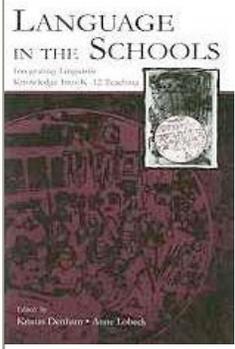


<i>Language in the Schools: Integrating Linguistic Knowledge in K-12 Teaching</i>		
Author:	Kristen Denham & Anne Lobeck, Eds. (2005)	
Publisher:	Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum	
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Pp. xii + 278	0-8058-4814-2 (paper)	\$37.50 U.S.



For the last few years I have been visiting districts around the country to provide professional development for teachers working with English language learners. At every workshop there is a teacher who shares the exasperation faced by many of his or her fellow teachers as they struggle to meet the needs of their diverse student population--"but I'm a (fill in the blank) teacher, so I wasn't *trained* to teach ESL."

Teachers recognize that their student populations are changing, and they are eager to better understand how they can most effectively meet this population's needs. Whether they teach math, science, or music, all teachers are finding that they are, to some degree, required to "teach language" in their classes. While teachers in some states are receiving mandatory courses or training in applied linguistics and on ways to support ELLs' academic development, most teachers continue to receive limited or no training and/or education in working with students with diverse language backgrounds. Without knowledge of language acquisition or its implications for classroom language use, many teachers feel ill-equipped to offer instruction addressing their students' needs.

Language in the Schools: Integrating Linguistic Knowledge into K-12 Teaching is a resource designed to provide teachers with this knowledge. It has been written to help teachers better understand and effectively apply language knowledge in their classrooms. Editors Denham and Lobeck suggest that linguistic diversity in the classroom creates a rich and complex environment for learning, but that teachers need support in discovering (1) which aspects of language are most appropriate to explore in the classroom; and (2) what specific approaches can be used in creating an

environment open to learning for all students. *Language in the Schools* presents twenty chapters designed to "[take] prospective teachers beyond basic linguistics to ways in which linguistics can productively inform their teaching and raise students' awareness of language" (p. xi).

The book does not limit its discussion of "basic linguistics" to issues in teaching English as a second language in K-12 contexts or to the history or structure of English. Indeed, these topics are addressed, but the text moves beyond grammar and syntax to explore current social issues in language education like language endangerment, classroom pragmatics, and notions of standard English. The topics selected for the text all focus on language, but they consider "language" more broadly, investigating how an understanding of the multiple aspects of language can inform teaching and learning for all students, not just ELLs. The editors hope their text offers reader support in addressing two central questions:

- What language issues are most important for teachers to explore?
- What types of classroom activities will develop teachers' and students' understanding of these issues?

The chapters in Part 1 mostly address the first question by highlighting key language issues teachers should be aware of and suggesting how this linguistic knowledge can enhance instruction. Part 1 addresses issues facing teachers and students in multicultural and linguistically diverse contexts: classroom pragmatics, language and gender, creole learners, ASL, bilingualism, and language maintenance. John Baugh's chapter, "Linguistics and Education in Multicultural America," provides an especially strong overview of the linguistic diversity story in American classrooms and includes some personal reflections illustrating the impact an awareness of and respect for diverse languages can have on student motivation and success. For an educator with limited knowledge of linguistic minorities' struggles in US educational systems, Baugh's chapter offers a concise, engaging social and political history of policy and reform measures and how these changes have affected multiple stakeholders.

Although Part 1 focuses heavily on the theories and issues impacting classrooms today, most chapters also usefully suggest how to translate these theories into classroom applications. Burt and Yang's chapter on language shifting describes studies of the spreading linguistic rift between generations of Hmong immigrants to the U. S, illustrating the complexity of language issues facing immigrant students, both at home and in school. Their stories of intergenerational miscommunication are powerful. Beyond the narratives themselves, readers will appreciate the activities listed in the "What teachers can do" section, tasks that help students (both ELLs and native English speakers) better understand how, when, and why to use different registers to communicate.

The ten chapters in Part 2 address the second question: *What types of classroom activities will develop teachers' and students' understanding of these issues?* They demonstrate, in greater depth than in Part 1, a variety of specific ways teachers can bring language awareness into their classrooms and to their students. These chapters present authentic classroom situations and activities as models for incorporating linguistic knowledge into daily lessons. Topics in Part 2 include using corpus linguistics, dictionaries, metaphors, and contrastive analysis to support classroom learning. Denham and Lobeck also address teaching the history of English, discussing

standard English and language variation, analyzing grammar, and developing sensitivity to language change and endangerment.

Readers will likely appreciate the more practical nature of Part 2, as it balances theory with more suggestions for classroom applications. Part 2 also widens the focus of linguistics substantially, investigating language as a resource for creative endeavors and for increasing linguistic appreciation among students. Anca Nemoianu's chapter on "Japangurisshu" is a delightful investigation of connections between Japanese and English words that even teachers with no Japanese language knowledge will follow and enjoy. Nemoianu shows teachers how to construct lessons that might encourage students to become aware of linguistic relationships and appreciate the linguistic differences of students they see every day.

The editors suggest that *Language in the Schools* is most appropriate for readers who have taken at least an introductory linguistics course. Although a basic knowledge of linguistics would be helpful, many chapters make the text accessible for readers without this basic knowledge, by including definitions of most of the relevant linguistic terms and an overview of current research or discussion on the topic. Notably, the book does not include a glossary, although a reference of this kind would likely benefit many readers less familiar with the basic terminology.

Busy teachers might also wish at times that information were presented more accessibly. There is no consistent format adopted throughout, so quick reference to, for example, fieldwork suggestions or lesson ideas is not always possible. Also, chapters do not include discussion questions, which often serve as useful guides for critical readers, especially for those teacher-readers who want to debate--with colleagues or themselves--a chapter's ideas or observations.

As I search for a text for an introductory ESL theory and methodology course I will be teaching for pre-service elementary school teachers next semester, I will certainly be considering Denham and Lobeck's book. The representative topics they explore are both stimulating and relevant to educators in today's teaching environments, and the suggested activities are, for the most part, realistic and exciting for teachers. *Language in the Schools* is successful in helping teachers see how to investigate and celebrate language(s) in their classrooms--whether they teach social studies, geometry, life science, or English. The book is a valuable contribution toward increasing awareness of language's role in classroom learning.

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