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BOOK II

Linguistic and Verbal Aspects  
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## **LINGUISTIC AND VERBAL ASPECTS OF THE CULTURALLY DIFFERENT.**

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## DISCUSSION

One area of great deficiency in the development of the culturally different child is his acquisition and utilization of language. Although much research has been aimed at identifying the patterns of symbolic functioning, little research has, as yet, led to identification of the causes or the methods to be utilized in remediation.

All speakers in a country as large as the United States use dialects. They tend to share the same sound system as well as the same semantic and grammatical systems. However, Standard American English is the language habitually used by most of the educated English-speaking people in this country.

Traditionally, English has been required as a school subject in all grades. This has been due to the tradition of teaching "genteel" English. Schools have tended to turn youngsters into adults who talk as educated people talk whether they are actually educated or not. Parents in this country still list "teach students good grammar" as a top desirable goal in the teaching of English. Students and English teachers do not always agree with this goal, however. Recently this "gentility" has led educators to a reverse position. Many educators now emphasize "leave the language alone."

The lack of command of Standard English among culturally different people results in learning disabilities and problems in the business world. Upward mobility is hindered by the lack of command of Standard English. Thus, the responsibility falls upon the teacher of the language arts to provide instruction in the Standard English of the geographic region in which he is teaching.

The way in which the culturally different child "receives," and what he "receives," from his environment is apparently quite different from the more advantaged child. The ghetto youngster, for example, may lack the sense of auditory discrimination essential to maximum speech development. The noise level of his crowded home may force the child to learn how to *not* listen. He fails to develop the ability to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant sounds, and to screen out the irrelevant. If, for instance, a jet plane zooms overhead while the teacher is talking, one pupil hears only one big roar of sound. But the student who has learned to screen out the irrelevant sound of the jet, listens to the teacher. Perhaps more important, the child who has not had adults correcting his pronunciation may be at a disadvantage. The correction of baby-talk is one crucial way in which the advantaged child learns to distinguish subtle differences of sound.

Differences in dialects can be due to differences in pronunciation, grammar or style. For example, a child in one part of the country might be punished for being impertinent when saying "yes, Ma'am" to the teacher while the same response would be expected verbal behavior in another part of the country. Another example is the difference between the phrases "I sick" and "I be sick." One phrase means the person is habitually sickly, the other means the person is just sick today or only temporarily sick.

A family which employs restricted language gives a child an environment characterized by: short unfinished sentences with poor syntactical form; little use of subordinate clauses; inability to hold a formal subject through a speech sequence; rigid and limited use of adjectives and adverbs; and frequent use of

personal pronouns. The child who has learned a restricted language at home is likely to experience difficulty in school where a more elaborate language is used by the teacher. Further, the difficulty is likely to increase as the child goes upward in school. The use of language by the child, chiefly to express his concrete needs, and by parents or other adults to command the child, may contribute to severe limitation of self-expression.

Education today cherishes individual differences. This is exactly what the culturally different people are doing—they are cherishing their language.

Schools can help develop Standard English while maintaining dialects. Teachers should accept the student's dialect in appropriate situations and build on the language patterns to which their students have been accustomed. Each pupil should be allowed to use his own language pattern while he is in the process of acquiring a command of Standard English. Avoiding rejection of the student's language patterns will forestall many undesirable psychological effects. Rejection of the student's language pattern could decrease enthusiasm for using language or could even develop a negative attitude toward learning.

Standard English, thus, becomes an additive available to the student for use in situations where he considers it appropriate. A French teacher does not always expect a student to stop speaking English while learning French. Therefore, the methods of foreign language teachers may well be applied to teaching Standard English to the culturally different. Oral language, emphasized in a relaxed classroom atmosphere, has proven helpful. Another good technique is the use of speakers with whom the student can identify. Drill and repetition are most helpful when the student already has the desire to learn to speak the standard dialect. A most useful approach to different dialects is the indirect attack where the student is taught the history of the language. This enhances the student's acceptance of his own language and reduces resistance to learning another language.

Research to date indicates that the language and cognitive development of the culturally different child are characterized by: deficiency in reception and comprehension of language; inadequacy in development of expressive language; defective and late maturation of speech; and inadequacy in development of cognitive function. There is a need for additional research in the areas of prevention and remediation. The following annotated bibliography may provide additional insights into these important aspects of child development among the culturally different.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## *Articles*

**Alexander, T., J. Stoyale, and C. Kirk.** "Language of children in the 'Inner City'." *Journal of Psychology*, 1968, v. 68, p. 215.

The goals of this study are (a) to determine if vocabulary differences exist between the sexes in children 3-5 years of age growing up in the deprived conditions of a large city; and (b) to determine if there is a significant vocabulary change over the Head Start school year and, if a change takes place, to determine if there is a difference between the sexes in the change.

One-hundred and eighteen children (52 girls and 66 boys) from 3 to 4 years of age were used in this study. The subjects attended pre-school (Head Start) in 4 centers located in socioeconomically depressed, urban areas having predominantly Negro residents.

The Picture Vocabulary items of the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale were used for the study.

A significant sex difference in extent of vocabulary in favor of boys was encountered. While a significant change for the entire group was encountered, no significant difference was found between the sexes in reference to changes in vocabulary.

**Bailey, B. L.** "Some Aspects of the impact of linguistics on language teaching in disadvantaged communities." *Elementary English*, May 1968, v. 45, p. 570.

The purpose of this article is to report on the findings of linguistic research in this area and to underscore the need for a specialized approach to the teaching of English in the schools that serve the children of disadvantaged communities.

**Calitri, C. J.** "On language and human dignity." *Education Digest*, May 1968, v. 33, p. 35.

This article explains how a man's language will have a bearing on his outlook of life, his respect for himself and others. An attack on the individual's language is an attack on the self.

**Corbin, R.** "English programs for the disadvantaged." *National Association of Secondary School Principals, Bulletin*, April 1967, v. 51, p. 78.

This author is trying to open the public's eyes to the disadvantaged. He discusses programs already in existence and states that everyone has to help build a better society for these people.

**Crosby, M.** "English: new dimensions and new demands." *Elementary English*, April 1966, v. 43, pp. 327-32.

English is the main life raft to free the disadvantaged from the "Sea of Hopelessness." English teachers must believe in the value of the children they teach, as human beings worthy of respect and capable of learning. They must have an understanding of the need of disadvantaged children to learn in school the skills of planning and the art of practicing them. English teachers must have an appreciation of the family dialects of their children and an understanding of the need of all people to possess several dialects.

**Davis, A. L. "Dialect research and the needs of the schools." *Elementary English*, May 1968, v. 45, p. 558.**

This article reviews the research in the area of language. Some of the studies discussed are the Urban Language Study of the District of Columbia, the Chicago Survey and the Detroit Dialect Study. The author feels more research will complicate the teacher's task, but, it will help to reach more adequate solutions.

**DeCarlo, M. "Non-verbal child." *Childhood Education*, February 1968, v. 44, p. 358.**

Many children have poor language and reading skills, meager vocabularies, forget tomorrow what they have learned today, do not understand what they read, are not interested, do not like school, are alienated, future dropouts and potential delinquents.

It is important for the schools to determine the step for which he is ready.

Constructive improvement for these children will grow out of the resources of the teacher joined with the real possibilities of the pupil.

**Dillard, J. L. "English teacher and the newly integrated student." *Record*, November 1967, v. 69, p. 115.**

The Negro dialect has baffled teachers for years. Fortunately, experiments made in cooperation with the District of Columbia school system tend to indicate that special drills for such studies need not be lengthy to be effective. A drill unit of five to ten minutes, using pattern practice procedures from English as a Foreign Language methods, have proved to be most effective. Experimental practices like the non-graded school provide a beautiful setting for this kind of improved language teaching. Computerized and programmed techniques are also being suggested but less prosperous schools cannot afford them.

**Duggins, J. H. Jr. "Language difference or language difficulty?" *A Bucket of Books. Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1965, v. 47, pp. 84-5.**

This article discusses the problems the Negroes have with phonics and verb tenses. There is a correlation between social variation and language behavior. Teachers can be of help by recognizing their language for what it is—different—without ascribing it to a lower class; conducting and asking for more studies on noise level and intelligibility; arranging for privacy within the school; arranging for printed materials centered about the realities they know; adding to a student's understanding of dialect through better presentations of American English pronunciation or teaching sentence patterns with oral-aural approaches.

**Etten, J. F. "Teachers should break the language barriers for the disadvantaged." *Wisconsin Journal of Education*, October 1967, v. 100, p. 11.**

This article focuses its attention on the student teachers and what should be done to make teaching the culturally disadvantaged easier. The writer proposes that (1) *The Languages of the Culturally Different*; (2) *Spanish for Teachers in the Inner City*; and (3) *The Teaching of English As a Second Language* be added to university curriculum for student teachers doing undergraduate work.

**Gans, R. "They must talk before they read." *Grade Teacher*, December 1966, v. 84,**

p. 100+.

The author of this article relates how she has tried to help children with different dialects to speak standard English. Through grants, she has developed a series of tapes beginning and ending with theme music. Parents are invited to participate. Each child is interviewed and taped before the training begins and will be taped again at the close of the program to determine progress.

**Hernandez, L. F. "Teaching English to the culturally disadvantaged Mexican-American student." *English Journal*, January 1968, v. 57, p. 87.**

The author of this article stresses the need for giving some identity to the Mexican-American students. He states there are basically four types of students:

1. Students who are more Anglo than Mexican and speak more English than Spanish.
2. Students who are more Mexican than Anglo and speak more Spanish than English.
3. Students who are half Mexican and half Anglo and speak a hodge-podge known as pocho.
4. Students who are Mexican in all characteristics and who speak absolutely no English.

The important thing is to stress his identity.

**Hodes, P. and J. E. Terrill. "Communication skills projects: A Community action program." *Claremont Reading Conference Yearbook*, 1967, v. 31, p. 156.**

The Communication Skills Project was begun to help the educationally disadvantaged child upgrade his total educational outlook. In April 1963, consultants from the Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools discussed the current and future educational needs of children living in South Central Los Angeles County.

In April 1964, a \$9,000 federal grant was received. One hundred twenty children in the third grade were selected to participate in the demonstration program. In 1966, the program, funded through the Economic Opportunity Act, included 4,000 children from 12 school districts in Los Angeles County.

**Jensen, A. R. "Conceptions and misconceptions about verbal mediation," *Claremont Reading Conference Yearbook*, 1966, v. 30, pp. 134-41.**

The author gives his definition of verbal mediation, and what verbal mediation is not. He gives several examples of verbal mediation and suggestions for future research.

**Jones, J. A. "English language teaching in a social/cultural dialect situation." *English Language Teacher*, May 1968, v. 22, p. 199.**

This author challenges the assumption that the natural or home language habits of the child are inferior or irrelevant and should play no part in the process of development; that there is only one form of language usage—the "acceptable" one—with which it is necessary for a person to explore all the outer and inner recesses of his experience.

**Loban, W., V. Burke, and M. Black. "Research Critiques: problems in oral English."**

*Elementary English*, December 1967, v. 44, p. 913.

This study of the "substandard" speech of three groups of children, 21 per group, with low or high language "proficiency" and a fourth random group of 50 children not selected according to language ability has caused opposing opinions on the validity of Loban's research by two critics, Dr. Virginia Burke and Mr. Millard Black. To Dr. Burke, Loban's book is a "disaster." Mr. Black agrees with Loban's ideas.

**Macauley, R.** "Linguistic diversity and the elementary school." *Claremont Reading Conference Yearbook*, 1967, v. 31, p. 34.

The author of this article stresses that an elementary school teacher "cannot know too much about her own and the children's language." She should be trained to observe the speech of children so she can have some insight into their problems and avoid adding to their confusion, and she should evaluate her results. If the results are unsatisfactory—there is something wrong with the system.

**McNeil, K. A.** "Semantic space as an indicator of socialization." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, October 1968, v. 59, pp. 325-7.

"A semantic differential was administered to 521 sixth grade Ss who could be classified into four subcultural groups representing a hypothesized degree of socialization. A principle components factor analysis yielded six factors having an eigenvalue above one. Factor scores were computed for each S and subjected to a discriminant analysis. The discriminant function which accounted for the most variance produced the same rank ordering of the subcultures as the hypothesized degree of socialization. The degree of socialization of an individual can thus be estimated from the empirical weights obtained in the discriminant analysis."

**Meier, J.** "Some results of new nursery school language research." bibliog. *Childhood Education*, December 1968, v. 45, p. 228+.

The New Nursery School (NNS), Greeley, Colorado, has a twofold purpose for working with environmentally deprived children: (1) to intervene in the growth and development patterns of several environmentally deprived children with an experimental compensatory educational program to enable them to perform, with greater success in school; (2) to establish and maintain a behavioral sciences laboratory in which interdisciplinary research, regarding the learning and acculturation of such learners, might be carefully studied.

Research evidence suggests that such a program does accelerate desirable growth and development in various components of a child's language behavior, whether he comes from a deprived or enriched environmental background.

**Metz, F. E.** "Poverty, early language deprivation, and learning ability." *Elementary English*, February 1966, v. 43, pp. 129-33.

A child's linguistics ability may receive objective consideration by subdividing language into at least three of its definable aspects: (1) lexical; (2) phonetic structure; and (3) syntactic structure. Each of these three areas have the typical limitations. However, no special educational techniques can succeed in the wrong attitudinal climate.



**Mukerji, R. and H. F. Robinson. "Head Start in language." *Elementary English*, May 1966, v. 43, pp. 460-3.**

This article relates how children in kindergarten in a New York City "special service school" were taught. All teaching strategies developed in the study to further language growth began with stimulating experiences and intense personal involvement of the children.

**Nash, R. L. "Teaching speech improvement to the disadvantaged: more effective schools program." *Speech Teacher*, January 1957, v. 16, p. 69.**

The author tells how (9/64) she set up a program, "More Effective Schools Program" (MES), for ten schools and now has been expanded to encompass twenty.

This type of program emphasizes the oral expression of ideas rather than rote memorization, reading aloud or transition. It utilizes vocabulary building, aural comprehension, visual or reading comprehension, and writing.

**Olson, J. "Verbal ability of the culturally different." *Educational Forum*, March 1963, v. 29, pp. 280-4.**

This article helps to explain some of the problems concerning lack of student participation in the classroom. Possibilities are suggested: (1) Some children may be genuinely retarded in their language development; (2) others may have full language development of a kind that is not accepted by the school. (3) Some children may have full language development, except in certain areas of activity valued by the school. (4) Other students may have full language development, but hesitate to share what they have experienced because they feel that these experiences will be disvalued. (5) In informal situations, some children may be quite verbal but tongue-tied in more formal situations like the classroom. (6) Children may not talk because we ask questions that do not require much talking, (7) and finally, they may not respond, because teaching technology may still be suffering from the verbal hangover of the Middle Ages. The author then proceeds to propose a total oral language program.

**Panel Discussion. "Head Start and language development." *Claremont Reading Conference Yearbook*, 1966, v. 30, p. 142.**

This article is a panel discussion among teachers working through Head Start. Their topic is one of unresponsiveness in "poor" children and how each member of the panel tried to help the children overcome this disability. Emotional speech, it is concluded, might be what educators should use when they talk. These children are retarded in *our* language but as a whole are not retarded in language development.

**Personke, C. "35mm reflex camera and language learning." *Audio Visual Instructor*, September 1967, v. 12, p. 703.**

This article suggests how the use of 35 mm. reflex cameras can create a good learning atmosphere for children whose experiences are few and far between. These slides can provide excellent vicarious experience for concept development. They can also provide the teacher with a way of orally presenting information that children cannot obtain through reading.

**Prehm, H. J. "Concept learning in culturally disadvantaged children as a function of verbal pretraining." *Exceptional Children*, May 1966, v. 32, pp. 599-604.**

"While research indicates that verbal pretraining has a positive influence on the discrimination learning performance of subjects of normal intelligence, a comparable influence has not been shown for other types of conceptual tasks for retarded subjects. The purpose of this experiment was to investigate the effects of stimulus pretraining on concept learning by subjects who had a 'high risk' of being classified as mentally retarded at some future time. A group of 27 'higher risk' and 27 'lower risk' subjects was randomly divided into three pretraining groups: verbal label, attention and control. Subsequent to pretraining on the stimuli used for Transfer Task I, subjects in each group were presented with a concept learning task (Transfer Task I). After reaching the criterion of learning on Transfer Task I, subjects were presented with a second, new, concept learning task. Analysis of the data revealed that there were no significant performance differences between risk groups and that pretraining had a significantly positive effect on performance.

**Raph, J. B. "Language development in socially disadvantaged children." *Journal of Educational Research*, December 1965, v. 35, pp. 389-400.**

Research to date indicates that the process of language acquisition for disadvantaged children is more subject (1) to a lack of vocal stimulation during infancy, (2) to a paucity of experiences in conversation with more verbally mature adults in the first 3 or 4 years of life, (3) to severe limitations in the opportunities to develop mature cognitive behavior, and (4) to the types of emotional encounters which result in the restricting of the children's conceptual and verbal skills.

There is much research needed in this area. The author suggests several for the benefit of his audience.

**Reich, R. "Puppetry, a language tool." *Exceptional Children*, April 1968, v. 34, p. 621.**

Puppets and a class of eight visually handicapped children ranging in chronological age from 10 to 13 with IQ scores ranging from 75 to 109 made up this author's research program. Three of the children were totally blind, three legally blind and two partially seeing. Puppets were made and dialogue constructed about an Indian helping to heal a sick colonial girl. Immediate improvement resulted. Puppetry provided a situation that encouraged original thinking, gave children an opportunity to practice craft skills and enhanced social studies learning.

**Robinson, H. F. and R. Mukerji. "Language concepts, and the disadvantaged." *Education Leadership*, November 1965, v. 23, p. 133+.**

The writers, in the spring 1964 term, conducted an exploratory study in a kindergarten class in a "special service" public school in Brooklyn. Negro, Jewish, Puerto Rican, Greek, Chinese and Italian represented the ethnic groups. The grocery store was their topic. Prices, food classification and symbolic representations were exposed to these children. The findings indicated that the utility of specific, preselected learning goals was underscored many ways in the study. The study also suggested the need for kindergarten programs to focus sharply on the kinds of learning goals which seem most needed by disadvantaged children. One challenging implication of the study was the support it gave for the

more active role for teachers in simulating new activities and for building bridges between children's purposes and the intellectual goals of the school while working within established principles of child development.

**Ruddell, R. and B. W. Graves. "Socio-ethnic status and the language achievement of first grade children." *Elementary English*, May 1968, v. 45, p. 635.**

Twenty-four first-grade classrooms representing a wide range of socio-economic levels in the Oakland Unified School district, Oakland, California, made up the subjects in this study. From these 24 classrooms, 160 children were drawn at random and categorized into socio-economic levels on the basis of the University of Minnesota Scale for Paternal Occupations. From this group 19 Caucasian and 19 Negro subjects were chosen. The Test of Syntax was administered. The objective was to investigate the relationship between syntactical language development and the socio-ethnic status of beginning first grade children. The following conclusions are based on the findings of this study: (1) An analysis of the error rate on all the test items for both groups demonstrates a significant positive relationship between error rate and socio-ethnic status; and (2) the most striking difference in error rate between the two groups was on items involving the third person singular form of the verb.

**Stern, C. "Language competencies of Young Children." *Young Children*, October 1966, v. 22, pp. 44-50.**

"There is no doubt that the preschool language competency of a middle-class child differs from that of a socio-economically deprived child." Since it appears evident that schools are not ready to accept the language of the latter's culture, the author proposes structured lessons to help him adapt his language to that which he will meet in school.

**Stoia, L. and G. E. Reeling. "Better speech for Head Start Children." *Elementary School Journal*, January 1967, v. 67, p. 213.**

During the summer of 1965, in Montclair, New Jersey, through the Head Start Program, 65 children were accepted for enrollment in the Head Start Project. Forty-one children who completed the program met all requirements for this study. The children were administered the Templin-Darley Articulation Diagnostic Screening Test (pre-test) and a complete pure-tone audiometric test. In September, the control group, children who had not participated in the Head Start project were given the same tests. The post-test was given to the Head Start children at the end of the summer.

The results indicated that this 8-week program improved the Head Start Program children's articulation.

**Tanzmon, J. "New twist in teaching communication skills." *School Management*, May 1968, v. 12, p. 23.**

"The tape recorder is pulling double duty in a special project for culturally deprived youngsters in Hempstead, New York." Each student is given a tape recorder to use in school and then at home. These special fourth grade students have been encouraged to vocalize more and more effectively; critical listening has improved and they are analyzing their own speech patterns more accurately. At

home, the parents listen to their child's progress, and messages from the teacher. The parents even tape messages for the teachers to play back the next day.

**Trotman, C. J. "Language programs for the disadvantaged: critique of a NCTE task force report." *Pennsylvania School Journal*, February 1968, v. 116, p. 311.**

This article is a critique of the NCTE task force report. "From an analysis of this report, several factors become apparent. First, the NCTE Task Force did not fulfill its responsibility as a disseminator of information on English programs for these students." The observers had no procedures or methods for evaluating English programs for the disadvantaged; the taxonomy is inconsistent with the NCTE definition of the discipline of English; the format of the report does not lead to a complete picture of English programs for these students." In general, an analysis of the "Secondary" section of the NCTE Task Force report leads to the general conclusion that the report is an inadequate index for measuring the efforts of the English curriculum to enrich the educational experiences of disadvantaged youth.

**Welch, J. "Experiment with talking." *Times Educational Supplement*, September 13, 1968, v. 2782, p. 457.**

This paper takes a psycholinguistic look at the early elementary speech program in light of two crucial areas of research and theory. (1) language acquisition and (2) language of the disadvantaged child. The author then proceeds to advance several points and suggests that a review of all pertinent research and theory in language development and behavior be made; plan language objectives so that they are specific and complement the developmental stages of grammatical acquisition; texts must reflect linguistic objectives in language improvement exercises; and classroom activities must reflect these language code objectives.

**Worley, S. E. and W. E. Story. "Socio-economic status and language facility of beginning first graders." *Reading Teacher*, February 1967, v. 20, p. 400.**

Forty subjects, chosen from approximately 350 first grade children were administered the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities. The purpose was to determine to what degree entering first grade children of low socio-economic status differ in language facility from those of higher socio-economic status. A difference of over one year was found to exist between the means of the two groups.

## **Books**

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