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# LITERACY AND DIVERSITY

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## INTRODUCTION

If true literacy is the ability to use written language for your own purposes, then the forms of literacy should be as diverse as are the interests and purposes of people in our society. The diversity of written language should express not just social differences, but the real social conflicts among interests, values, and points of view. In a democratic and truly literate society, the uses and forms of written language should reflect and help to create the same healthy social diversity which the spoken language does. Otherwise, an astute observer might be pardoned for supposing that the forms and uses of literacy were being limited and restricted in the interests of some members of the community, while others were allowed access to literacy only if they accepted those limitations and restrictions.

In most modern industrial societies today the diversity of written language, in its forms and uses, is greatly impoverished compared to the diversity to be found in spoken language. And while fluency of speech and spoken communication is nearly universal in all social groups, fluency of writing and written communication is relatively rare and mainly confined to only a few social groups. Yet the skills of using written language, for writing and for reading, are universally and systematically taught, while those of spoken language are scarcely taught at all. The key to this apparent paradox is the simple fact that what is taught, and taught successfully only to very few, is not in fact literacy as such, but only a single highly specialized language variety.

A true literacy curriculum would teach students how to transpose their own meaning strategies from spoken to written language and how to cope, in written communication, with the divergent forms and strategies of others. What is today called a literacy curriculum instead demands that students abandon the meaning strategies through which they create and make sense of the interests, values, and points of view of their own social communities and adopt a single set of alien forms and strategies as the price of access to written communication. Not only is that price of alienation from their own communities too high for most of them to pay, the total price in loss of intellectual diversity is too high for our society to continue to pay. I believe that the traditional arguments for language standardization as the sine qua non of literacy are invalid when critically re-examined in the light of what we now know about the relations of language to culture and social values, the role of language in the construction of personal identity and social relationships, language and social conflict, and the forces that lead to language change and social change.

## THE MYTHS OF LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION

Nearly all educational policy regarding literacy today is based on the assumption that standardized national or international languages are necessary and desirable. Because of the dominance of written language in academic assessment, the primary functional criterion of educational achievement today has in effect become the mastery of these standardized language forms, including not only their lexicon and grammar, but also, and more importantly, standardized forms of discourse organization and standardized semantic strategies for what kinds of meanings may be properly made and how.

At the heart of the literacy curriculum today, nearly everywhere, is the 19th-century notion of a Standard National Language. For most of us, this is what we call `Standard English'. Nearly all instruction in reading and writing is in fact an effort to teach students to master this one particular specialized language variety. I believe that there is widespread misunderstanding of the nature, functions, and implications of so-called standardized varieties.

## The Myth of Neutrality

For many people, language is simply a neutral medium of expression in which anything can be said, and language standardization is nothing more than conventional agreement about the forms to be used in saying it. But both functional linguistics and semiotics have shown us that language is the very means by which we create a world of meanings, and that different languages and different language varieties differ not simply in their forms, but in the kinds of meanings they enable us to create. This is not so obvious if languages are described simply by their formal syntax, but it is an inescapable conclusion when they are described in terms that include the semantics and social functions of grammatical and lexical choices and language's resources for organizing larger units of meaning in text and discourse.

The policy of language standardization seems culturally and politically neutral only if we deny that differences in linguistic codes have evolved to reflect differences in the lifeways, social practices, and interests of different communities and social groups. Formal linguistics has misled many educators into the naive belief that a mere change of lexicogrammar to standardized forms could hardly represent a serious imposition on students. The formalist myth of linguistic neutrality argues that whatever can be said in one language variety can just as well be said, somehow, in another. Functional linguistics, on the other hand, especially through its work in recent years on the text and discourse semantics of genres, discourse formations, and rhetorical strategies, reminds us that differences in language varieties reflect differences in what and how different communities of people mean. Education does not simply insist on changes in lexicogrammar, but on changes in the kinds of meanings students use its resources to make. Some of those changes represent essential curriculum content, but others serve only to enforce the policy of linguistic standardization itself.

A sophisticated view of discourse skills today goes far beyond specifying the need to master vocabulary and grammar. We know that discourse skills include the mastery of genres, of rhetorical structures, of specific linguistic strategies for mapping semantic relations onto grammatical constructions. We know that these discourse practices are intimately connected with the activity types and systems of attitudes and beliefs of a community. They differ systematically from one society to another, and within a society, they differ according to social divisions (class, caste, occupation, subcommunity, etc.). Moreover, within a society they do not simply differ: the language-using practices of different groups are functionally articulated with respect to one another. Their precise relationships of complementarity or conflict are an integral part of the overall social relationships among groups and their typical activities and social practices. Language and culture, language variety and subculture are inextricable for these reasons.

The diversity of varieties of spoken language in a society demonstrates that different social and cultural groups within a community, whether they speak varieties that would be characterized as distinct social dialects or not, use discourse practices and semantic strategies that differ in ways that both reflect and help to create the kinds of meanings that embody their life practices, attitudes, values, interests, and points of view. The relations between social groups are not merely differences: there are normally specific relations of alliance and opposition, of agreement and disagreement, of common interest and social conflict. So also their language varieties and their attitudes towards one another's varieties participate in these specific social relations.

We have long since realized that ethnic and group identity is often critically expressed through a group's own language variety, and that members of different groups have very strong and often divergent evaluations of the language of other groups. Where the groups are themselves in social conflict, their language-using practices become part of the means for waging that conflict and also reflect it. Language varieties are not static, and the directions of their change frequently reflect social pressures to maintain distinctiveness from surrounding varieties. Language varieties are not socially neutral. They are not sociologically independent. They are articulated within a common social system and have specific relationships to one another within that system. Frequently these are relations of conflict.

## Linguistic Universality vs. Semantic Incommensurability

Literacy education has moved in recent decades from the discredited Deficit Model, which held that students' failure to mastery the standardized written variety was due to deficiencies in the semantic capabilities provided by their home language, to a Difference Model that assumes that there are only unimportant formal differences in means of expression between language varieties. The Difference Model upholds the semantic egalitarianism of modern linguistics and anthropology, staunchly maintaining that all language varieties are equal and often strongly implying that under the surface they are really all the same. Functional linguistics and social linguistics should suggest to us, on the contrary, that the language varieties of socially and culturally distinct groups may be semantically incommensurable with one

another because each is differentially adapted and culturally specific to the life practices, attitudes, values, interests, and points of view of the group whose historical usage has formed its special character.

The notion of semantic incommensurability between language varieties not only limits the possibilities of translation and communication between socially and culturally divergent groups, it implies that the apparently easy and painless job of switching from the language variety of your home community to the alien variety of the standardized written language (and its spoken approximations) can be a soul-wrenching and perhaps soul-destroying transformation. It is radically at odds with the modern ideological preference for belief in the universality of human nature and human experience. We will return to the role of this ideology in the rise of standardized language varieties later, but first we need to make the meaning of semantic incommensurability a little clearer.

If you can make a meaning in your community with the resources of one language variety, you can doubtless convince yourself that you have replicated that meaning to any desired degree of delicacy by sufficient application of the resources of some other variety. Once a meaning is made, it can seem to be remade, but the text that results may well be so semantically anomalous in the second variety that its normal users will not make much sense of it, or a sense quite divergent from anything that could be retranslated back into something close to the original meaning.

It is too simplistic to argue that because a meaning once made in one variety CAN then seem to be remade in another, the varieties are functionally equivalent semantically . We must be concerned with whether or not it is LIKELY or NATURAL that such a meaning would ever get made in the second variety, and why. Can the meaning in question be made, not simply through some possible deployment of the abstracted grammar of the community's language, but within the normal discourse semantic framework of the the community's codes for using its language, or must we import an alien discourse semantics in the process of translation?

Between different speech communities, differences of life-practices give rise to differences in meanings made, and register by register to different ways of using linguistic resources to make different kinds of meanings in different kinds of socially recognizable and repeated situations: different genres, different rhetorical formations, discourse formations, idioms, cliches, cultural narratives, styles, etc. Even if these differences are not yet systematically embodied in major differences of grammar between the varieties, they are already semantically incommensurable in fundamental ways.

## The Myth of the Majority Dialect

If the standardized variety were, as another myth has it, simply a slightly more formal variant of the dialect of the vast majority of people in our society, then semantic incommensurability would only be a problem for a small minority of students.

The fact that neither most students nor most adults can write acceptable Standard English should begin to make us suspicious that this variety is in any important respect close to the language most people use.

Is there a speech community whose dialect `Standard English' is? If so, it is a numerically very small group. How many people speak Standard English, including not only its lexis and grammar, but its discourse patterns? How many people speak `correct English' or `good English' as it is stilled called by most of them? I think it is a myth that `correct English' is widely spoken today, or that it ever was. Spoken English is and always has been highly polylectal, a social mixture of highly diverse language varieties differing in their regional, social class, and ethnic origins and differing as well between males and females and even from one age group to another.

What we call Standard English is essentially a written, not a spoken variety. The standards that describe this variety are meant to apply primarily, if not exclusively to writing. A purely written variety of a language is not properly speaking a dialect at all. It is a register of the language, a weighted subsystem of its semantic resources, specialized for use in particular contexts of human activity. It is language specialized to a kind of doing, rather than to a community of users.

Where do we find this variety in use? Mainly in large burocratic organizations, used by middle- to upper-echelon personnel, by their secretaries (an interesting special case), by students who will form the pool from which such people will be drawn in the future, and their teachers. By and large, the standardized variety of written English could fairly be called Corporate English.

In practice, then, what `Standard English' amounts to is no more than a loose term to cover the written registers and associated formal spoken language of a particular social subgroup of middle- and upper-middle class people. No one speaks this variety as their native tongue, i.e. as their home dialect, because it is not fundamentally a general-purpose spoken dialect at all. You must be taught a specialized register to learn to write it, and to speak it you must shift your normal speech patterns towards the biases of that register, as if it were an acrolectal spoken variety. It is of course true that the home dialect of upper-middle class communities (Bourgeois Colloquial English) will be more like the standardized variety than any other spoken dialect, thus insuring special advantage for the children of those who are in a position to control the definition of this standard and enforce its norms.

The discourse strategies of middle-class, corporate, academic, burocratic written English presuppose and themselves help to constitute a cultural system of experiences, activities, practices, and attitudes that are not shared by most people or most students. Those social attitudes and practices include language use but go far beyond it to embrace every aspect of middle- and upper-middle class lifestyle and culture. To write like a middle-class person, ultimately you must become a middle-class person, or you must at least share many of the attitudes, values, experiences, and spoken discourse strategies that characterize a middle-class person. The goal of teaching students to master written Standard English is the goal of recruiting them to the core of middle-class culture, it is `embourgeoisement'. To write Corporate English, you must become a `Corporation Man' (women, too), or at least you must, in the outdated mentalist idiom, learn to `think like one'. To write like an academic, a burocrat, etc. requires more than mastery of a grammar and a vocabulary, it requires a significant degree of participation in a subculture.

Standard written English is a subcultural language variety; it can be mastered only as a concommitant of recruitment in some fundamental degree to the upper-middle-class subculture.

## The Myth of Communicative Necessity

Even supposing that we must all, some more and some much more, make a major change in how we mean if we would master this standardized variety of language, complete with all its genres and discourse strategies, do we have a choice? Is not a standardized variety necessary to insure functional communication? Probably not.

Historically, dialect diversity has been the rule everywhere in the world. Every local community had its own language variety and special-purpose registers, not all of which were known to all members of the community. Some of these registers were written and some were not. Writing was no more standardized than speaking, and even published works until the 19th-century used variant spellings and grammatical conventions even on the same page. The farther apart geographically that two historically related communities were, and the longer they had been relatively out of direct contact, the more different their dialects were. But at the same time there were some institutions that exchanged writing and people over longer distances: government, education, religion, the professions. Their specialized registers, usually written, were not local dialects, but had their origins very often in the dialect of the court, the capital, or their own special centers.

With the rise of Nationalism, sporadic efforts were made to impose the dialect of the political center on the whole of the social elite. It was only, however, when Nationalism became a strategy of the bourgeois state in the 19th-century, that language standardization took hold.

A critical element in the ideology of bourgeois nationalism is the belief that a strong, centralized national government is necessary to unite diverse regional interests, prevent factionalism, and create conditions for national development. The modern bourgeois interest at stake here is the uniformity of market conditions needed to make large-scale capital investments profitable. All diversity in the market is the enemy of the profitability of mass production (whether of goods or of services). Standardized, interchangeable consumers are as essential to the logic of industrial and post-industrial economies as are standardized, interchangeable parts. The logic of standardization applies equally well, and for the same reasons, to the standardization of curriculum, and historically to the standardization of national languages.

In this ideological framework, Standard National Languages are necessary to ensure mutual intelligibility of communication among all members of the new Nation. In practice, the recruitment and training of armies and workforces, the administration of central government over national regions or ethnic populations, the operations of nationwide corporations, and mass marketing of standardized goods and services all profit from language

standardization. For political reasons, the variety chosen as the basis for the standard is generally that of the most powerful subcommunity and that of the upper-middle class.

The myth of the necessity of standardized language, so profitable for its promoters, conveniently ignores both history and the example of many communities that live quite happily in the midst of the normal social diversity of language. Historically, before the 19th century, people wrote, often quite profoundly, with little regard for language standardization, and presumably they read, with no less comprehension than we do today, texts as diverse in their orthography, grammar, lexicon, idiom, and discourse organization as the language they were accustomed to hearing around them. Not only do publishers today go to elaborate lengths to hyperstandardize the stylesheets of their own product lines even beyond the general conventions of standardization, but they mostly also erase from view the texts of an originally far more diverse written English by `editing' (i.e. substantially re-writing) them when they are re-published for us today.

It would also seem to be the case that in the many genuinely polyglot communities of the world, there is a sufficiently well-developed metalinguistic awareness that people routinely translate for one another among languages and dialects, use different varieties in different social situations, and actively compare the forms of different varieties. In this way they become adept at juggling language forms.

Experimental trials which ask people to quickly repeat sentences in a dialect not their own find that they usually do so in their own dialect and sometimes without being aware of the changes they are making, as if they effectively `heard' in their own dialect.

It certainly does not seem to be at all outside the normal linguistic capacity of human beings to function in a multilingual, polyglot, or polylectal language environment. Given a reasonable degree of training and experience in the metalinguistic skills of communicating across differences in language varieties, it remains to be empirically determined just what degree of standardization may actually be necessary for mutual intelligibility. It may even be that with written can tolerate a considerably higher degree of language diversity than is possible in the more ephemeral contexts of spoken communication.

There is a fundamental theoretical reason why it is not so difficult as might be supposed to negotiate the complexities of life in a polylectal community. When multiple varieties of a language persist in contact through social use in a single community over a sufficient period of time, they become functionally articulated; that is, their patterns of use in relation to one another, and even the functional correspondences of their forms and semantic-discursive strategies, come to conform to a `meta-code' of the community which articulates them with one another. They become no longer totally independent and autonomous codes, but `positioned' codes with specific relations to one another in common service to a higher meta-code: the social semiotic system of the community.

## The Myth of Inevitability

Finally we need to confront one further myth about language standardization: that it only hastens and codifies the inevitable tendency to language uniformity brought about by mass society, mass communication, mass education, etc. Is history on the side of standardization?

While it is certainly true that in the last century some regional dialect differences have disappeared as speakers moved from relatively isolated rural communities to mix in urban centers with speakers of other dialects, nevertheless many features of the regional varieties have persisted even among urban speakers and have proved quite resistant to standardization, even under the influence of both the schools and the mass media. Moreover, even as regional dialects decline as a result of urbanization, social class dialects and the dialects of ghettoized communities are flourishing if not actually multiplying, and new regional creoles and second-language dialects of migrant and displaced peoples are still being born from colonial, media, and school English all over the world.

The English language is not now, never has been, and never will be one uniform language, and every variety of English is changing in daily use. These varieties will themselves change unrecognizably in time. It is as likely as not that there will someday be an Anglic Family of languages descended from the present-day varieties of English just as those of the Romance Family are descended from the historical varieties of Latin. Perhaps they will be spoken on different planets

or artificial space colonies; and perhaps, if we are very unwise, they will be spoken by different social classes or occupational castes.

Language diversity will be with us as long as social and cultural diversity is, for it is an essential constituent of that fundamental reservoir of our human adaptability.

## LANGUAGE DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL DIVERSITY

Language standardization is neither a socially nor a culturally neutral policy. It is neither necessary nor inevitable. And to the extent that it attempts to impose an enforced corporate, upper-middle-class cultural uniformity on all of society, it is not desirable.

All our knowledge of complex systems, from machinery to forests, from viruses to ecosystems, from individuals to communities, tells us that diversity is the basis of resilience, the wellspring of innovation, and the ultimate insurance for long-term adaptability and survival of the type. Uniform, homogeneous systems may show remarkable efficiency in the short-run, but they are necessarily overadapted to prevailing conditions. When those conditions change, as inevitably they must (even if only because of the cumulative effects on the environment of the actions of the system itself), they will be much less well adapted. If such systems have no reservoir of alternatives, no sources of residual plasticity among themselves or their descendants, they and their kind will not long survive.

Complex, evolved systems like human communities have built-in diversity. Some of this diversity represents remnants from forms previously dominant in their ancestry. Some represents random variation, and some represents counterreactions to currently dominant forms, needed to keep their tendencies in check. Any attempt to enforce uniformity in such a system will generate resistance. Persistent efforts to overcome that resistance require force and debilitate the system as a whole.

The dream of universal literacy becomes a nightmare if it means that we must enforce a cultural uniformity on our community, if it means that we must act as agents to increase the privilege of the already powerful.

A large complex society will never eliminate linguistic diversity nor should it contemplate even so much cultural uniformity as a universally mastered, standard written dialect would probably require. Middle-class institutions of mass education today are overreaching themselves in trying to impose standards for the use of written language that are essentially grounded in upper-middle-class culture on those whose cultures are essentially different from and, in most cases, also in conflict with upper-middle-class interests.

These students are speakers not just of linguistically distinct varieties of English, but of stigmatized varieties characteristic of subcommunities whose interests and cultural attitudes and practices are in many respects in conflict with those of users of the prestige varieties. They can be expected to actively resist their attitudes, values, practices, and linguistic strategies. To the extent that they do adopt them, they often find themselves alienated from their home communities. Language-loyalty applies to varieties as much as to wider national or ethnic languages. It is part of cultural loyalty, whose ultimate betrayal may not be so much treasonable as it is simply impossible.

Schools today are massively failing in this doomed effort. If they continue it, they will only destroy themselves. Many classroom teachers know this and despair. Educators do not have much longer to pay attention before it will be too late.

What is the alternative to standardized language? to reduction of diversity and the enforcement of cultural uniformity? A deliberate policy of promoting language diversity as the basis for literacy education.

## LANGUAGE DIVERSITY AND THE LITERACY CURRICULUM

We need policies and curricula that accept and foster diversity, that support nonstandard and nontraditional literacies, that help students evolve new written registers, genres, discourse formations, and rhetorical and semantic strategies that extend their home dialects and cultures.

We need to teach students how to cope better with diversity, to communicate effectively across linguistic differences and with people whose points of view, interests, and semantic strategies may differ markedly from their own, in speech and in writing, across the registers of many activities and social situations. There are in the world many human communities where people successfully negotiate polylectal, multilingual, and multicultural systems of social options. There are many teachable strategies for living with the richness of diversity.

## English Diversification

English Diversification is a project to allow a loosening of strictures on the vocabulary, grammar, and discourse strategies of written English so as to give features of all varieties equal standing. It is an exercise in diversity, tolerance, and cross-fertilization. Its principal purpose is to allow wider social access to educational, economic, and political uses of written language.

The key to English Diversification, I believe, is the development of effective meta-linguistic reading skills to allow useful interpretation of widely diverse lexical, grammatical, and discourse forms. We need to know more about the strategies by which languages and dialects are spontaneously mixed by speakers, and about the strategies by which bilinguals, polyglots, and other metalinguistically experienced readers interpret non-standardized texts and normal polylectal diversity in spoken discourse.

Teachers are among the most experienced readers of texts that do not conform to the norms of the standardized variety. How do they learn to make sense of what and how their students write? What kinds of non-standard patterns give them the most trouble? Do foreign-language, English, bilingual and other `language-aware' teachers find it easier to read non-standard texts? How about bilingual or bidialectal students as readers?

As teachers we have all heard our students' most frequent argument against insistence on standardized forms: `But you understood what I meant didn't you?' In most cases, yes, we did in fact understand. In some other cases, with a little effort we could have understood. In my own experience with students' use of non-standard discourse strategies in the spoken language of the science classroom, the effort required can be considerable, and indeed, written language (e.g. transcripts of the classroom dialogue) certainly seems to provide more opportunity for decipherment -- spoken discourse vanishes before we can analyze it a second time.

But what additional strategies prove most useful in dealing with non-standard written text? I think we would all expect that we ourselves, or any trained linguist, would do much better with such texts than the average reader. Learnable, teachable strategies clearly exist. They need to be identified and more widely taught. It should be perfectly possible to teach students to read in this way. It seems likely that it will be far easier for most students to learn these metalinguistic reading skills than for them to learn to read and write the present Standard Written Language. Certainly it should be easier for the students who are presently most excluded from successful use of a variety which is so alien to their social backgrounds.

We need to do much more than this however, and in particular, something that is far more exciting intellectually. We need to help our students develop new written registers, genres, discourse formations, and rhetorical and semantic strategies that extend their home dialects and cultures. Students come to us with spoken language strategies, including speech genres, narrative types, subcultural styles of argumentation and reasoning, alternative logics, rhetorical modes and semantic orientations that reflect the culture, attitudes, values, and interests of their home communities. Just as the corresponding discourse formations of presently dominant groups developed in the recent past into the norms of standardized written registers and became institutionalized, so can the discourse modes of all sectors of our diverse world society.

Educators can and should help students from all sectors of society take up the task of creating their own literacies. Such literacies must develop, of course, in intimate interaction with the other contexts of people's lives, outside school, in which they can be employed for the full range of functional purposes that written language and communication can serve. Indeed, I would expect that when placed at the service of the full range of human social diversity, written language and the literacies of diverse communities will find new uses in many respects fundamentally different from those we are now accustomed to.

In schools, we also need to re-examine the curriculum in every subject to determine how its speech genres and written forms (including especially those which are assessed for marks) enforce standardization and unacceptably limit diversity. Because the desired diversity is essentially semantic in nature, the curriculum must diversify culturally and intellectually in content as well as linguistically in form. Changes in how linguistic and semiotic resources are deployed will inevitably create differences in content meaning in every subject. This may well be one of the most radical consequences of an educational policy of language diversification.

Because language varieties are not neutral media for the expression of curriculum content in science, history, mathematics, or literature, but the semantic resource systems we deploy to create the meanings codified in a curriculum, the evolution of new written language varieties will inevitably lead, against great resistance, to different social constructions of all these subjects. This occurs as a natural part of the evolution of alternative literacies in the registers of these subjects: language diversification, as it must be, `across the curriculum'. Neither, I feel sure, will even the canon of what subjects belong in the curriculum, or what their relative priority should be, long remain untouched in so fundamental a reform. There will be demands for new subjects not previously considered `academic' or even considered subjects at all. There will be natural reorganizations of topics in ways that will look interdisciplinary, but only from a point of view that assumes that our present notions of `the disciplines' represent nature rather than culture. In inviting into the curriculum the full semantic diversity of our society, we are opening Pandora's Box and we should be prepared for the intellectual and social challenges, the real conflicts of values and interests, and the potential for exciting change that will ensue.

## The Teaching of Standardized English

I know that many who read this will feel deeply that, for whatever reasons, Standardized English is still essential for students to obtain the economic opportunity and political influence needed to better their own lives and those of others in their home communities. Whether you feel that this situation is invidious and unnecesarily discrimiatory or not, whether you wish to see it changed or not, you may well want students to have the opportunity to learn to read and write texts in the standardized variety. If your own home dialect was significantly different from Bourgeois Colloquial, you are understandably proud of your accomplishment in mastering the standardized variety and well aware of the importance of that accomplishment in your own personal history.

Of course students should have this opportunity. The sheer volume of texts in Standardized English is such that access to them is important. Students can of course be taught to read these texts without being taught how to write Standardized English, at least up to a point. Ultimately, we do want many of them to be able to write and read them in the fullest sense that only an active mastery of Standardized English confers.

But let us be clear about our goals and about exactly what we are doing -- clear among ourselves and honest with others outside the profession, including students and their parents. If we are teaching Standardized English, we are teaching something foreign to most or all students, not something `correct'. We are also teaching something that requires, for most students, some acculturation to upper-middle-class culture and some loss of perfect identification with their home culture. We are teaching a specialized language variety used for specific social purposes, not a majority dialect.

If we recognize that for most students Standardized English is in effect a foreign language variety, then it needs to be taught in a separate curriculum of its own, perhaps using the best of what we know about methods for teaching foreign languages. It is the skills of English Diversification, true literacy across language varieties, that should be properly taught in the Language Arts curriculum for English. Moreover, both the Language Arts curriculum and the Standardized English curriculum should teach the writing and reading of texts of all major genres and academic registers, including science and mathematics, history and economics, as well as examples from literature. The study of the history of English literature, like that of other fine arts, deserves a separate curriculum of its own.

## LANGUAGE DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In the short run, it is power which is at stake in any basic change of language policy. Ideology, myth, tradition, interest, privilege, and the values that have grown up around these over two centuries (often shared even by the linguistically disenfranchised themselves) will object to `bad English' being allowed to mix on equal terms with `good English'. They

will continue to urge that the schools teach `good English' and that language educators and linguists find a way to do so successfully.

We must tell them that it cannot and should not be done. We must convince them that it is our belief in the notion of a universal Standard itself that has to change, if all are to have equal access through language to educational, economic, and political opportunity. We need to remember ourselves, and to persuade others, that language is an integral part of culture, that language differences are inextricable from social differences, and that language change and language diversity are inevitable.

The English language is not now, never has been, and never will be one uniform language, and every variety of English is changing in daily use. But the diverse varieties of English in our community form a common family, divided in its loyalties and interests, torn by inevitable conflicts, but nonetheless united by their functional articulation as varieties in use in one community. This language family will change faster as we work to change social practices in education and in every sphere of life where we desire these changes. Language change is not possible apart from larger social changes, but neither need it wait on those changes. Because it is an integral part of social change, it can lead as well as follow.

Perhaps the strongest single argument for an educational policy of language diversification is that it represents a direct effort to recognize and deal with social diversity and social conflict. The strategy of standardization is part of a larger ideological mystification of social diversity and conflict. Standard language doctrine holds that we can all simply master a universal second language or dialect for purposes of intergroup communication. It ignores or belittles the fundamental social and cultural conflicts of interests, values, and practices among the speech communities of diverse dialects and language varieties. It expresses in the arena of language policy the fundamental myth of 19th-century ideology: that human nature is everywhere the same: white, adult, male, Northern European, and upper middle-class, and all differences are merely superficial variations. This is the language of comfortable pluralism, of difference without fundamental conflict, of safe diversity, of a parliament of individual voices, distinct but not essentially different. It ignores the social construction of individual subjects as members of social categories which are systematically positioned with respect to one another, often in antagonistic relations of essential conflicts of interest and access to power.

If we believe that we understand the relations of language, education, and social opportunity better as professionals than do people at large, then it is we who have the responsibility to lead others, even in the face of resistance, toward workable policies when existing policies are found to be based on inadequate understanding of principles and practices. But first we must convince ourselves.

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