Professional Book Club

TEAC 813K: Linguistics for Language Teachers

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First section

Language learning and teaching can be daunting tasks for learners and teachers. The teachers have to learn more about the different varieties of the language as well as the other languages that their students bring into the classroom. In this regard, Devereaux (2014) contends that all teachers have stories of how language education and people interact. She discusses these stories and interactions in her eight-chapter book. This paper deals with the first four chapters, mainly an introductory chapter that deals with teachers' and students' voices and assumptions about language ideologies, language and power, and language and society.

Her interlocutory chapter deals with education stakeholders within the additional language learning classrooms. It consists of three stakeholders: preservice teachers, experienced teachers, and the voices of the students and their assumptions. The three main stakeholders in the book also face three types of challenges. The first challenge is that not all secondary students come to school speaking and writing in a language variety other than the standardized assessment standard of English. The second is that students and teachers come to the classroom with clear opinions about language variations. The third challenge is that students may not understand or appreciate the dialectically diverse texts that teachers bring to the classroom.

Following the discussion of the difficulties, the author briefly discussed contrastive analysis, code-switching language ideologies, language variation, common core state standards, state standards, literature, and language standards—writing standards, reading standards, listening standards, and speaking standards. These standards and language practices carry some ideologies that she discussed in the second chapter.

Standard varieties are embedded within cultural, historical, and ideological boundaries. Devereaux posits that in classroom moments, we can observe some beliefs about language and its users' language-ideologies in action. She defines "language ideologies" as "our beliefs about language and its users" and notes that "three factors usually underlie language ideologies: power, society, and identity" (p. 20).

Standard varieties are usually attached to power, and that may explain "why mainstream power has historically been associated with standard English" (Delpit, 2006, as cited by Devereaux, 2014, p. 20). She provided an example through the standardization of American English, explaining that when America was a new and growing country, John Adams, one of our country's forefathers, urged his political peers to consider a standard American English, one separate from England's (Heath, 1992; Kahane, 1992). Adams opined that the new standard should be "*prescribed"* which is "American standard English should be defined by grammar and usage books." On the other hand, other scholars from that time frame opted for a "descriptive approach studying early Americans' daily language use should be the barometer of standard" (p. 20).

Apart from power, language is a social practice that happens within a society and can vary from one community to the other. Devereaux, therefore, claims that teachers must be aware that language varieties in schools may cause dissonance. In addition to dissonance or affiliation, a study of language and society often shows the many stereotypes that exist within the language varieties used in America's multiple societies that teachers should take into account.

Furthermore, the author elaborates that "language ideologies go beyond power structures and different societies;" and the also reflected on "our personal experience with the language and the world; they tie us to our sense of self." (p. 21). There is also an interrelationship between power, society, and identity. Due to the complexities of language, the concepts of power, society, and

identity cannot fit into neat, separate boxes. Therefore, we can discuss the embedded nature of language and power, language and society, and language and identity, and how one affects the other.
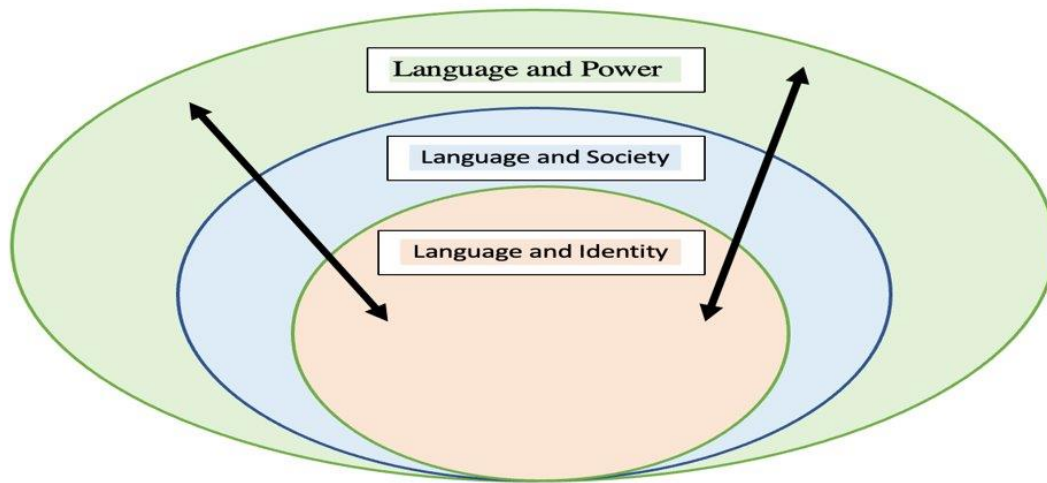

Figure: The Embedded Nature of Language Ideologies

Devereaux introduces the concept of "moralizing language." She explains that by describing standard English as good, right, and proper and vernacular varieties as bad, wrong, and improper, we moralize language, and when we use moral descriptions for language, we also label the people who use these varieties. Surely, teachers would not want to teach their students that all Standard English speakers are good and right, but this is what we subtly teach students when we use moralizing language in the classroom.

In the third chapter, Devereaux discusses the connection between language and power. We cannot discuss power with our students in a single way due to various complicated ideologies and reasons; rather, we must encourage them to question and consider both the larger power structures and how they enact power, as well as the power that their communities have.

Next, the author has discussed the following: mainstream, ways of speaking , and ways of knowing for larger power structures.

In her Definition of Language and Power, she said that power is intricately tied to language, and the English language arts classroom should support students in critiquing "the widespread belief that students must stop using stigmatized dialects entirely to be successful academically and professionally" (Goldley and Minnici, 2008, p. 323 as cited by Devereaux, 2014, p. 36). Therefore, introducing students to the concept of language and power can help students understand how to gain power and identify why and how others use language and power.

In the fourth chapter, Devereaux defines society as "a social group, a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category" (Stets and Burke, 2000, p. 225, as cited by Devereaux, 2014, p. 57). She contends that discussions about

language and society in the classroom and in students' lives should be common topics. When we explore language differences with our students, we can use the study of language in society as a tool to build affiliation among different societies, rather than living with dissonance. The discussion will equip students with knowledge on adolescent social groups and language , language and society in the classroom, language as a window of society, and language, society, and stereotypes.

Devereaux has discussed language ideologies, showing how power, society, and identity affect the lives of language varieties and their users. It is therefore important to give multilingual learners tools to assume their identity, recognize discrimination, and respond appropriately by exposing them to "World Englishes" and teaching them that everyone has an accent (Yule, 2020).

The critical lens of language use is applicable in all areas of adolescent lives; understanding how people gain and sustain power through language use creates critically aware participants in our democratic society. Once participants are equipped with critical lenses, they can "articulate and transform their thinking into an artifactual form, which becomes a source of further reflection" (Martin-Beltrán, p. 211).

Explicit teaching of language and society can help students understand the differences and similarities that exist between groups. Additionally, it may give them the tools to create bridges between these different social groups and uncover what Seltzer (2019) calls "the implicit link between being seen and heard that is key to processes of racialization" (p.147) and "recognize that our positionality limits what we are able to see and hear" (p. 150). Language is a social practice through which we affirm our identities that "can be perceived as socially negotiated constructs" (Rosa & Flores, 2017). It is rooted in our culture, histories, and personalities. Identity is fluid and dependent on context. As mentioned by Razfar, depending on the purpose of the conversation,

people have "dynamic and fluid perspectives of social identities" (Razfar & Rumenapp, 2014, p. 272).

Second Section

Language variation initially seems to be a natural process. The same language varies in time and space. However, the different varieties, especially those related to space, are not always considered to be equal. The reason is that the varieties that are used by people with power and higher socio-economic status come to be standardized, sneak into the socio-economic lives of people, and are imposed upon others as the right language variety. However, the pervasiveness of the teaching of this variety often comes at the expense of speakers of other varieties of languages that lack power and have lower socioeconomic status. Since language is a social practice, it carries people's identity, history, personalities, and values. Devereaux's (2014) seminal book discusses the links. The first four chapters of the book discuss the stakeholders of language education in the classroom. language ideologies, language and power, and language and society. The last four chapters that will be discussed in this section of the paper deal with language and identity, the teaching of code-switching to multilingual learners, contrastive analysis in the language classroom, and presentations of best practices in the language classroom.

In the fifth chapter, Devereaux discusses language and identity. Language is a social practice and is therefore linked to our ethnicity, race, history, and origins. Devereaux (2014) posits that race and ethnic identity are tied to a person's culture and heritage, and "ways of responding to and dealing with the mainstream group often describe [them] as a group and the impact on [their] psychological well-being" (p.82).The author elaborated that it is therefore important for teachers to take students' histories, and personalities into account in the language classroom for the simple reason that adolescents are well-adjusted when they are taught the significance of their ethnic identity while still being exposed to mainstream culture. Furthermore, Devereaux asserts that identity, like language use, is fluid. Consequently, it is essential to incorporate students' histories and native cultures into language classrooms.

Devereaux distinguishes between identity and personality. She argues that "identity considers students' personalities that make each of them unique individuals, and how the language they use demonstrates their one-of-a-kindness" (p. 84), whereas "personality accounts for variances in style and word selection" (p. 84).

Additionally, our language is how we construct our identity. Thus, language is utilized to demonstrate our identities—the various facets of who we are, such as our communities, culture, history, and values. It is also essential to recognize that individuals have several identities. The author explicates that identity is fluid and changes over the course of our lives and sometimes depends on situations. She added that our identities influence how we see and interpret the environment. Thus, the study of identity can help students comprehend how language shapes the way people perceive things, how language has affected their identity, and how it is tied to their sense of self, as well as to names, history, and locations.

Furthermore, Devereaux contends that emotions are also connected to language use. She elaborated that when one is irritated, they revert to their default state and use the core language or language variety that defines them. She provides this example about accent when the speaker claims that they only have an accent when they are exhausted or angry ("My accent comes out when I'm angry or tired" (p. 91)).

Devereaux introduces chapter 6 with a story where a teacher fails to introduce code-switching to their students of non-standard English. The instructor had the mistaken notion that everyone wanted to acquire "standard" English, assuming that everyone is aware that they and other people code-switch. Nevertheless, she discovered that not everyone is fond of learning to speak standard English. In her attempt to tell students that code-switching with standard English is important, a student replies as follows: "I ain't fake! You fake if you do" (p.105). Therefore, teachers must be conscious of how they introduce code-switching in their language courses with regards to their students' linguistic backgrounds.

Devereaux argues that code-switching does not imply a dichotomy in language usage in this book. It is not about language use based on group membership or social standing; rather, it is about how people "change their language according to the situation, audience, and purpose" (pp. 106–107).

In light of the opening story, Devereaux (2014) suggests that code-switching is better taught through activities and practice than by telling students what it is. And, when teaching code-switching to multilingual students speaking a non-standard variety, it is preferable to use the expression "does not fit" rather than "inappropriate" when they utilize a different variety in the wrong context. In this case, code-switching becomes a deliberate choice to move between situations and language identities. Deveraux elaborated that code-switching requires that students "not only learn the dominant variety of English, but also know how to include their favored types in rhetorically advantageous ways" (Canagarajah, 2006, as cited by Devereaux, 2014, p. 113). She provided the following table to illustrate how teachers can use code-switching in the standard and non-standard varieties.

Table 6.2 Language Differences Between Audiences

Formal Audience	Familiar Audience
Transitions between sentences/ideas	Few or no transitions
Coordinating conjunctions (to create compound sentences)	Simple sentences
Formal vocabulary No slang or pet names	Slang, pet names
No overlapping talk	Overlapping talk
Few to no fillers (um, yeah, like)	Fillers used (um, yeah, like)

(Devereaux, 2014, p. 108)

The table on code-switching recalls the very objective of contractive analysis that Devereaux discusses in Chapter 7. She avers that contrastive analysis enables students to grapple with

dialectically dissimilar texts and discourages them from employing informal language in formal writings. The author recommends the use of T-charts in contrastive analysis to compare and evaluate linguistic patterns in language classrooms. Teachers' utilization of T-charts highlights the differences and commonalities between their language variety and the standard variety. However, the use of the T-chart should make students feel that their language variety does not belong. By telling students that their language does not belong, a dichotomy is created, which impedes the learning process. Teachers should instead emphasize students' native languages and teach the standards from there as a strategic communication tool. With this approach, contrastive analysis does not tell students to abandon their language in favor of the mainstream variety. The contrastive analysis considers that all language varieties have structural integrity and follow patterns. Its objective is not to have students pick a language but to assist them in making deliberate decisions. The following table shows how teachers can use contrastive analysis in the language classroom.

Table 7.1 Linguistic Patterns in Students' Writing

Example	Pattern
She ___ fun to talk to.	Understood *be*
I was just **sittin'** in the cafeteria, just **chillin'** and **talkin'** to old girl.	Shift in pronunciation of final consonant
I said, "Why stop me out of all people?" The teacher said, "'Cause **you was** the closest to me."	Generalizing *is* and *was*
When **jerk kids plays** sports and when **other kids wants** to be emo and do everything else.	Subject–verb agreement (–s suffix on verbs occurring with plural nouns)
No matter what I learn **I be** speaking this way 'cause it is who I am.	Habitual *be*
I like these lessons **'cause** I've learned more **'bout** [African American English].	Deletion[1]

(Devereaux, 2014, p.123)

In using contrastive analysis to help students grasp, analyze, and make strategic decisions, it aids multilingual learners in understanding that people have distinct yet similar speech patterns. For instance, the use of "be" in African American English is one example that teachers can use

while dealing with patterns in different varieties. It is important to add that before developing a contrastive analysis writing assignment, it is essential that teachers evaluate student work and look for patterns to base their lesson on.

All language/language varieties follow patterns

 (Devereaux, 2014, p.)

In chapter eight, Devereaux (2014) provides unit plans and language teaching and learning standards. She suggested that teachers should know their students better because understanding students' abilities and backgrounds plays a vital part in the unit plan. She provided a graphic explanation that teachers can use for themselves and their students as they get to know them better.

A graphic explanation of language and identity

Figure 8.1 The Embedded Nature of Society and Identity, Example
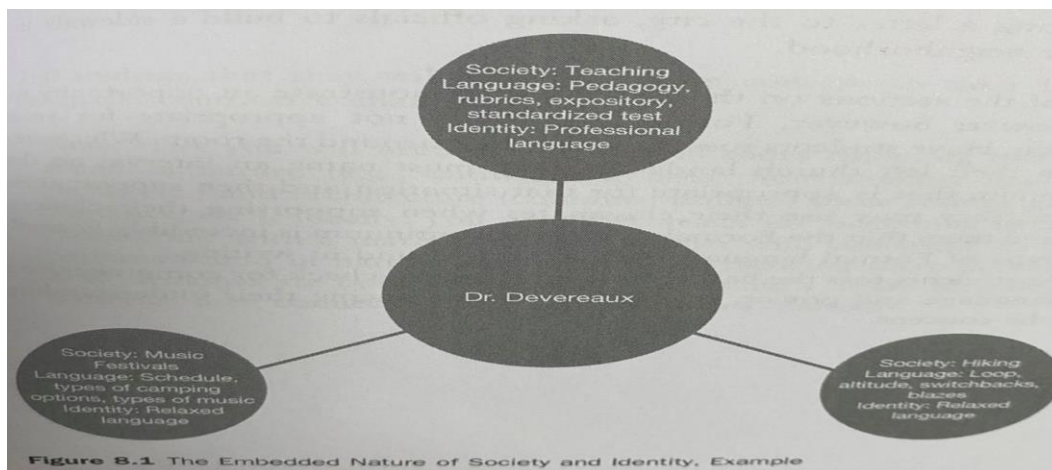
(Devereaux, 2014, p.165)

Referring back to code-switching, the author suggests an activity where the instructor might have students compare a job interview in a small town where the owner speaks non-standard English to an interview in a large metropolis where many people speak standard English. Furthermore, she contends that language variation is a prevalent pattern in literature, and she encourages teachers to assist students in understanding how these varieties and patterns are thought as well as to use them to introduce students to the relationship between language varieties and communities. Speaking about varieties, Devereaux claims that African Americans are not the only people who speak African American English, and that African American English varies across regions. From Louisiana to Pennsylvania through Texas, African American language varies from northern metropolitan areas to southern rural areas. In the same vein, Wolfgang (2007, as cited by Devereaux, 2014) demonstrates that African American English is not exclusive to middle folks.

 Blank T-chart that teachers can use (p.175).

Table 8.2 Blank T-Chart

Name of the Pattern:	
Familiar English	Formal English
Example 1:	
Example 2:	
Example 3:	
The Pattern:	The Pattern:

(Devereaux, 2014, p.175)

In a nutshell, Devereaux discusses the importance of including and valuing students' linguistic backgrounds in the classroom and urges teachers to refrain from practices that make students' language repertoire invisible in the classroom. She made it clear that teaching code-switching should not make students feel like their language variety is unacceptable but rather should be viewed as a way of making strategic choices to affirm oneself. Likewise, Razfar and Rumenapp (2014) posit that students have a specific way of using the language that teachers should accept and analyze. They further explain that it does not mean that students "don't know how to use English," but rather that they understand the rules […], but perhaps haven't mastered what is socially and culturally acceptable" (p. 117) in that specific situation. Therefore, multilingual students can learn the standard variety as an additional strategic tool to navigate society.

In the process of providing students with an additional language tool, contrastive analysis can help students see the affordances of the different varieties. Contrastive analysis is, then, a tool that allows students to gain an in-depth understanding of standard and non-standard varieties and validates the integrity of the various varieties. The knowledge gained from contrastive analysis gives them more tools to comprehend why people choose to express themselves in a particular manner.

However, the stories from the book indicate that when one culture is introduced to another, teachers should be aware of the potential for conflict (Murray, 2020). Teachers should be aware of this and provide the information necessary to prevent the widening of existing gaps and the maintenance of existing hegemonies (Nguyen & Zeichner, 2020). Translanguaging, which is the use of two or more languages simultaneously by multilingual students (Martin-Beltrán, 2014), can be another way of understanding Devereaux's stance on code-switching, which is not a dichotomy in language use but a strategic choice. Devereaux advocates that language activities should be centered on the student and should allow all language varieties to be visible. Thanks to their vast linguistic repertoire and diverse origins, multilingual students can contribute to the enrichment of the language classroom. The instructor should demonstrate to students that their source language is valued, as this will encourage them to participate actively in class. If this is not done, intelligent students with a wealth of knowledge will be excluded and considered deficient (Kiramba, 2017).

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