

Maya Honda and Wayne O’Neil, A quick look back at linguistics in US classrooms

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Latin and Linguistics Workshop, Stony Brook University, 13-14 October 2017

Note: We focus here on top-down efforts to introduce linguistics in schools, generally imposed on teachers. For teacher-initiated efforts, see the presentations by Connolly, Keyser, and Loosen given at the Latin and Linguistics Workshop.

0. In the beginning, there was traditional school grammar, which persists to this day.

- Rationale: To pre-/pro-scribe: “On a single point, at least, grammarians are united. They hold that, by the study of Grammar, the pupil should acquire the art of using the English language with propriety. A study of the science that does not issue in this, all agree, fails of its proper end.”
- Used sentence-diagramming technology to achieve this end.

See: Alonzo Reed and Brainerd Kellogg. 1889. *An elementary English grammar, consisting of one hundred practical lessons, carefully graded and adapted to the class room*, 3. New York: Effingham Maynard & Co., Publisher.

1. American structural linguistics in the foreign language classroom, post World War II.

- Rationale: To introduce a new method for teaching and learning a foreign language, for acquiring the ability to speak that language.
- Replaced the grammar-translation method with the “process of ‘mimicry-memorizing’” of complete sentences (Haugen 1972: 201)—fallout from the “Army method” of teaching languages developed during World War II.
- Embedded in behaviorism: Leonard Bloomfield “insisted upon the importance of constant practice and overlearning, since command of a language is not an insight, but a habit, not a knowledge, but a skill” (Haugen 1972: 203). Latin did not escape the structuralist—see Sweet 1957.
- Valued description over pre-/pro-scription.
- Had no organized presence in the English language arts classroom.

See: Einar Haugen. 1972 (1951). From army camp to classroom: The story of an elementary language text. In Evelyn S. Firchow, Kaaren Grimstad, Nils Hasselmo, and Wayne O’Neil, eds. *Studies by Einar Haugen*, 199-208. The Hague: Mouton, 1972. [Haugen’s army materials are the basis of his *Spoken Norwegian*. New York: Holt, 1947.]

Leonard Bloomfield. 1933. *Language* (Chapter 2). New York: Holt.

Waldo E. Sweet. 1957. *Latin: A structural approach*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

2. Transformational grammar in the language arts classroom, the 1960s.

- Rationale: To replace a prescriptive grammar of English with a science-based grammar.
- But the grammar was deemed “too hard”, leading to development of ‘teacher-proof’ material.
- Resulted in serious study of grammar disappearing from the school curriculum.

See: Albert Kitzhaber, ed. 1968. *The Oregon Curriculum: A sequential program in English, language/rhetoric, Volumes I, II*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. [This secondary school program was supported by public dollars through Project English.]

Wayne O'Neil. 2007. Project English: Lessons from curriculum reform past. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 1: 612-623.

Paul Roberts. 1966. *The Roberts English series: A linguistics program, volumes 3-9*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World. [The publisher initiated this series.]

Wayne O'Neil. 1968. Paul Roberts' rules of order: The misuses of linguistics in the classroom. *Urban Review* 2.7: 12-16. <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2FBF02223247.pdf>

3. Sociolinguistics in the social studies/social science classroom, 1990s to the present.

- Rationale: To engage students in language and dialect study in order to promote awareness of linguistic diversity and to counter language bias.
- Focuses on local/regional languages and dialects, which has the potential to draw on linguistic resources in students' communities for data and analysis.
- More flexibility to innovate in social studies than in language arts, where there is often high stakes testing.

See: Jeffrey Reaser and Walt Wolfram. 2007. *Voices of North Carolina: Language and life from the Atlantic to the Appalachians, instructor's manual and student workbook*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Language and Life Project. [The first state-based curriculum on variation in the US; meets North Carolina standards for 8th grade social studies.] <https://linguistics.chass.ncsu.edu/thinkanddo/vonc.php>

SKILLS – School Kids Investigating Language in Life and Society [The first program to teach linguistics in California public schools.] <http://www.skills.ucsb.edu>

Mary Bucholz, Audrey Lopez, Allina Mojarro, Elena Skapoulli, Chris VanderStouve, and Shawn Warner-Garcia. 2014. Sociolinguistic justice in the schools: Student researchers as linguistic experts. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 8: 144-157. [About the SKILLS program.]

Kristin Denham and David Pippin. Under construction. *Voices of the Pacific Northwest*. <https://www.voicesofthepnw.net>

4. Linguistics beyond the classroom, the 1990s to the present.

- Rationale: To increase awareness of language, linguistic diversity, and linguistics as a discipline through informal education and public outreach via a variety of media and in a variety of settings.
- Creates potential support for the value of linguistics in US schools—in the Latin classroom, for instance.

See: The Language and Life Project at North Carolina State University [Established in 1993 by Walt Wolfram, its director and executive producer; focuses on research, education, and outreach about language in the American South.] <https://languageandlife.org>

The Ohio State University's Buckeye Language Network Language Sciences Pod at Columbus Center of Science and Industry [A museum-based outreach program directed by Laura Wagner.] <https://u.osu.edu/thebln/language-pod/>

Thomas Purnell, Eric Raimy, and Joseph Salmons, eds. 2013. *Wisconsin talk: Linguistic diversity in the Badger State*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Wisconsin Englishes Project <http://csumc.wisc.edu/wep/>