SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROBLEMS IN
CURRENT SESD THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The black population of the United States is making itself increasingly heard, seen, and recognized today. Whites are becoming aware at the very least that Blacks are dissatisfied with their lot in life. Those Americans who are more sensitive, interested, perceptive are finding a new culture that is very much a part of America.

Ever since the Civil War there has been the traditional controversy between the respective proponents of segregation and integration. More recently, Civil Rights has been an issue of major importance. In keeping with American ideals of democracy and equality, pro-Civil Rights spokesmen have demanded that all men be treated as equals. At times this idea has gone so far as almost to see individuals as identical. However, the fact is that all Americans are not identical. The various sub-cultures found in this country lend (or could lend, if properly understood) rich color and special character to America. The old idea of the 'melting pot' is being attacked and new ideas of preserving cultures while gaining in understanding and acceptance of one another are making themselves heard.

This new turn in events leaves linguists and English teachers in something of a quandary. The new SESD (standard English as a second dialect) trends which seemed so wonderful and so humanitarian are now being attacked as undemocratic

and anti-American. It is the job of the linguist and English
teacher to examine the facts, to listen thoughtfully to the
arguments pro and con, and then to decide what he or she will
do about teaching Blacks.

Statement of the Problem

Until very recently, the problem in SESD was one of
describing the points of difference between standard English
and Black dialect and deciding what measures could be used
to overcome the difficulties. We assume here that Black
dialect is accepted as a valid and respectable form of speech
and that standard English is taught as an alternate (not
replacement) dialect to be used as a tool. This tool could
be used to give the Black a choice of staying in his small
corner or getting out into the world. The assumption is that
standard English would give the Black the key to entry into
the White world.

The problem today is much more complex. Can we as
linguists or English teachers realistically say that standard
English is the key to White society? Can we guarantee the
Black that job discrimination will end once he can command
standard English? These are the questions that many concerned
professionals in the field are raising today.

On the other hand, suppose we accept the fact that standard
English is a desirable dialect for every American to command.
What then are the problems? The problems of contrastive analy-
sis leading to various oral-aural drills and other classroom

exercises seem obvious and trivial when compared with the problem of motivating the Black student to learn standard English. Why should he learn another dialect? He gets along perfectly well with his own language. He can say whatever he wants to say to whomever he wants to say it in a perfectly acceptable way. Can an English teacher refute this? Can she accept his dialect? Does she have valid reasons for believing he needs standard English? How can she make him see the need for learning standard English? Unless a teacher believes strongly in the program and its necessity and can convey her ideas to her students, she has already lost the battle.

The problem for the teacher, then, lies first of all in justifying the SESD program to herself and then communicating her beliefs effectively to her students. Secondly the SESD program must be made interesting, relevant, and rewarding. Contrastive analysis must be done to ascertain where the problems lie. Various drills must be set up with these problems in mind.

Review of the Literature

In reviewing the literature in the field, it is necessary to look at several areas. One area is that written by linguists about the characteristics of the language or dialect in question. Many studies have been done describing the language and these serve as the basis upon which the development of SESD programs lie. William Labov is one who has dealt at length with this subject. In an article in Language

(Labov 1969) he deals with the problem surrounding the copula in Black English. In an article in the same issue of <u>Language</u> Ralph Fasold (Fasold 1969) deals with the special uses of <u>be</u> in Black English.

An article by Marvin Loflin in <u>Journal</u> <u>of</u> <u>English</u> <u>as</u> <u>a</u> <u>Second</u> <u>Language</u> (Loflin 1969) deals with the use of the passive in Black English. He shows in his article that Black English and standard English differ in their deep structures, thus strengthening the arguments for using ESL techniques for teaching standard English.

Another discussion of <u>be</u> is found in an article by Beryl Bailey (Bailey 1968). She points out the difference in meaning between a sentence with no copula and a sentence with the base form of <u>be</u> used as a copula.

An article by Mildred Gladney and Lloyd Leaverton (Gladney & Leaverton 1968) lists some of the most important features of Black English that distinguish it from standard English as follows:

a) The verbs <u>is</u> and <u>are</u> are omitted:

1) In simple sentences. e. g.

He my friend.

2) In sentences using the present participle form. e. g.

They playing house.

3) In sentences expressing the future using the verb <u>go</u>. i. e.

She gon be a nurse when she grow up.

b) One verb form is used for all subjects in the present

tense, i. e.

Chocolate milk look good.

The baby look like he do.

That boy have a piece of bread.

c) One verb form is used for all subjects in the past
    tense, i. e.

    We was hungry.

    Somebody knock that down.

    Yesterday I write my name.

d) <u>Be</u> is used in place of <u>is</u>, <u>am</u>, and <u>are</u> and in sen-
    tences describing a recurring event, i. e.

    When my mama be gone, I take care of the babies.

    Sometimes he be riding in the alley.

    I be scared when it be thundering.

This article, although very helpful in many ways, is objec-
tionable in some respects because it seems to look at Black
English as a deviant form of English rather than as a separate
dialect or sub-system of English.

The sections entitled 'Linguistic Problems of Many
Nonstandard Speakers' and 'Articulation and Pronunciation' in
<u>Nonstandard Dialect</u> (N. Y. Board of Education 1967:5-15) con-
tain a fairly extensive coverage of features of Black dialect
which differ from standard English. The whole booklet is
written in layman's terms making it extremely helpful for the
teacher with little or no linguistic training.

The body of literature just mentioned--that describing
the language--is basic for understanding the rest of the field.

This is the basis of contrastive analysis (modified, of course, with regard to the particular dialect of the students) which underlies any ESL methodology.

The second area to be considered is that of SESD programs. Fortunately, virtually all the recent literature accepts the idea that Black English is a separate language, or at least a separate sub-system of English, and that ESL techniques are necessary to use in teaching standard English. Labov (1970), however, makes the point that the similarities between Black dialect and standard English must be emphasized.

Gladney and Leaverton (1968) use the terms 'school talk' and 'everyday talk' with the children to eliminate the idea of correct and incorrect and to help establish the idea of one dialect being appropriate in some situations and another in other situations.

The basic premise on which SESD is founded is expressed well in an article by Charlotte Brooks. She stresses the need for the child's retaining his native dialect (and the teacher must treat this dialect as an acceptable one) while being taught standard English for use as an alternate language appropriate to certain situations. In her opinion, the philo-sophy of the SESD teacher (and this must be communicated to the students) is this: 'I accept you and your language. Use it when you need it for communication with your family and friends. But, if you really want to be a free and successful participant in other areas of this American life, why not learn the language spoken there: standard English?' (Brooks 1964:

Many writers have had something to say about SESD programs
--Lin (1965), Slager (1967), Carroll (1967), Stewart (1969),
Shuy (1969), Bailey (1965, 1968, 1970), Johnson (1969), Allen
(1969), Baratz (1969), Troike (1969)--the list goes on and on.
The most important themes running through the papers written
by these authors are that standard English is necessary and
should be taught as an alternate (not replacement) dialect,
that the native dialect should not be looked down upon, and
that some of the ESL techniques prove effective in SESD.

Still another phase of the subject under investigation is
that body of literature which contains the arguments both for
and against teaching SESD. Again, the last few years have
brought changes in the arguments. Until recently, the argu-
ment has centered around whether nonstandard dialects were
merely incorrect English and as such should be 'corrected' or
whether the dialect in question was a separate language or
sub-system which had value to the speaker and therefore should
be retained and standard English added to give the student
the opportunity of climbing the social ladder.

The latter argument has become the accepted philosophy
in SESD. Now the argument centers around the value or necessity
of SESD. While Bailey, Labov, Shuy, Stewart, and many others
continue to hold that the acquisition of standard English is
a desirable goal, others such as Orlando Taylor (1970) and
Thomas Kochman (1969) feel that the value of acquiring standard
English is far overrated. Kenneth Johnson (1969) while
seemingly accepting the fact that standard English should be

taught, raises questions himself about the worth of the program.

The arguments both pro and con are dealt with in greater depth in Chapters 3 and 4.

Justification

Awareness that Blacks do not speak standard English is not new. It has been common knowledge for a long time. But ideas on how to regard Black dialect and what to do about standard English for Blacks are new. The purpose of this paper is to present a current picture of SESD--the theories and practices connected with the program and the problems.

It is important to understand the attitudes of Blacks today with regard to their culture as it relates to the White culture. These attitudes are responsible for the way in which Blacks respond to language programs.

By gaining an understanding of the current status of SESD, the English teacher can better assess the situation, come to grips with her own feelings on the matter, and set realistic goals for her students.

CHAPTER 2

CURRENT SESD METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

SESD Programs

In a paper presented at the 1968 NCTE Convention in
Milwaukee, Roger Shuy expresses doubts about the validity and
usefulness of currently available materials. 'A majority of
the materials currently available for teaching standard English
to nonstandard speakers rest on the uneasy assumption that
TESOL [teaching English to speakers of other languages] tech-
niques are valid for learning a second dialect. They do this
without any solid proof. We do not have a viable evaluation
tool at this time nor are we likely to get one until the
linguists complete their analysis of the language system of
nonstandard speakers.' (Shuy 1969:83)

Regardless of the validity of this type of materials, it
is the author's purpose here to present the types of SESD
programs that are being carried on.

If Black dialect is recognized as a separate dialect or
sub-system of English, then ESL techniques are looked on as
the most helpful ones for teaching standard English. If it
is not recognized as separate from standard English, but merely
'incorrect' standard English, no such techniques are used, but
rather the ineffective 'correction' techniques of the past
are used.

The themes of bidialectism (biloquialism, as Shuy prefers

to call it) and of alternate rather than replacement dialect
run through the descriptions of and recommendations for
SESD programs. Walter Loban (1968) emphasizes that 'Teachers
must proceed on the principle of adding standard English to
the dialect of pupils whose speech reflects economic disad-
vantage. The other alternative, substituting standard English
and eliminating the dialect, is neigher feasible on sociologi-
cal grounds nor sensible on psychological grounds. Least of
all is it humane. A speaker who is made to feel ashamed of
his own language habits suffers a basic injury as a human
being.' (Loban 1968:595)

Loban (1965) gives a year-by-year guide to SESD instruction.
He strongly believes that the child should be allowed to use
his native dialect during the early years of school. He
must learn to develop and amplify his sentences so that he can
express his thoughts and feelings well. He can do this better
in the dialect he already speaks. He should never be criticized
for his use of language or made to feel in any way that the
teacher does not approve of his language. 'If we do not first
encourage the child to use his own indigenous language in its
full range, we will diminish his desire to use language in
school.' (Loban 1968:595)

However, Loban also stresses the need for having the child-
ren practice all the sounds of standard English before it
becomes too difficult to make them. Loban suggests using taped
skits for the child to listen to--both in his own dialect and
standard English so that he can learn to discriminate between

the two.

During grades 4, 5, and 6 the children should be given
an opportunity to hear many dialects of English so that he
will be aware that there are many ways to speak English.
This will help minimize the chances of his feeling his dialect
is considered inferior when more intensive SESD work is begun.
The children should imitate all the various dialects with
increasingly more emphasis being placed on standard English.
During this period also, the teacher should begin oral drill
on especially crucial areas of difference between Black dialect
and standard English. Pronoun case is one example. The teacher
should give a number of sentences--some standard English and
some Black dialect. She should tell the children which is
which without going into grammatical analysis and strive to
have them learn to tell for themselves which sentence is in
which dialect.

Grades 5, 6, and 7 are, according to Loban, the best time
to introduce the idea of social distinctions. This is the time
for trying to get the children to see the consequences of
remaining bound by one dialect and the possibilities which
exist for the person who can, in addition to his native dialect,
handle standard English.

In grades 7-12 Loban suggests using drill tapes and lan-
guage laboratories which would alternate with dramatics,
literature, discussion, and writing.

Some SESD lessons are composed of riddles, short dialogues,
narratives, or poems for memorization. Many of these lessons

are supplemented with pattern drills. Various drills, guided
conversations or games follow each dialogue in order to give
the pupils practice with the new material in varied situations.
Visual aids, puppets, and role playing are devices used to
hold interest and facilitate practice.

In Detroit, Ruth Golden and Robert L. Donald have moved
in this type of oral-aural direction. They have placed
lessons for imitation on tapes in order to make the program
of use to the maximum number of teachers.

Another approach to SESD is set forth by James Mackey
(1969). He advises the teacher to 'accept the language, deal
with it in an intellectually honest way, and use ghetto lan-
guage as a vehicle with which to approach the language commonly
used in the larger society.' (Mackey 1969:140) He feels the
most viable approach is to allow the child to use Black
dialect in the classroom, but compile lists of everyday words
and define them and compare them with standard English. This
affords the ghetto youth the opportunity to see the utility
of standard English without condemning the language of the
ghetto.

Gladney and Leaverton (1968) give this unit plan for the
introduction of verbs:

Unit 1 -- am, is, are

2 -- was, were

3 -- /-s, -z, -ɨz/

4 -- do, does

5 -- say, says

6 -- have, has

7 -- /-t, -d, -ɨd/

8 -- be

They have used this sequence in teaching and found it to work well.

In Werner Cohn's article in <u>The School Review</u> (1959) he quotes Bernhard Hormann's ideas on SESD methodology. His ideas obviously are for students of at least junior high age, but for the student of that age might be very worthwhile. 'Pedagogically, a systematic knowledge of the local dialect would make possible the development of better techniques for teaching standard English. In grammar, for instance, the structure of the local dialect can be worked out inductively by the pupils. These pupil-discovered rules can then be used to bridge the gap to the structure of standard English.' (Cohn 1959:438)

Slager's article (1967) contains good samples of drills, although it is objectionable in that it treats Black dialect as incorrect English and is intent on 'correcting' it. He recommends the typical ESL repetition and substitution drills for teaching the person-tense markers on verbs. For problems of phonology, he relies heavily on use of the minimal pair to establish the need for developing the standard English pronunciation and also for use in drilling to see if students are making the discrimination both in hearing and in speaking.

The section entitled 'Program of Instruction' in <u>Nonstandard Dialect</u> (N. Y. Board of Education 1967:17-38) provides a

sequential series of activities designed especially for Blacks in New York City. By following this series of lessons it is hoped the student will first be made aware of standard English and then be stimulated to want to adopt it.

Problems in the Existing Programs

No matter what approach to SESD is taken, no matter which program is adopted, the problem of motivation always arises. If a student sees no need for learning standard English, he is not likely to learn it. If he feels resentful of the whole program, he is even less likely to learn it.

Mackey (1969) cites the feeling of powerlessness which characterizes most lower class youth. This powerlessness is defined as the perceived inability of the individual to maintain effective control over his life and destiny. The implication of this feeling of powerlessness is that 'If an individual feels powerless to control the outcomes of his actions, then it will seem of little use to him to learn materials that could conceivably help him perform more adequately.' (quote from John Galliher, Mackey 1969:133-134) Basil Bernstein has said that those who possess a restrictive linguistic code feel '...that nothing really important is ever transmitted by language, at least by classroom language. The middle class teacher, imploring as he does the ghetto student to develop linguistic autonomy, to use language as a method for the verbal expansion of thought, creates, in effect, a vast cultural discontinuity. The effect of most

traditional teaching strategies on ghetto students is often puzzling, bewildering, and alienating.' (Bernstein 1964)

William Stewart (1964, 1965) speaks of the SESD situation as a 'quasi-foreign language' situation. Since standard English and Black dialect are both sub-systems of English and have many things in common, it is harder for a speaker of Black dialect to learn standard English than it would be for a speaker of a completely foreign language. 'The near identity of the two linguistic systems at certain structural levels may deceive the learner into thinking that the two are more generally alike than they really are, with the result that he **may** be unwary of the likelihood of interference at other structural levels.' (Stewart 1969:50)

Another problem here is that the speaker of Black dialect thinks he already speaks standard English (indeed the teacher may recognize it only as deviant standard English) and thus there is no awareness on the part of the learner (and often the teacher as well) that this is a quasi-foreign language situation.

'Disadvantaged Black children understand standard English, even if they don't speak it, and the drills and exercises used in a second language approach to teaching standard English are easy and don't present much of a challenge for these children. The drills and exercises must contain sentences that are interesting, humorous or provocative to maintain the attention, interest and motivation of the children.' (Johnson 1969:80)

An additional problem lies in the fact that Black English has never been fully described. If a grammar were written,

educators would have a standard of comparison. There is
disagreement about whether ESL techniques are the proper ones
to use in SESD programs. A grammar of Black English to com-
pare with standard English might help determine the useful-
ness of ESL techniques and would also make contrastive
analyses easier.

Not only is lack of motivation a problem in SESD. The
problem goes even deeper. Kenneth Johnson talks about func-
tional interference--"the refusal to learn standard English
because it is 'white folks talk.' This phenomenon is a result
of Black people taking increasing pride in anything that is
identifiably black (that is, identified with the Black people
and Black sub-culture)...This pride in themselves, coupled
with the reluctance of whites to assimilate Black people,
has caused Black people to hold onto their identity labels.
Thus many Black children will not want to learn standard Eng-
lish because it is white, not Black." (Johnson 1969:79)

Probably the greatest problem in SESD programs is teacher
attitude. Traditionally, English teachers have regarded the
speech of Black children as sloppy, 'bad' English. Since
language is an identity label, the children whose language
is criticized and condemned are themselves condemned by the
teacher--even though she doesn't mean to do this. These
attitudes on the part of the teacher alienate children.
They are not likely to accept her language when she will not
accept theirs. Teachers must be trained in the nature of
Black dialect and Black culture and the specific ways Black

dialect interferes with standard English.

Desired Outcomes

Before educators became aware of Black dialect as being such an essential part of the Black child and his culture, it was the tendency of the English teacher to look upon the Black child's speech as 'poor' English. She, of course, was interested in 'correcting' his English and completely eradicating his former 'bad' speech habits.

Now that Black dialect is becoming more and more accepted as a legitimate and essential speech form, teachers are changing to the philosophy of teaching standard English as a second, alternate (rather than replacement) dialect. The idea is to give the Black child a choice of remaining in the ghetto speaking Black dialect or of going into a larger portion of society by being able to command standard English.

Black dialect is seen as essential for the child in communicating with his family and friends in the community. On the other hand, it is considered to be important for Black children to command standard English in order to have an equal chance in our democracy.

The goal, then, is for Black children to become bi-dialectal--to be able to switch from one dialect to the other as the situation demands.

CHAPTER 3

THE CASE FOR TEACHING SESD

In a paper presented at the 1970 TESOL Convention in San Francisco, Orlando Taylor lists three reasons which are usually given to justify teaching SESD to Blacks:

1) To help get a job.

2) To make Blacks more socially acceptable.

3) Standard English is a necessary prerequisity for reading.

Let us look more closely at each of these reasons. For any job which involves dealing with people, standard English is required--not only for Blacks, but for people of all races. It is commonly felt that for one to make a favorable impression on a prospective employer, one must speak standard English. Ruth Golden says of the Blacks migrating to Detroit, 'The migrants depend upon the schools to make any necessary changes in their language and socialization to make them employable.' (Golden 1967:63)

The second reason is closely tied in with the first. Language patterns are a persistent social marker on what seems on the surface a classless society. An individual can mark himself as belonging to a certain social class the moment he opens his mouth.

Walter Loban states in an article in Elementary English, 'Even in an open society such as ours where individual worth

and aspiration are intended to count for more than fortunate
or unfortunate birth, language still operates to preserve
social class distinctions and remains one of the major barriers
to crossing social lines. In a free and open society, schools
should assist all other institutions in making equality of
opportunity a reality.' (Loban 1968:593)

It is to the credit of educators that they have seen this
problem, have seen a possible solution, and are going about
effecting this solution in the best way they know how.

It is widely felt to be the English teacher's job to
provide every student with a command of the standard idiom
so that language will be no barrier to his success in what-
ever he chooses. Standard English is to be taught as an
alternate dialect which is appropriate in certain social
situations. Standard English is not taught as a replacement
dialect because, first of all, the student would not accept
it--the teacher would have no chance of success in a SESD
program. Secondly, Black dialect is an integral part of
Black culture and therefore of every Black person. We have
no right to deprive anyone of an important part of his
heritage.

The third argument--that standard English is a necessary
prerequisity for reading--if it is valid is certainly reason
enough to teach SESD. Certainly Blacks have to be taught to
read in one way or another. Since Black dialect is a spoken
language and standard English has both spoken and written
forms, one must read standard English if he is to read English

at all. This applies not only to Blacks, but to all regional dialects as well. No one will argue that Blacks should be illiterate rather than read standard English. What is a point of controversy here, though, is how to go about teaching reading. The question has been raised whether it is necessary to command spoken standard English in order to read it. In any case, it is essential to be able to read standard English and some SESD principles will have to be applied in teaching reading.

Virginia Allen (1970) speaks of the 'language of public life.' She says that everything written for public edification requires the reader to be a master of this language. She contends that a knowledge of the morphology and syntax of standard English are not enough. In order to be able to understand this 'language of public life,' one must develop a frame of reference such that he can interpret allusions and metaphors and he must become aware of certain habits or conventions of educated writing.

The arguments, then, all center around the needs of the child (as the educator sees them). The child must be taught to command standard English to enable him to get a better job, to give him greater social class mobility, and to enable him to read.

Some writers have justified SESD on the grounds that it is the obligation of the educator to make standard English available to the student. What he does with standard English after he has learned it is not our concern. He can use it

if it will benefit him, or he can forget it. At any rate,
the choice is his and he will use Black dialect because he
wants to and not because he has to.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE AGAINST TEACHING SESD

In the previous chapter the reasons supporting SESD
were given. All these reasons have been under attack recently.
White educators who have seen the rise of the Black Pride,
Black Power, Black is Beautiful philosophy should have been
expecting a more vocal rebellion against teaching standard
English to Blacks.

Much of the literature makes passing remarks about the
Black child rejecting the language of the middle class teacher
because he feels (and often is) rejected by her. There is
mention of Blacks feeling standard English is useless to them.
Nothing, however, comes close to Orlando Taylor's bitter
attack on SESD at the 1970 TESOL Convention in San Francisco.

Taylor calls the educational system paternalistic in
its desire to help Blacks. He sees SESD programs as Whites
deciding what Blacks should have and then forcing it on them.
There is no opportunity for Blacks to decide what they want
and need.

Taylor lists the three reasons which are used in justi-
fying SESD programs (see p. 18) and gives arguments why each
was not a valid reason. He argues that even if a Black can
speak standard English, there will still be job discrimin-
ation. He feels that Blacks are discriminated against in the
job market because they are Black, not because they speak

Black English.

He also feels it is doubtful whether speaking standard English would make Blacks more acceptable to white society. And even if standard English did make Blacks more socially acceptable, Taylor says it is uncertain whether Blacks want to be socially acceptable to whites, particularly if it means communication with them on white terms.

The only reason he sees as valid for learning standard English is to be able to read. He also says writing standard English might be a feasible goal since Black English is not a written language. The methods used for the attainment of these goals are questionable. Is there any need to speak standard English to be able to read it? ESL techniques are widely used for SESD. Taylor questions whether this is the best approach.

Taylor suggests three points which should be considered before embarking on an SESD program:

1) Is the Black child's auditory comprehension sufficient for reading purposes and if not, how can it be expanded accordingly?

2) Is facility in speaking standard English a necessary prerequisite for reading it?

3) If it turns out to be unnecessary, then there is no reason for Black children to receive instruction in standard speech. It could be offered as an elective.

As Taylor sees the SESD program, things have gotten completely out of proportion. 'A number of individuals have placed so many eggs in the speech and language basket that

they have ignored the total social and political milieu in which Black people must exist in this country.' (Taylor 1970)

Thomas Kochman at the 1969 TESOL Convention in Chicago voiced many of the same feelings. In his paper, which appears in the Spring/Summer 1969 <u>Florida</u> <u>FL</u> <u>Reporter</u>, he makes the point that there is an exaggerated importance placed on being able to perform in a prestige dialect, far beyond its net social value. He also condemns SESD programs because they do not "...develop the ability of a person to use language...in a variety of social contexts on a variety of subject matter. Instead, we utilize valuable time to set up drill exercises which are designed to get the individual to replace socially stigmatized forms with socially preferred ones. I cannot endorse as valid a program that sacrifices individual language growth in exchange for some nebulous and highly problematic 'social security.'" (Kochman 1969a:87)

Kochman argues also that SESD programs have such a low efficiency quotient they aren't worth the time and trouble. An enormous amount of time and drill are required to acquire even a mediocre and restrictive performance in standard English.

Another point Kochman makes is that 'The inescapable social truth of the matter is that people's attitudes towards other people's speech are merely an extension of people's attitudes towards their culture and the people of that culture. This point is not missed by the culturally different when they enter the middle class establishment of the schoolroom.' (Kochman 1969a:88)

Labov in his talk at the 1970 TESOL Convention put the idea of rejecting Black culture and forcing conformity to white ways into words beautifully, 'The ambition of the Head Start originators is really to fulfill the dream of every teacher--to make every child in the world into an image of herself.' (Labov 1970)

Kenneth Johnson (1969) finds it questionable whether Blacks will be able to use standard English even if they learn it. If society does not open up for Blacks so that they have the same opportunities for participation as Whites, then standard English will be of little use to them.

The arguments against SESD programs, then, are both sociological and linguistic. The opponents argue that it is morally wrong to impose standard English on Blacks, that it is useless anyway (the supposed rewards of being able to handle standard English are nonexistant), and that as far as reading goes, speaking standard English is not the way to approach the problem. Linguistically, since the similarities between Black dialect and standard English make it extremely difficult for a Black dialect speaker to learn to command standard English, the time and effort spent on drill will not be worth the mediocre command of standard English which results. Time could more profitably be spent in teaching the student to express himself well in his own dialect.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to present a picture
of the field of SESD today. An overview was given of types of
programs in existence, the problems in the programs, and what
educators hope to achieve. In light of the strong controversy
surrounding SESD today, the author thought it essential to
include the arguments on both sides of the question.

Some programs focus on eliminating the nonstandard
dialect in favor of standard English. This school of thought
sees Black dialect as 'incorrect' and socially unacceptable
English. Fortunately, this point of view is taking a back
seat to the less ethnocentric notion of standard English as
an alternate rather than a replacement dialect. It is felt
by this school that if Blacks can command standard English,
the door will be open for them to enter the mainstream of
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foreign language situation because the learners (and sometimes the teachers) do not recognize the magnitude of the language learning problem.

Other problems include student motivation and teacher attitude. It is hard to make the student feel that there is any reason for him to learn standard English. The problem of teacher attitude is certainly paramount. Teachers who do not accept the Black student's speech and who do not understand his culture are alienating the student and making it very unlikely that he will have any interest in learning standard English.

Among the arguments on both sides of the SESD question, we find those who favor teaching standard English to Blacks because they feel it will help them in obtaining jobs, in moving into white society, and in learning to read. Educators feel it is their obligation to provide the student with a command of standard English so that he can use it when it is appropriate.

Those who oppose SESD argue that standard English doesn't help Blacks get jobs. They are discriminated against on the basis of color rather than speech. By the same token, they argue that Blacks will not be accepted by Whites even though they do speak standard English. As far as reading is concerned, opponents of SESD favor only teaching enough standard English to be able to read--not adding standard English as a second dialect. The pro-SESD force here argues that it is not enough to know the structure of standard English to be

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wasted that could have been devoted to furthering language
development in the native dialect. The argument is that
standard English can never be taught with complete success in
any case and the result is that the child is left with poor
language development in any dialect.

The paternalistic attitude of educators can no longer
be tolerated. Perhaps SESD is good, perhaps it is bad. In
any case it is the decision of the Black community whether or
not to teach standard English and how far we should go. With
linguists working on descriptions of Black English and with young
teachers being educated in the cultural pluralism rather than
melting pot theories we are becoming more nearly ready to
accept the Black culture and language. We can teach standard
English if that is what is desired, but the decision lies in
the hands of the Black community.

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SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROBLEMS IN
CURRENT SESD THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

JANE OBERG STAMETS

B. A., Kansas State University, 1969

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

This paper presents a picture of the field of SESD or
teaching standard English as a second dialect with the
emphasis on speakers of Black English or a Black Dialect of
English. An overview is given of types of programs in exist-
ence, problems in the programs, and what educators hope to
achieve. In light of the strong controversy surrounding SESD
today, the author thought it essential to include the arguments
on both sides of the question.

Some programs focus on eliminating the nonstandard
dialect in favor of standard English. This school of thought
sees Black dialect as "incorrect" and socially unacceptable
English. Fortunately this point of view is taking a back
seat to the less ethnocentric notion of standard English as
an alternate rather than a replacement dialect. It is felt
by this school that if Blacks can command standard English,
the door will be open for them to enter the mainstream of
society. Since Black dialect is seen as a separate dialect
or subsystem of English, ESL (English as a Second Language)
techniques have been hailed as the best approach to SESD. In
many ways these techniques have proved to be of use. In some
respects they have proved to have problems not found in the
usual ESL program. Because Black dialect and standard English
are both separate dialects of English, it is harder for the
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