A TREATISE ON "MULTICULTURALISM" AND EDUCATION

Language Diversity in the Classroom
By John Edwards
Bristol, U.K.: Multilingual Matters, 2010. Pp. iv + 338.
ISBN: 978-1-84769-226-9; $129.95 (pbk $49.95)

Reviewed by
PHILLIP M. CARTER, *University of Southern California*

Producing a work of scholarship that consolidates the assumptions, empirical findings, and controversies that constitute a broad range of cross-disciplinary engagements with a particular subject is a formidable task. Making that scholarship accessible to an audience at once comprising "teachers, students and researchers" (279) is even more daunting. Yet, this is the project that Edwards has undertaken with *Language Diversity in the Classroom*, a book whose disciplinary engagements include social psychology (Edwards's primary discipline), education, and linguistics (sociolinguistics, second-language-acquisition, sociology of language, among others). In chapter 1, which serves as a general introduction to the text, Edwards clarifies the purpose of his project: "This book is an attempt to bring under one roof some important matters—largely linguistic but also, inevitably, sociocultural—that, I believe, should have greater exposure. It is not any sort of handbook or 'how-to' manual. It does not outline specific activities or curriculum adaptations, and its coverage is not restricted to what might be seen as immediately relevant in the classroom. It deals, rather, with background information that could reasonably inform pedagogical activities and research" (9). It is at this level—background information—that Edwards's text is a glowing success, evident in his vigorous citational practice and corresponding bibliography, which encompasses nearly 45 pages. Certainly, Edwards has done his homework on the myriad issues he tackles.

The book, composed of 14 chapters, is loosely divided into three sections: "disadvantage," nonstandard language varieties, and multilingualism. Chapter 2, "Discourse Analysis and Its Discontents," in providing a hodgepodge list of Edwards's own discontents with the field, fits somewhat outside of the scheme of the rest of the text. Referring to his labor in this chapter as "brush clearing" (14), Edwards's primary point seems to be that discourse analysis is generally impractical and at times intellectually untenable; as such, it "dilutes attentions and energies that would be better directed elsewhere"(24). Presumably by "elsewhere" Edwards has in mind something

to do with either language diversity or the classroom, although suggestions for how discourse analysts might better spend their time are sparsely provided. Among the disciplinary formations Edwards deems problematic are linguistic ethnography, ethnomethodology, Critical Discourse Analysis, conversation analysis and, above all, the field of English for Academic Purposes, which "exudes a pseudo-intellectualism that is likely to appeal only to those interested in 'critical pedagogy,' or 'critical linguistics,' or 'critical framing'" (28). Leaving no theoretical stone unturned, Edwards also turns his sights to poststructuralist theory, unleashing a litany of rhetorical devices for dismissing it, including such ideologically laden phrases as "indeterminate subjectivity" and "left-leaning ideological tendencies," thereby reducing the whole of the poststructuralist project to "the parlor games of French intellectuals" in less than a paragraph (30). Citations in this chapter include work from a relatively small pool of well-known discourse analysts, such as Fairclough, Foucault, Rampton, and van Dijk. Chapter 2 concludes with a final summary statement on discourse analysis: "In its various guises and emphases, discourse analysis remains popular in many circles, but it is hard to see that it has created a break-through of any significance for its intended beneficiaries. It has done its practitioners some considerable good, at least within the inbred confines that they increasingly inhabit" (36). One cannot charge Edwards with a lack of clarity.

Chapters 3–5 comprise Edwards's review and commentary on "disadvantage." Although rightly noting "the scholarly caravan may have moved on" (49) from the difference/deficit debates, full reviews of two deficit positions are provided: the "genetic" case in chapter 4 and the "environmental" case in chapter 5. One of the primary objectives in these chapters is to recuperate DISADVANTAGE in academic discourse, which Edwards claims has been falsely and unfairly equated with the "deficit" position. In chapter 3, "Disadvantage: A Brief Overview," he contends that the vitiation of DISADVANTAGE is "largely due … to a post-modern hypersensitivity that, in the final analysis, does no one any good" (42), arguing instead that it offers a productive, balanced way of talking about social inequality that does not connote "deficiency." Chapter 4, "Disadvantage: The Genetic Case," provides a summary of the historical "genetic" rationale for disadvantage, glossing topics related to the eugenics movement including intelligence testing, racial categorization, disorders associated with bilingualism, *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein and Murray 1994), and other contemporary "genetic" explanations for difference. Chapter 5, "Disadvantage: The Environmental Case," outlines the "socioculturaldeprivation" position, drawing out historical examples of arguments cohering around the rhetoric of environmental deficiency and its ostensibly negative effects on socialization.

Chapters 6–9 raise many topics related to linguistic variation, including many of the issues that have motivated sociolinguistic inquiry in recent decades. In chapter 6, "The Language Debate," Edwards considers disadvantage as it has been articulated in the context of language diversity, focusing largely on the work of Basil Bernstein and its consequences in the educational communities of both the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, he provides a thoroughgoing yet accessible discussion of African American English, reviewing much of the early variationist literature on the subject. The chapter ends with two abbreviated sections attending to matters of the classroom. The first reviews the literature on teachers' (mostly negative) attitudes about nonstandard dialects, while the second addresses issues related to language diversity and the teaching of writing. In chapter 7, "Persistence of Linguistic Deficit," Edwards considers how deficit ideology, despite the best efforts of linguists, continues to resurface. Here he focuses largely on the work of John Honey, a rather contentious champion of "standard" English in Britain, and the critical responses of his interlocutors, who include Deborah Cameron, David Crystal, and Peter Trudgill. In the final pages of the chapter, Edwards turns his attention to several studies suggesting that language-deficit thinking remains prevalent in the attitudes, professional training, and practices of classroom teachers. Chapter 8, "Evaluative Reactions to the Language of Disadvantage," considers the role of language variation in group identity and collective solidarity, covering common variationist notions such as covert prestige and hypercorrection. The chapter also provides an abbreviated discussion on some of the major findings in language and gender, including the relationship between gender and social class, politeness norms, and vernacularity. Finally, Edwards offers another informative discussion of teachers' attitudes toward linguistic diversity and closes the chapter with a call for more work in the area of language attitudes in general. Chapter 9, "Black English as Ebonics," covers African American English, with a strong emphasis on "Ebonics" and its controversies, among them the Ann Arbor King trial of 1979 and the Oakland School Board resolution of 1996. Edwards dedicates a few pages at the end of the chapter to the popular fallout from Oakland decision, highlighting the comments of some famous African Americans (e.g., Bill Cosby) and the proliferation of "mock Ebonics" on the Internet.

The final set of chapters (10–14) provides summaries and perspective on a variety of multilingual issues, both in and out of the school context. Chapter 10, "'Foreign' Languages in the Classroom," raises some important questions about the status of foreign-language teaching in the United States in light of both declining enrollments in some traditional European languages (e.g., French and German) and doubts about the effectiveness of

the current system. In addition, Edwards discusses some of the social (e.g., social power) and psychological factors (e.g., motivation) that promote or inhibit second-language acquisition in the school context, noting, "in a world made increasingly safe for Anglophones, there is less and less reason (or so it seems to many, students included) for them to learn any other language" (193). The chapter also offers brief discussions on ethnic minority empowerment through language teaching and the teaching of heritage languages and immigrant minority languages. The multilingual situations in settings such as Canada, which includes, for example, 53 indigenous languages, majority Anglophone and Francophone populations, and "new" immigrant languages like Chinese, Punjabi, and Tagalog, serve as the backdrop for the issues raised in this chapter. In chapter 11, "Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education," Edwards moves the discussion toward official policy and considers positions for and against regulated multiculturalism in schools.

Chapter 12, "Bilingualism: A Very Brief Overview," is a short chapter that considers the "symbolic and group-identity aspects of bilingualism" and deals with some general, definitional issues (e.g., receptive vs. productive bilingualism, additive vs. subtractive bilingualism) (234). For the more technical aspects of bilingualism, Edwards refers readers to several texts, including Romaine (1995) and Bhatia and Ritchie (2004). Relying on a typology of bilingual education proposed by Baker (2006), in chapter 13, "Bilingual Education," Edwards reviews the advantages and disadvantages of several types of bilingual education programs (e.g., immersion, maintenance, transitional). A short discussion on the politics of bilingual education concludes the chapter. This section considers, for example, the educational implications of George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind initiative of 2001 and Proposition 227 (passed in 1998), which placed major restrictions on bilingual education programs in California's schools. Chapter 14, "A Concluding Statement," restates Edwards's positions on several issues raised throughout the text, including his call for the rehabilitation of the term DISADVANTAGE, the value of "multiculturalism" in schools, and the need for scholars to devote more attention and resources to the study of language diversity in the classroom.

Language Diversity in the Classroom is commendable for its coverage of a wide array of issues pertinent to language scholars and educators alike. Accessible to students and teachers, the text is written in a clear, expository style, punctuated frequently with Edwards's personal opinions on many of the topics covered. Sociolinguists will be pleased to see much of their work animating the pages of the book but may lament the absence of work that specifically attends to educational matters (see, e.g., Charity, Scarborough, and Griffin 2004; Rickford, Sweetland, and Rickford 2004; Reaser 2006;

Sweetland 2006; Reaser and Temple Adger 2008; Spolsky and Hult 2008; Wolfram, Reaser, and Vaughn 2008; Wolfram 2009). The text is a useful reference for educators in teacher training programs and a possible text in a graduate seminar on language and education, although the usefulness for the latter will be largely limited to the chapters in the second half of the book. The inclusion of the second chapter is somewhat puzzling as it seems to lie outside of the purview of the rest of the text and, as such, would likely confuse educators drawn to the book for the content implied by the title.

REFERENCES

Baker, Colin. 2006. *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism.* 4th ed. Clevendon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters.

Bhatia, Tej K., and William C. Ritchie, eds. 2004. *The Handbook of Bilingualism.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Charity, Anne H., Hollis S. Scarborough, and Darion M. Griffin. 2004. "Familiarity with School English in African American Children and Its Relation to Early Reading Achievement." *Child Development* 75: 1340–56.

Herrnstein, Richard J., and Charles Murray. 1994. *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life.* New York: Free Press.

Reaser, Jeffrey. 2006. "The Effect of Dialect Awareness on Adolescent Knowledge and Attitudes." Ph.D. diss., Duke Univ.

Reaser, Jeffrey, and Carolyn Temple Adger. 2008. "Vernacular Language Varieties in Educational Settings: Research and Development." In Spolsky and Hult, 161–73.

Rickford, John R., Julie Sweetland, and Angela E. Rickford. 2004. "African American English and Other Vernaculars in Education: A Topic-Coded Bibliography." *Journal of English Linguistics* 32: 230–320.

Romaine, Suzanne. 1995. *Bilingualism.* 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.

Spolsky, Bernard, and Francis M. Hult, eds. 2008. *The Handbook of Educational Linguistics.* Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Sweetland, Julie. 2006. "Evaluation of Contextualized Contrastive Analysis in Language Arts Instruction." Ph.D. diss., Stanford Univ.

Wolfram, Walt. 2009. "African American English and the Public Interest." In *The Languages of Africa and the Diaspora: Educating for Language Awareness,* ed. Jo Anne Kleifgen and George C. Bond, 249–69. Bristol, U.K.: Multilingual Matters.

Wolfram, Walt, Jeffrey Reaser, and Charlotte Vaughn. 2008. "Operationalizing Linguistic Gratuity: From Principle to Practice." *Language and Linguistic Compass* 2: 1109–34.

DOI 10.1215/00031283-1337055