but also of government officials. Also important to the integration of linguistics was the implementation of a National Curriculum. Hudson discusses how linguistics found a curricular niche in the National Curriculum with the demise of "drill and kill" grammar teaching, which was unsuccessful in meeting teachers' goals. Linguistics, under the umbrella of "knowledge about language" or KAL, was integrated into the curriculum through applications to the study of literature and creative writing, building on the interests and skills of teachers. Linguistics was also linked to improving the teaching of foreign language, which had also been identified as a curricular need. Strong leadership by linguists dedicated to reforming education, such as Randolph Quirk, Michael Halliday, David Crystal, Hudson himself, and others, was instrumental in this process, as were teachers themselves, who were enthusiastic about and committed to these changes. One result of this curricular change is the linguistically informed A-level course in English Language (see also Clayton, Chapter 23 in this volume on "A-level English Language teaching in London"), and a wealth of resource materials, including websites, teacher training materials, and email discussion lists. As a result of these changes, dialect diversity is now more tolerated, and prescriptivism is in decline. Language is viewed as an object of study in and of itself. Hudson notes that teacher training, though not an insurmountable problem, is still a challenge that remains to be overcome.

Graeme Trousdale's chapter on integrating linguistics into the curriculum in Scotland echoes many of the themes in Hudson's chapter, with some important differences. While KAL is part of the Scottish curriculum, guidelines are unclear, and participation in courses on language is rather low. To boost interest in KAL and to encourage more interest in this area of study, a number of different organizations have been formed to promote KAL in the curriculum. Trousdale discusses these organizations, among them the Committee for Language Awareness in Scottish Schools (CLASS), a group of university linguists, educationalists (those involved in teaching and research on educational policy and teacher training), primary and secondary teachers, and writers who have a particular interest in raising language awareness in the curriculum. By connecting KAL to Scottish language and culture, the study of English and of foreign languages, these committees and organizations have made progress in not only changing the curriculum, but in fostering the kinds of essential collaborations needed for such work to succeed and continue. The collaborative groups Trousdale discusses host workshops and conferences, create Google groups and blogs, offer professional development for teachers, create materials

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for English and foreign language teaching, and offer a variety of opportunities for exchange between universities and primary and secondary schools.

Jean Mulder's chapter traces the development and implementation of a national linguistics curriculum in Australia, called VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) English Language, developed by a group of academic linguists and secondary English teachers. This "top-down" work was supported by a call for institutional change and, as we've seen before, for an approach to language to fill the void created by the abandonment of traditional grammar instruction (a factor in the projects undertaken by both O'Neil and Hudson, described in this section). Mulder focuses primarily on the curriculum itself – what is taught and why, and how linguistics is connected to the study of text in a variety of ways. She elaborates on the role of linguist as learner rather than expert when it comes to designing materials for secondary schools, and the importance of collaboration with teachers. Mulder provides important insights into the challenge and process of writing a linguistically informed textbook that will meet teachers' needs, and offers useful commentary on the kinds of judgment calls linguists must make in developing lessons and assessments.

Carol Lord and Sharon Klein's chapter explores how educational standards have developed over the years, to help us better understand why linguistics has been largely excluded from such standards. Understanding the forces that drive standards (currently, to measure school success and to enforce accountability) helps us understand how to respond in constructive ways. Lord and Klein discuss how to bring the advances of linguistic science into education standards by linking that research with pressing educational needs (in California, the academic success of English language learners, for example). Effective standards must also be aligned with teacher preparation, curriculum development, and assessment. Such alignment offers linguists many opportunities to become involved in shaping education. Lord and Klein, like Mulder, discuss the importance of working not only on curriculum but on textbooks. The success of their work also relies, as we have seen with the other examples of top-down change in this section, on "bottom-up" collaboration with teachers.

Jeffrey Reaser's chapter describes two curriculum projects he and his colleagues have developed for high schools. One is a companion to the Public Broadcasting System's series *Do You Speak American?*, created by Robert MacNeil *et al.* (1986). The curriculum is explicitly tied to the educational standards of both the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Council for the Social Studies, and is designed for use by teachers who have no training in linguistics. Reaser also discusses Voices of North Carolina, a regionally based dialect awareness curriculum which is also tied explicitly to North Carolina educational standards and teacher identified topics of interest. A multitude of materials is available for both curricula; DVDs, websites, teachers' manuals, and workbooks, all of which are tied to Social