Publié dans Revue Tranel (Travaux neuchâtelois de linguistique) 18, 27-50, 1992
qui doit être utilisée pour toute référence à ce travail

The interface between linguistics and education

Jenny Cheshire, Universités de Fribourg et de Neuchâtel
and **Viv Edwards**, University of Reading, UK

1. Introduction

Many of the findings of sociolinguistic research are directly relevant to the formulation of educational policy and practice. For example, teachers, policy makers and educationists need to take account of differences in the form and function of spoken and written language, of the way in which pupils' gender, social class and ethnic group may affect the way they speak, of the relationship between standard and nonstandard varieties of language, and of social attitudes towards linguistic diversity. The changes in education that are currently taking place in the United Kingdom have made the sociolinguistic dimension to language use increasingly relevant. The National Curriculum, which is being implemented at breakneck speed in British schools, stresses the importance of oral work in all subjects in the school curriculum, and insists on the assessment of both oral and written English. Sociolinguists may be pleased that the importance of oral work has been officially recognised, but at the same time they have become painfully aware that we still know far too little about many vitally important features of spoken language. Teachers are being asked to draw up assessment procedures for aspects of language which even experts in linguistics do not fully understand.

2. The survey of British dialect grammar

Between 1986 and 1989 we carried out a survey of British dialect grammar, which was designed to contribute to our understanding of just one of the educationally relevant aspects of language: the relationship between standard and nonstandard English syntax. Our aim was to obtain information on dialect syntax and, eventually, to present this in a way that would be helpful and accessible to school teachers. We planned the dialect survey before the introduction of the National Curriculum, already seeing that this

type of information was urgently needed. Research in Britain had shown the problems that could be caused by an incomplete understanding of the differences between the linguistic forms of standard English and those of nonstandard varieties: Edwards (1983), for example, discusses some of the inappropriate teaching strategies that teachers may use when teaching reading skills; and Edwards (1979) and Cheshire (1982a) give examples of hypercorrect forms produced by schoolchildren in their written work. During 1989, however, the National Curriculum was introduced in schools throughout England and Wales, and the need to provide this type of information became still more urgent. The National Curriculum sets out 10 'attainment levels' for children, covering the age range 5 to16. By level 5, children should be writing in standard English (Cox 1989: 17.34); from level 7, they should be competent in speaking and listening to standard English 'wherever appropriate' (Cox 1989:15.24). The National Curriculum is uncompromising in its insistence on the place of standard English in the English curriculum:

> The development of pupils' ability to understand written and spoken standard English and to produce written standard English is unquestionably a responsibility of the English curriculum (Cox, 1989: 4.34).

It is equally uncompromising in deciding who will carry the burden of dealing with the linguistic differences between standard and nonstandard varieties of English, assuming that teachers 'themselves have an accurate understanding of the differences between written standard English, spoken standard English and spoken local varieties of English ' (Cox 1989: 4.40)[1] . Such an assumption would appear, at the very least, to be optimistic. A study of the level of linguistic knowledge and awareness among students training to be primary teachers (Chandler et al.1988) indicates considerable gaps in their understanding of language.

[1] 1. The Cox report recognises, however, that it is difficult to teach spoken standard English and that there is likely to be some difference of opinion about whether this should be seen as a responsibility of the English curriculum (Cox 1989,4.34).

We did not set out to address the differences between spoken and written standard English, which continues to elude linguists who have been working on spoken English for many years (see, for discussion, Crystal 1980). Instead, we aimed simply to increase the amount of information on local dialect syntax that is available for teachers to consult, and to involve school children and their teachers in gathering that information. Dialectologists and sociolinguists know far less about dialect grammar (by which we mean morphology and syntax) than about dialect vocabulary or phonology (Edwards, Trudgill and Weltens 1984), so that it has been difficult to provide teachers with any detailed information on regional variation in British English grammar. Some general information is available on the linguistic differences that teachers can expect to find between the local nonstandard variety of English and standard English (for example, Edwards 1983; Milroy and Milroy 1985), and some detailed information has been made available to English advisors on the dialect grammar of five areas of the British Isles (Scotland, Northern Ireland, Southern England, and Newcastle upon Tyne) - see Milroy and Milroy 1989. For the most part, however, teachers have had to face the burden of attempting to understand the differences between standard and nonstandard dialects of English on their own. There is widespread public confusion of dialect grammar with 'sloppy English' or 'incorrect' English, and in the absence of any proper linguistic or sociolinguistic training for teachers there seems little reason to expect the majority of teachers to be any less confused than the rest of the general public.

The Survey of British Dialect Grammar therefore aimed to extend our understanding of British dialect grammar; in particular, it aimed to establish which linguistic features were used in which parts of the country. We established a nationwide network of teachers who were willing to take part in collaborative teacher-pupil projects on language use in the local community (see Edwards and Cheshire 1989 for details). The time was ripe for an initiative of this kind. There has been a marked growth in schools in recent years of "language awareness programmes" at both primary and secondary levels. A central tenet of such programmes is that children

themselves are the experts: they are all competent users of at least one language - which in itself is no mean achievement - and this knowledge can be used in understanding and explaining a wide range of social and political issues (Clark et al. 1987).

The collaboration between schools and linguists is an important development. On the one hand, teachers are interpreting the accumulated knowledge of linguists and, in particular, of sociolinguists, to their pupils. On the other hand, the rapidly developing awareness of language in teachers and children opens up many new possibilities for linguists. There had, of course, been notable previous initiatives in this area, including the survey of languages and dialects of London schoolchildren (Rosen and Burgess 1980) and the much larger Linguistic Minorities Project (LMP 1985). However, our own survey is, to our knowledge, the first attempt to involve schools in directly gathering linguistic data rather than information on language use.

For reasons of economy, the Survey had to take the form of a questionnaire, which we sent to all the participating schools. The questionnnaire consisted of 196 linguistic features, drawn from the main areas of dialect grammar described in Edwards, Trudgill and Weltens 1984 (see Appendix 1). We felt it essential that a period of language awareness work (see Hawkins 1984, Jones 1989) should precede the administration of the questionnaire, in order to ensure that children provided reliable information, rather than simply the answers that they assumed their teachers wanted. In order to reinforce this point, we developed a series of lesson outlines and materials, tried these out during the pilot stage of the research, and sent the modified version to all teachers who participated in the Survey. The lesson outlines covered topics such as multilingual Britain, language variation, language change, standard English, and 'talking proper'. The questionnaire on local dialect usage was presented as the end point of the work on language awareness, with the intention of consulting pupils as the experts on their local variety of English, and asking them to tell us whether the forms listed on the questionnaire were used locally.

The results of the Survey provided the information that we had hoped for, giving us a general picture of the regional distribution of those features

of dialect grammar that had been included on the questionnaire. We were also able to form some preliminary hypotheses concerning dialect levelling in the British Isles. We briefly discuss part of the analysis of the completed questionnaires in section 4; fuller details are given in Cheshire, Edwards and Whittle 1989. However, we also obtained some sociolinguistic information of a more general kind, as a by-product of the lesson suggestions that were sent to the teachers participating in the Survey. Teachers who returned the questionnaires were invited to comment on the usefulness of working on dialect issues in the ways that we suggested in the lesson outlines, and on practicalities surrounding the completion of the questionnaire. Their responses were, without exception, favourable; the general feeling was that the topics used as basis for classwork were very successful, generating a great deal of constructive discussion and, in many cases, written work (Edwards and Cheshire 1989). Some teachers offered us extensive examples of the written work that their pupils had produced as part of their exploration of dialect. These examples were of interest to us as sociolinguists, in some cases providing a qualitative counterbalance to experimental research on attitudes to regional variation in English, in other cases giving us direct evidence of children's reactions to linguistic diversity and of their interest in exploring the everyday realities of language use in their local community. The work that we received convinced us of the value of incorporating language work in the classroom which allows children the opportunity to explore their personal reactions to linguistic variation and to develop their skills as sociolinguistic researchers in the local community. In section 3 we give some examples of the work that we found the most interesting.

3. Reactions to linguistic variation

The work that we received covered a range of topics. We were particularly interested in the topic of correction, both because we wanted to see which linguistic variables are salient to the teachers, parents and other adults who feel the need to monitor children's language and because we were curious about the children's reactions to being corrected. We were also interested in some written work that illustrated how language functions as a symbol of individual and social identity, and in work describing children's attitudes to regional variation.

3.1. Correction

Part of the lesson outline on the topic of 'talking proper' invited children to reflect on whether teachers or other people ever corrected the way they spoke or wrote, to consider the kinds of things that these people said, and to explore their feelings about being corrected. Two teachers sent us the written work that their classes of 14 year old children had done on this topic. This work was of interest for a number of reasons. First, we were interested in the identity of the forms that children said were corrected, since there is little precise information available on stigmatized forms in the research literature, and few hypotheses offered to explain why some variables are more salient to speakers than others. Condemnation of 'h' dropping, for example, is very widespread in Britain, but people do not seem to be concerned about vowel alternations (such as regional variation in the pronunciation of words such as *bus*, which may be [b s] or [b s].

Trudgill (1986:11) suggests that overt stigmatization occurs when there is a high status variant of the stigmatized form which tallies with the orthography, while the stigmatized form does not. Many of the corrections concerning pronunciation that schoolchildren wrote about gave support to this view. Sometimes (as in examples 1 and 2) corrections were expressed in terms of 'dropped letters' or additional 'letters':

1. Mum corrects my speech when I drop letters especially 'h' and it annoys me but I suppose she's right.

2. Yes they moan at me when I start to speak like a Scouser. I say married as if there's about 7 r's in it - marrrrrrried.

3. Yes like when I say ye they always correct me and say yes.

Predictably, other corrections concerned features of nonstandard English grammar, which were denied existence (example 4) or said to be 'not English' (example 5):

4. Yes because I use words like worser and other things like that when there's no such word.

5. Yes they correct me when I am saying something and say that's not English. If I say what they say that. If I say can I borrow this they say it's not borrow it's lend.

A second reason for our interest was the information that we received, indirectly, on whether correcting children's language is a worthwhile exercise. Teachers in England and Wales are sometimes advised on the kinds of corrections that they should make. For example, the Cox Report (Cox 1989:4.46)) rightly points out the dangers of indiscriminate correction, but suggests that teachers should correct nonstandard forms and highly stigmatised forms (such as the past tense forms of see)that occur frequently. However, the work which we received did not lead us to share the view that correction is worthwhile. Several children reported 'corrected' versions of their speech that we are confident were not made in that form:

6. Teachers normally correct me when I say can I lend a pen but you shouldsay can you please borrow me a pen

7. Yes. When I say I saw something they (teachers) say to say seen but my parents say it the opposite. This confuses me.

8. When you ask to lend something they always say borrow is the right word then your next lesson you ask to borrow something and they say lend is the right word.

Examples such as these would seem to indicate that correcting children's speech is a waste of time, and that it may confuse them about the relation between standard and nonstandard English.

Sociolinguists stress that language is closely bound up with individual and social identity. It is certainly not dificult to envisage a scenario in which persistent corrections of a child's language can lead to a reticence in oral work and even, in extreme cases, to alienation from the school. We were interested, therefore, in the reactions that children expressed to being corrected. Examples 9 - 12 illustrate a broad range of professed reactions:

> 9. I feel very angry because I know what I am saying and so does the teacher.
>
> 10. I am not really bothered: I know what I mean and so do they.
>
> 11. My mum corrects me and it annoys me but I suppose she's right.
>
> 12. It doesn't bother me because they (teachers) know how to speak better than I do.

With the possible exception of the sanguine response in example 10, this range of reactions confirms our view that it is not a good idea to correct children's speech. In this respect, the repeated complaints of older dialect speakers also consulted during the course of the survey presents a point of comparison. One Northern octogenarian commented:

> Any child using dialect speech would be severely reprimanded or ignored, depending on which teacher was in charge. Some teachers would endeavour kindly to explain that this was not on; others, less sympathetic, would perhapsresort to sarcasm or pretend to deliberately misunderstand.

Although tolerance of the spoken word has certainly increased in recent years, it is extremely doubtful whether the attempts of present-day teachers to change dialect speech or writing will be any more effective than those of the past. As one fourth year pupil in Rotherham reflected:

> Teachers always correct the way I write. They correct the way I write more than anything. When I write a story and include talking I write it how I would speak. But sometimes teachers cross it out and put in how they would talk. I don't think they should do that. They should leave it as is.

Yet, while we remain sceptical about the usefulness of correcting non-standard forms, we are convinced of the value of including discussion of this aspect of 'talking proper' in the school curriculum. We agree with the Cox Committee's view that every child is entitled to learn not only the functions but also the forms of standard English (Cox 1989:4.7). However, it is is by no means clear how this should be achieved, nor how teachers are to achieve the Cox Report's instructions to teach children the grammatical differences between the speech of their area and spoken standard English (Cox 1989: 15.37ii). Even if teachers decide against correcting children's spoken language, parents and other concerned adults are likely to feel a need to monitor their children's language, and the opportunity to air personal reactions to corrections and to see the range of reactions amongst classmates seems a necessary prerequisite for constructive teaching of the linguistic differences between standard and nonstandard English.

3.2. Linguistic variation as an expression of individual and social identity

Another aspect of the lesson outline on 'talking proper' invited pupils to consider what they liked and what they disliked about speaking the way they did. The statements about what they liked confirmed the function of language as an expression of personal identity:

> 13. I enjoy speaking the way I do as I think it's me
>
> 14. I feel comfortable speaking the way I do and I think it's good

Similarly, there was confirmation of the role of language as a symbol of loyalty to the neighbourhood (examples 15 and 16) and to the peer group (examples 17 and 18):

> 15. I like the way I speak because it sounds normal in this town.
>
> 16. I like Widnes accent best because it goes with the town and it's different from all the others.
>
> 17. I like it because you don't feel stupid, because all your mates speak it.

18. I like the way I speak because my friends all speak the same way and I can understand them.

The territoriality of language was mentioned by one cautious pupil:

19. If you go to Liverpool you might change the way you talk because you might get beat up.

There were suprisingly few comments, however, about aspects of their speech that children disliked. A few comments revealed an awareness of the social prestige associated with certain kinds of speech:

20. When I am talking to posh people I feel terribly common.

Other comments, such as 21 and 22, revealed an antipathy to 'talking posh', and we were interested, and encouraged, to note that most children commented as in example 23:

21. What I like is that I speak just like anyone else and not like a Yuppie (posh person).

22. I like it because it doesn't sound posh.

23. I don't really dislike anything about the way I speak.

We found little evidence, in other words, of the linguistic insecurity so often reported as typical of children who speak with a regional accent (see, for example, Macaulay 1977).

3.3. Attitudes to regional variation

The research literature in sociolinguistics and social psychology is unaminous about the nature of attitudes towards regional varieties of English. A series of matched guise experiments has shown that accents associated with rural areas of Britain tend to be perceived by British speakers of English as more attractive than accents spoken in heavily urbanised areas (see Trudgill 1975), and further experiments have repeatedly shown that speakers with Received Pronunciation are considered to be more intelligent and more competent than speakers who have a regional accent. This perception has been found to be shared by speakers of

both standard and nonstandard varieties, although those who speak a nonstandard variety may have strong feelings about the value of their own speech, associating it with friends, family and neighbourhood (as we saw above), with social attractiveness and with integrity (Giles and Powesland1975; Ryan and Giles 1982).

The lesson suggestions invited children to consider which types of accents they liked best, and which they liked least, and to give reasons. The work that we received from the class of children in Widnes, Lancashire, did not give us any insights into attitudes towards Received Pronunciation, but it did show us that 'talking posh' was often associated with the South of England, particularly London:

24. I dislike London accent. It sounds really posh.

25. I dislike London accent because they are stuck up snobs.

As for other accents, the most striking feature of the children's comments was the complete lack of unanimity in their likes and dislikes, and the very wide range of reasons that were given in support of these opinions. Many of the attitudes that were expressed within a single class of pupils directly conflicted with each other. Compare, for example, 26 with 27, 28 and 29; 30 with 31; and 32 and 33 with 34 and 35:

26. I like Cockney because it gives you a laugh. I also like American becauseit's dead cool. Geordie is OK as well.

27. I dislike Geordie accent because of the way they say it, it just gets right up my nose.

28. I detest American accents because there is too much of it going on TV.

29. I don't like Cockney accents because it sounds like they're talking out of their nose.

30. I like the Welsh, Manchester, and Australian accents because they're good.

31. I dislike Manchester accent because I don't like Manchester and everything's slower.

32. I like Scottish because of the way they say it and when they say it fast it sounds dead cool.

33. Scottish is the best because it sounds so easy going.

34. I dislike Scottish because I can't understand what they are saying.

35. I dislike Scottish accent because they speak so quick I can't understand it.

The comments that pupils made about different regional accents revealed a very interesting selection of idiosyncratic likes and dislikes, which they justified in equally idiosyncratic ways:

36. Norfolk accent is the best. The people sound like farmers.

37. I like the Australians and the French because they're different and good.

38. Scousers speak terrible. Apart from that I don't really mind the rest of them except the people from Devon, they're really stuck up.

39. I hate the Birmingham accent becaause it makes them sound thick.

40. I dislike Newcastle. They talk really slow and drawn out.

41. I like Welsh: it's got a nice sound to it.

This diversity of attitudes within a single class of schoolchildren is in stark contrast to the unanimity that has been found amongst participants in matched guise experiments. Perhaps this is because experiments direct participants to choose from a pre-selected closed set of characteristics (usually, of course, characteristics which have been elicited previously by open questioning); in a less structured situation, when people are invited simply to express their personal likes and dislikes, it is easier to see the very

wide range of opinions that individuals hold and to appreciate the very personal and idiosyncratic nature of attitudes towards linguistic variation. Airing these personal views in the context of a class discussion is a valuable educational experience, showing those individuals who have very strong linguistic prejudices that others may have equally strong, but different, prejudices. Teachers who have studied sociolinguistics may be able to tell their pupils about linguistic prejudice, and about the systematic results of matched guise experiments into the social evaluation of regional accents. Relaying information, however, cannot take the place of exploring the personal motivations for an individual's own linguistic likes and dislikes. Incorporating language awareness work of this type into the English curriculum is perhaps the surest way of allowing schoolchildren to develop into adults who will be more linguistically tolerant than their predecessors.

3.4. Resources for diversity

Classroom discussions of dialect are useful not only for raising children's social and linguistic awareness, but also for their development as writers. The work which teachers shared with us demonstrated not only that children write with interest and enthusiasm *about* dialect but also that they write most competently *in* dialect. Teachers who participated in the project used a wide range of stimulus material - texts about dialect, short stories and poems in dialect, recoords, tapes and television programmes. The children recorded an equally wide range of responses. They improvised plays, which they later transcribed. They wrote plays in dialect which they then performed. They also composed poems and stories in dialect. Yasmin, a 12 year old Pakistani girl from Blackburn, wrote a series of ten poems in Lancashire dialect, including this memorable one about her grandmother's wish to visit a disco:

T'disco

I wer the best looking un there
Wi mi jumper an mi mini skart.
Mi dad wer reet proud of mi.
O'boys ran far mi.
I loked like on' of them Miss World
Wi mi hair done and mi face.
I've been t'disco 'ut none like this.
Mi granny ses she wana go, er.
An ah ses, "Yer t'old granni, love!"
An she ses she's 'oing there today,
So ah as sum sharp words ready.
Wah! Mi old granny going t'disco!

Work on the project made it clear that dialect continues to be a source of fascination for a wide range of people - for academics who believe that the description of dialect is as important to linguistic theory as standard English; for teachers who feel that education should acknowledge and build on children's speech, rather than criticizing and rejecting it; for writers and performers who find dialect a versatile vehicule for their work; and for the large body of laypeople who identify with regional speech and want to find out more. It also became clear that there was a very great need for a central source of information on dialect resources. A secondary development, the compilation of a Directory of English Dialect Resources (Edwards 1990) therefore attempted to bring together as comprehensive as possible a range of books and commercially available sound recordings, together with information on dialect societies, resource centres and sound collections.

4. Research in the local community

The children taking part in the dialect survey carried out two kinds of research in the community. One was systematic research into the distribution of the specific features listed on the questionnaire, which was carried out as collaborative classroom projects and analysed by ourselves. We briefly discuss this research in section 4.2. The other type of research consisted of mini-projects on various aspects of linguistic variation, which were carried out as individual research projects by the children, and written up as part of their school work. We discuss some of this small-scale research in section 4.1.

4.1 Small-scale projects

The lesson outline on language variation invited schoolchildren to write down in a notebook the different phrases that they heard used during the course of a single day for greeting,thanking or taking leave of people. This activity produced a great deal of written work, with some children carrying out detailed analyses of the phrases used by people of different ages and different genders. The value of this kind of work can perhaps be seen most clearly from the comments of one 16 year old, who recorded seven ways of thanking people (*ta, thanks, thanks a lot, cheers, good on yer, proper job, many thanks*) and five ways of taking leave of them (*see you, tara, bye then, cheerio, cheers then*), and wrote that she was amazed to find that she had not recorded a single occurrence of *thankyou* or *goodbye*. Carrying out mini-research projects of this kind, then, can clear preconceived ideas about language out of the way and help pupils to develop linguistic sensitivity.

Another mini-project which resulted in written work was research into dialect vocabulary, with pupils noting down some words which were used locally and which they thought might not be understood by people from outside the locality. Thus we learned that a sixty-year old man from Lydford, Devon used *gaiky* ('ugly'), *emmett* ('tourist' or 'visitor') and *dashels* ('thistles'); that in Leicester people said *cob* ('bap'), *me duck* (term of address from a man to a woman) and *mashing tea* ('brewing tea'). Another pupil in Devon recorded different ways of giving emphasis to what people were saying, mentioning intonation, swearing and the use of *you* (as in *he was a big man you*). All these projects seem to us to be invaluable ways of extending the linguistic awareness of schoolchildren. They also provided us with some useful information that we did not have before (for

example, the use of *you* for emphasis has not, as far as we know, been reported before).

4.2. The questionnaire on local dialect grammar

From our own point of view, the most useful information on linguistic variation was contained in the questionnaires that were returned. We suggested to teachers that classes working collaboratively should divide into three groups, each dealing with one page of the questionnaire, and that each group should report on those forms of dialect grammar listed on their page, that were used in their local community. If more funds and research staff had been available it would, of course, have been preferable for our purposes to have based this part of the survey on audio recordings of a sample of speakers in different parts of Britain. However, teachers reported that the questionnaire provided a useful end point for the series of lessons on language awareness, with pupils seeing themselves as experts on local speech; the questionnaire, therefore, served as a further way of developing pupils' linguistic sensitivity. And since the questionnaire responses had been systematically collected, they could be used in the way that we had intended - as a principled basis for providing classroom material on dialect grammar. A pilot study had been carried out in 1986 in the town of Reading, in Berkshire, where previous research had established the features of local dialect syntax (Cheshire 1982b). Children's appraisals of those dialect features that were used in their local community coincided with those that we knew to occur there; the pilot exercise confirmed our view, therefore, that because we were asking children to report on the speech of others rather than their own, and because the children had carried out a preliminary course of work on language awareness, the data that we collected during the Survey was sufficiently reliable for a preliminary survey of British dialect grammar.

Fewer questionnaires were returned than we had anticipated: the Survey had to contend with several problems in data collection, many of which resulted from the effects of the industrial action taken by teachers during 1985-1986, and from the work involved in preparing for the introduction of

the new GCSE public examinations in 1988. Nevertheless, 87 completed questionnaires were returned, covering all except two of the major urban areas of the British Isles (see Cheshire, Edwards and Whittle 1989). The Survey of British Dialect Grammar therefore contrasts sharply with the only previous survey of English dialects (Orton et al.1962-71), not only in its focus on syntax rather than on phonology, but also in its primary focus on urban areas rather than on rural areas.

This predominantly urban distribution of responses allowed us to make a contribution to the controversial question of dialect levelling. Some writers (see Edwards, Trudgill and Weltens, 1984:31-32) have suggested that dialect diversity is reducing and being replaced not simply by standard grammatical forms but also by a development towards a levelled nonstandard dialect. This question could only be properly addressed by empirical investigations of actual usage, but the Survey responses nevertheless allowed us to make a preliminary, informed contribution to the question, by determining those features that were reported most frequently as used in the urban centres of Britain.

Certain nonstandard grammatical features are sometimes listed as common to most urban varieties of English (see, for example, Hughes and Trudgill 1987). Coupland (1988:35) suggests that seven of these grammatical features are so widespread that they are best seen as British social dialect characteristics rather than as marking regional provenance; these are negative concord, *never* as a past tense negative, *them* as a demonstrative adjective, absence of plural marking with some quantified nouns after numerals, 'adjectival' forms with adverbial function, reduction of complex prepositions such as *up to*, and regularizing of the reflexive pronoun paradigm. These assumptions, however, have inevitably been unsupported by systematically collected empirical data.

On the basis of the Survey responses we were able to identify those syntactic features that were reported most frequently by teachers and pupils participating in the Survey, thereby providing some principled information about those features of dialect grammar that are reported as occurring throughout the urban centres of the country. A large number of features

were reported infrequently (61 of the 196 features - 31% - were reported by fewer than 5% of the schools). One dialect feature (demonstrative *them*, as in *them big spiders*), on the other hand, was reported by more than 90% of the schools who took part in the Survey, and a further ten by more than 80% of the schools. We list these11 features below, together with the percentage frequency with which they were reported and the questionnaire item that was used to ask about them. Note that we attach no importance to the actual percentage frequencies; these were calculated simply as a way of distinguishing those features that were reported more widely than others.

them as demonstrative adjective (item 125: *Look at them big spiders*)

97.7%

should of (item196: *You should of left half an hour ago!*)

92.0%

never as past tense negator (item 7: *No, I never broke that*)

86.2%

absence of plural marking (item 95: *To make a big cake you need two pound of flour*)

86.2%

what as relative pronoun (item 115: *The film what was on last night was good*)

86.2%

there was with plural 'notional' subject (item 58: *There was some singers here a minute ago*)

85.1%

there's with plural 'notional' subject (item 29: *There's cars outside the church*)

83.9%

present participle *sat* (item 46: *She was sat over there looking at her car*)

83.9%

nonstandard *was* (item 51: *We was singing*)

83.9%

adverbial *quick* (item 86: *I like pasta. It cooks really quick*)

82.8%

ain't / in't (items 9 and 10: *that ain't working / that in't working*)

82.8%

present participle *stood* (item 47: *And he was stood in the corner looking at it*)

80.5%

The Survey thus confirms that the following features are widespread throughout the urban centres of Britain, as suggested by Hughes and Trudgill (1987) and Coupland (1988): *them* as demonstrative adjective, absence of plural marking on nouns of measurement, *what* as relative pronoun, nonstandard *was*, adverbials without the *-ly* suffix (note, however, that the questionnaire included only one such form), and *ain't /in't*. In other words, 'regional dialect' appears to be a misnomer for these features. Their social distribution, however, has yet to be determined, so that we are not yet ready to label any of them as social dialect features, as Coupland (1988) suggests.

Some features were not reported as frequently as we had expected. These include multiple negation; the use of simple prepositions such as *up*, *round* and *over* where standard English has complex prepositions such as *up to*, *round to* or *over at*; the regularized reflexive pronoun forms *hisself* and *theirselves*; and the past tense form *done* for full verb DO. With the exception of the nonstandard reflexive pronoun forms, all these features were reported much more frequently by schools in the South of England

than by schools elsewhere in Britain, suggesting that there may be a hitherto unsuspected regional distribution to these forms.

Some of the syntactic features that were most frequently reported are not usually thought to be widespread features of urban varieties of British English, although they appear from the Survey responses to occur throughout the urban centres of the country: these are *should of*; and the present participles *sat* and *stood*. Some of the frequently reported features are thought to be used by 'educated' speakers and should not, perhaps, be considered as nonstandard; these include *there's* and *there was* with plural subjects; *never* as past tense negator; and, possibly, adverbial *quick* (Hughes and Trudgill 1987; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik 1985). The relationship between standard English and nonstandard English and between dialect and nonstandard language is not at all straightforward; more important, perhaps, than a distinction between dialect and standard, or between standard and nonstandard, is the distinction between spoken English and formal written English. All the most frequently reported grammatical features discussed above are characteristic of spoken English, whether they are considered to be features of dialect, features of nonstandard English, or features of educated colloquial English. Some of these features reflect the interactive nature of speech, having discourse functions such as addressee-orientation (*never* is an example; see Cheshire 1990) or the structuring of information (invariant *there's* and *there was* are examples). With the possible exception of *never* as past tense negator, the features have in common the fact that they are not used in formal written English, and that children have to learn not to use them in their school writing. Now that we have established which features appear to occur throughout the urban centres of Britain, and which features have a more limited distribution, we are in a better position to decide on the best way to convey this information to schoolteachers.

5. Conclusion

The Survey of British Dialect Grammar was an attempt to incorporate sociolinguistics diirectly into the classroom, with the short-term aim of

enlisting teachers and their pupils as researchers, asking them to help us in he systematic collection of data on local dialect grammar. We have used these data to formulate hypotheses on dialect levelling, which now await empirical testing (see Cheshire, Edwards and Whittle 1990), and we intend to use them as the basis of classroom materials on standard and nonstandard English (or, perhaps, between features of formal written English and features of spoken English). We expect these matarials to be of some help to teachers in their difficult task of implementing the National Curriculum.

We also found that schoolchildren were interested in acting on their own account as sociolinguistic researchers, exploring their personal reactions to linguistic diversity as well as investigating the linguistic variation that exists in their local community. These personal explorations seem to us to be an essential first step towards achieving the aims of the National Curriculum, paving the way for a dispassionate explanation of the differences between written and spoken English which can be linked to discussion of standard and nonstandard English, and towards the addition of standard English to the repertoire of those children for whom standard English is not their native dialect (Cox 1989:4.43). These explorations, however, are also a valuable educational experience in their own right, allowing children the opportunity to share their experiences of linguistic diversity with their peers and their teacher, and to develop into linguistically sensitive and responsible future citizens.

Bibliography

CHANDLER, P., ROBINSON, W.P. and NOYES, P. (1988): "The level of linguistic knowledge and awareness among students training to be primary teachers", *Language and Education* 2, 161-173.

CHESHIRE, J. (1982a): "Dialect features and linguistic conflict in schools", *Educational Review* 34, 53-67.

CHESHIRE, J. (1982b): *Variation in an English dialect: a sociolinguistic study*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

CHESHIRE, J. (1989): "Addressee-oriented features in spoken discourse", *York Papers in Linguistics: Festschrift R.B. LePage*, 49-64.

CHESHIRE, J., EDWARDS, V. and WHITTLE, P. (1989): "Urban British Dialect Grammar: the question of dialect levelling", *English Worldwide* 10, 185-226.

CLARK, R., FAIRCLOUGH, N., IVANIC, R. and MARTIN-JONES, M. (1987): "*Critical language awareness* ", University of Lancaster, Centre for Language in Social Life Working Paper Series no. 1.

COUPLAND, N. (1988): *Dialect in use: sociolinguistic variation in Cardiff English.*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press.

COX, B. et al. (1989): *English for ages 5-16*. London, Department of Education and Science.

CRYSTAL, D. (1980): "Some neglected grammatical factors in conversational English". In GREENBAUM, S., LEECH, G. & SVARTVIK, J. (eds.): *Studies in English Linguistics.*, Harlow, Longman, 134-152.

EDWARDS, V. (1979):*The West Indian ianguage issue in British schools,* London, Routledge.

EDWARDS, V. (1983): *Language in multicultural classrooms.*, London, Batsford.

EDWARDS, V. (1990): *A Directory of dialect resources*, London, Economic and Social Research Council.

EDWARDS, V. and CHESHIRE, J. (1989): "The survey of British Dialect Grammar", in: CHESHIRE, J., EDWARDS, V.,MÜNSTERMANN, H., and WELTENS, B (eds.): *Dialect and education: some European perspectives,* Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 200-215.

EDWARDS, V., TRUDGILL, P. and WELTENS, B. (1984): *The grammar of English dialect.*, London, Economic and Social Research Council.

GILES, H. and POWESLAND, P. (1975): *Speech style and social evaluation*, London, Academic Press.

HAWKINS, E. (1984): *Awareness of language: an introduction*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

HUGHES, G.A. and TRUDGILL, P. (1987): *English accents and dialects: an introduction to social and regional varieties of British English*, London, Edward Arnold.

JONES, A.P. (1989): "Language awareness programmes in British schools", in: CHESHIRE, J., EDWARDS, V., MÜNSTERMANN, H., and WELTENS, B. (eds): *Dialect and education: some European perspectives*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 269-281.

LINGUISTIC MINORITIES PROJECT(1985):*The other languages of England*, London, Routledge.

MACAULAY, R.K.S. (1977): *Language, social class and education: a Glasgow study*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

MILROY, J. and MILROY, L. (1985): *Authority in language*, London, Routledge.

MILROY, J. and MILROY, L. (eds.) (1989): *Regional variation in British English syntax*, London, Economic and Social Research Council.

ORTON, H. et al. (1962-71):*Survey of English Dialects*, 4 vols., each in 3 parts, Leeds, E.J. Arnold.

QUIRK, R., GREENBAUM, S., LEECH, G. and SVARTVIK, J. (1985): *A comprehensive grammar of English*, Harlow, Longman.

ROSEN, H. and BURGESS, T. (1980): *The languages and dialects of London schoolchildren*, London, Ward Lock Educational.

RYAN, E.B. and GILES, H. (1982): *Attitudes towards language variation*, London, Edward Arnold.

TRUDGILL, P. (1979): "Standard and non-standard accents and dialects of English in the United Kingdom", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 21, 9-24.

TRUDGILL, P. (1986): *Dialects in contact*, Oxford, Blackwell.