

**LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS SURVEY  
CONDUCTED BY  
CCCC LANGUAGE POLICY COMMITTEE**

**FOR THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH  
RESEARCH FOUNDATION AND THE CONFERENCE ON  
COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION**

**FINAL RESEARCH REPORT  
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## **BACKGROUND: HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Myths and beliefs about the history and present condition of English in the United States abound, not only in the general public, but also within our profession. Despite the tolerant climate established by the Founding Fathers, who made a conscious decision not to designate an official language for the country, intolerance and confusion have characterized many recent approaches to language rights and policies in the educational and public sectors. Until the 1950s, for example, many myths about Standard English could remain basically unchallenged as long as people who were different and “talked different” stayed in their “place.” However, with desegregation of the public schools and open admissions in higher education occurring during the 1950s and 1960s, the cultural and linguistic diversity of the U.S. became more noticeable, and for some, more problematic. Theories to explain that diversity arose, ranging from what Gere and Smith (1979) called the “myth of verbal deprivation” propounded by educational psychologists Jensen (1969) and Bereiter and Engelmann (1966), to Labov’s work on the “logic of nonstandard English” (e.g., 1970) and Smitherman’s (1977) work documenting the linguistic and rhetorical history of the “language of Black America” (aka African American Vernacular English, Ebonics, African American/Black Language).

Amidst this controversy, the Executive Committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in Fall, 1971, charged a specially appointed committee ‘to prepare a position statement on students’ dialects’ (Larson, 1974). The committee, comprised of scholars from institutions across the country, developed the policy resolution, *Students’ Right to Their Own Language*, which was adopted by the CCCC membership in April, 1974. Essentially *Students’ Right* affirmed “the students’ right to their

own patterns and varieties of language--the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style.” Further, the resolution argued that “a nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects” and that “teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.”

Following suit, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), in its 1974 Convention Resolution #74.2, called for the acquisition of “written edited American English” and simultaneously affirmed the value of multiple language varieties. As promised in its resolution, the NCTE has continued for over two decades to “promote classroom practices to expose students to [linguistic diversity]...so that they too will understand the nature of American English and...respect all its dialects.”

In response to increasing language protectionism from proponents of the English-Only Movement, the CCCC passed its *National Language Policy* in 1988, building on its 1974 *Students’ Right* policy. This organizational position recognizes that “even though English has become the language of wider communication, we are a multilingual society.” Further, it affirms the value of Nation-wide multilingualism in order to prepare the next generation for the Twenty-First Century.

Despite the CCCC and NCTE policy pronouncements, experienced professionals in both organizations have expressed concern about the teaching practices and lack of academic preparation in sociolinguistic matters among today’s college composition and secondary English teachers. For example, many college composition instructors espouse positive beliefs about linguistic diversity but lack the intellectual base to support their beliefs. Are there significant gaps in academic training about language concepts and issues among professionals in secondary

English and college composition classes? What is the source of such professionals' knowledge and attitudes about language and language diversity? There is a need to answer these and related questions in light of three critical factors: 1)the burgeoning linguistic-cultural diversity in high school and college writing classrooms; 2)the high rate of school-forceouts among students of Color; and 3)the leadership roles of CCCC and NCTE around issues of language and linguistic diversity.

### **BACKGROUND: RESEARCH CONTEXT**

The work most closely related to the survey reported here has been research on language attitudes among the general public and research on teachers' perceptions of students' linguistic abilities. Foundational studies of language attitudes led sociolinguists to conclude that language and speech cues elicit social perceptions of cultural groups and that attitudes toward the language or language variety of cultural groups reflect attitudes toward the groups themselves. Matched guise studies pioneered by Lambert, *et. al.* (1960) and variations on those studies done in the 1960s, and more recently, reveal the stark relationships between linguistic and social biases.

In work on language attitudes and teacher perceptions of students' linguistic abilities, previous research indicated that teachers generally possess a greater range of language attitudes than the public at large. Sledd, for instance, identified teacher attitudes ranging from denial of all standards to reverence for past linguistic traditions (quoted in Gere and Smith, 1979). In a study of teachers in a national sample, Taylor (1973) concluded that the majority had either positive or neutral attitudes toward what he termed "Black Language." On the other hand, this early work also clearly established that teachers share many of the general public's myths and misconceptions about language and dialects.

In numerous studies, Williams and his associates found that teachers not only evaluated students on the basis of language cues, but they also consistently judged students along a two-dimensional model: confidence-eagerness and ethnicity-nonstandardness. By comparison with Anglo children, African American and Latino children were ranked low in both dimensions, and the teachers' academic expectations correlated with the rankings of the children's speech (e.g., Williams, 1970a, 1970b; Williams and Whitehead, 1973). More recently, Bowie (1994) posed the question of current teacher attitudes toward "Black English." She surveyed seventy-five preservice teachers at a large urban university, 86% of whom were European American. A majority of the responses were negative although only 63% reported even minimal exposure to the subject, that exposure typically having been in a single class discussion about research on African American Language. Bowie proposed new strategies for sociolinguistic change, such as requiring preservice teachers to spend time in racially diverse schools.

Byrnes and Kiger (1994) sought to validate their Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS) by surveying teachers enrolled in university courses in Arizona, Utah, and Virginia. The researchers addressed two critical questions, only indirectly related to language: whether a teacher would be willing to have a Limited English Proficient (LEP) child in their classroom, and whether teachers think LEP children are detrimental to the learning of other students. There was a high correlation between negative responses to these questions and negative language attitudes. Based on this work and an earlier study (1991), the researchers concluded that teachers' negative language attitudes are a barrier to positive learning experiences for LEP children.

The study reported here differs from past work, both in terms of the survey population and in the scope of the data collected. The sample population was neither the general public nor teachers in general, but language arts educators, more specifically members of CCCC and

NCTE. In terms of scope, the study examined the sample population's academic training and background in general language study, not just training in a particular language or variety of English. Further, the survey focused not only on relationships between language attitudes and race/ethnicity, but also on self-reflective questions about the respondents' own language experiences and about their classroom practices. Finally, this research departs from the main body of language attitude research by seeking not simply to describe teachers' language attitudes, but also to identify the origin and source of these attitudes.

### **PURPOSE OF STUDY; RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study reported here, which was conducted from 1996 to 1998, is a survey of the state of knowledge, training, and attitudes about language diversity of the membership of the Secondary Section of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). (Hereafter Secondary Section members will be referred to as NCTE.) A status survey of this nature is important because CCCC and NCTE are the leading language arts organizations and because both organizations, for more than a generation, have advocated policies of respect for the Nation's many languages and dialects.

The study sought to answer a number of broad research questions relative to matters of language diversity, namely:

1. What academic training in language diversity have NCTE and CCCC members had? And what percentage of the membership have had such training?
2. What percentage of NCTE and CCCC members believe that academic training in language diversity is needed? What kind and to what degree?
3. What are the attitudes of NCTE and CCCC members toward language variation and bi/multilingualism?
4. What are the attitudes of CCCC and NCTE members toward their own language? What are the sources of these attitudes?

5. To what extent do the members' teaching practices reflect language diversity? What kinds of practices reflect awareness of language diversity?

6. To what extent do NCTE and CCCC members support the organizational positions on language diversity (i.e., the "Students' Right" resolution and the "National Language Policy")?

### **METHODOLOGY; RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

The study employed survey research design and utilized a random, stratified probability sample of the membership of both organizations. The Pearson Chi-Square statistical procedure was used to measure significance, with .05 established as the cut-off level for statistical significance.

In the fall of 1996, a preliminary survey questionnaire was developed based on input from Language Policy Committee members and English professionals in literature, language and composition. In the spring of 1997, a pilot study was conducted to pre-test the questionnaire and ascertain its reliability. The pilot involved approximately 200 randomly selected English professionals, on both college and secondary school levels, and English Education majors in teacher preparation programs. All three aspects of the English curriculum--language, literature, composition--were reflected in the areas of concentration of the pilot subjects. The survey instrument was determined to be reliable, with a reliability coefficient of .58. (Consult Appendix section for a copy of the survey.)

Only two of the items on the questionnaire had a low reliability coefficient (.24). These were the questions about support of the "Students' Right to Their Own Language" resolution and the "National Language Policy." In the pilot study, there were few responses to these questions presumably because the pilot subjects were unfamiliar with these organizational policies. The Language Policy Committee decided to leave these questions on the final questionnaire, however, reasoning that the respondents in the final survey would all be members of NCTE and

CCCC and thus likely familiar with these policies. This prediction, however, was not borne out. (More on this point in the following discussions.)

A random, stratified probability sample was drawn from the membership lists of CCCC and the Secondary Section of NCTE, provided by NCTE Headquarters, with the total sample reflecting the larger membership of NCTE. For the Secondary Section membership list, only those members teaching in Grades 9-12 were included in the sample universe. Both random samples reflect stratification along the variables available in the membership profile: ethnicity, gender, region, number of years teaching. The sample total was 2,970, approximately 67% of whom were from NCTE Secondary Section, and 33% from CCCC. (However, slightly more CCCC members returned their questionnaires than did NCTE members.)

A cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey was attached to each survey. Each mailing included a business reply envelope addressed to Dr. Geneva Smitherman as Chair of the Language Policy Committee. The surveys were mailed on March 18, 1998, with a requested return date of April 20, 1998. However, surveys were accepted and entered into the data pool as late as July 1, 1998, which was the date when five surveys were received, presumed to be the last of the lot. A total of 2,970 surveys were mailed out. Of these 110 were returned by the post office for improper addresses, and three (3) were returned by members who indicated that they had retired from teaching. The total number of completed, returned surveys was 983. These respondents comprised the research sample.

### **DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE**

Of the 983 respondents, 61.7% are members of NCTE, and 38.3% are members of CCCC. Of those who reported gender, 75.3% are females, and 24.7% are males. The age groupings indicate that 70.9% are 41-60 years of age; 22% are 21-40; and 7.1% are over 60. In

terms of race/ethnicity, 14.1% were People of Color (POC, i.e., African, Asian, or Native American, Latino, Alaskan Native, or Pacific Islander), and 82.9% were not People of Color (NonPOC, i.e., European American, Caucasian, non-Latino). Three percent (3%) identified themselves as “Other” (e.g., writing in such labels as “mixed race,” “American,” “Jewish”).

In terms of educational background, over half of the sample (51.5%) had a Master’s degree or “Master’s plus” (i.e., credit hours beyond the Master’s); 33.2% had doctorates; 12% had Bachelor’s, and 3.3% indicated “other” in reference to their educational background.

The overwhelming majority of the sample, that is, 66%, had 15 years or more of teaching; 19.4% had 7-14 years of teaching; and 14.3 had 1-6 years of teaching. Only .3 % of the respondents had been teaching for less than one year.

In terms of teaching level, 52.3% are teaching grades 9-12; 30.6 are teaching on the college or university level; 11.5% are teaching on the community college level. (The remaining respondents indicated “other” for teaching level, writing in such labels as “retired,” “language arts supervisor,” “grades seven and eight”).

## **SUMMARY RESULTS**

### Academic Training in Language Diversity

Nearly a third (28.4%) of the respondents had had **NO** course in language diversity in college. However, there was **nearly total** agreement (95.5%) that a college course in language diversity was necessary for anyone preparing to be a teacher today.

Of those who had had at least one college course in language--which amounted to 72.6% of the 983 respondents--the most frequently taken course was “Introduction to the English Language” (49.8%). Other college courses taken were “African American English” (6.8%),

“American Dialects” (16%), and “Linguistics for Teachers” (49.5%). [Some respondents had taken more than one course in language and/or language diversity.]

The course ranked as most important for anyone preparing to teach today was “Introduction to the English Language.” The course ranked least important in teacher preparation was “African American English.”

#### Attitudes Toward Language Variation and Bi/Multilingualism

Statement #1: A student whose primary language is not English should be taught solely in English.

33.2% agreed; 66.8% disagreed

Statement #2: Students need to master standard English for upward mobility.

96.1% agreed; 3.9% disagreed

Statement #3: In the home, students should be exposed to standard English only.

13.2% agreed; 86.8% disagreed

Statement #4: Students who use nonstandard dialects should be taught in standard English.

89.5% agreed; 10.5% disagreed

Statement #5: There are valid reasons for using nonstandard dialects.

80.1% agreed; 19.9% disagreed

Statement #6: There are valid reasons for using languages other than English.

92.6% agreed; 7.4% disagreed

Statement #7: Students should learn grammar rules to improve their ability to understand and communicate concepts and information.

78.4% agreed; 21.6% disagreed

#### Members' Attitudes Toward Their Own Language

Overwhelmingly, respondents described their language now and in the past as “standard American English most of the time.” However, a significant minority of respondents also described their language as “multilingual” and/or “multidialectal.”

The factor cited as most important in influencing members' language was education. The factor cited as least important was race.

### Language Diversity and Teaching Practices in Speech and Writing

Virtually all the respondents indicated that they discuss language diversity, at least to some extent, with their students. Only 4.8% do not engage in any such discussions.

Respondents use a variety of approaches to discuss language diversity: readings on language matters; analysis of language use in literature and other creative forms; affirmations by the teacher that all languages and language varieties are equal. An overwhelming majority of members' students (82.4%) raise issues and topics about language diversity. The students' concerns include: differences between dialect and language; differences between dialect and slang; why everyone doesn't speak the same way; status and appropriateness of languages and language varieties other than standard English.

We posed the question, "What approaches do you use with students who use nonstandard dialect features in their speech?" The following responses were given (multiple responses were allowed):

- \* 44.4% correct students' writing, not their speech
- \* 13.0% tell students that for an English class only standard English is appropriate
- \* 100% use private conferences to discuss issues of correctness
- \* 24% might say nothing
- \* 82.4% discuss the importance of knowing both nonstandard and standard and the contexts of appropriate use for each

In terms of the same question applied to students who use nonstandard dialect features in writing, members gave the following responses (multiple responses were allowed):

- \* 19.9% instruct students that for an English class only standard English is appropriate in writing
- \* 53.4% use private conferences
- \* 84.3% discuss the importance of standard and nonstandard and contexts of appropriate use for each
- \* 11.2% might say nothing

Knowledge of and Support for Organizational (CCCC) Language Policies (“Students’ Right to Their Own Language” and “English Plus” [i.e., CCCC “National Language Policy”])

- \* 65% of the respondents were **NOT** familiar with the “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” resolution
- \* 65.9% of the respondents had **NO** knowledge of the “English Plus” Policy [Expressed in the question as the “view that students should be encouraged to use and learn not only standard English but other languages and dialects for multilingual/multidialectal ability”]
- \* 67.9% of those respondents familiar with the CCCC “Students’ Right” language policy support it; 33% oppose it
- \* 82.3% of those respondents familiar with “English Plus” [i.e. the CCCC “National Language Policy”] support it; 17.7% oppose it.

## Issues of Greatest Concern

Respondents were asked about language issues that were of great concern to them as teaching professionals. Eighty-five (85%) of the 983 respondents wrote a response to this question. Several different types of issues emerged--e.g., the need for students to communicate effectively using the Language of Wider Communication; students' inability to convey critical thoughts and ideas in writing; language and power; need for students to communicate effectively in spoken formal, academic contexts; concern for reading skills competency among students; teaching of "correct" English.

Examples of issues of greatest concern, expressed in the respondents' own words, include the following:

Bilingual education and ESL issues concern me the most. I teach and live in the Southwest, close to the Mexican border. [I] am a faculty member at a designated Hispanic-Serving-Institution. I am also very concerned that our students, many of who have learned English as a Second Language do not do well on standard tests, especially our EXCET (Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas). This means they will not become certified to teach themselves. (0037)

Poor grammar of most high school graduates. (0055)

Business communication vs. street language. (0225)

I teach in a private college prep school that is made up largely of Middle Eastern and Caucasian American families. The languages issue of most concern is student's ability to write a clear and effective essay. (0049)

[Students] need (from ages 0-4 especially) to engage in communicative experiences about their behavior and immediate environment. Too many infants and toddlers are spoken to in broken phrases and one-word utterances...and left to watch TV. (0207)

Understanding context in language use and audience as well. (0069)

I want [students] to appreciate the contributions of black language to America's inclusive language and the beauty of Black English. (0982)

I don't want a law that states, "English only." (0059)

Language is a weapon of domination and control. (0027)

Teachers of English at my community college tend to be overly prepared to teach literature and underprepared for their teaching load of primarily composition courses. Burnout is a chronic problem, as are scholarly articles by colleagues not attempting to teach 130-150 students each semester who (the colleagues) nevertheless reveal our deficiencies and shortcomings. (0232)

I am concerned that students struggle to express themselves effectively because they do not know “the rules of the game.” They need to know grammar and usage rules to be able to express themselves accurately in standard English. They also need to learn appreciation and respect for dialect and to understand appropriate usage for particular times and places. (0303).

I am convinced bilingual diversity in the classroom is wrong and harmful to students. I love diversity! Let it thrive in the home and in the neighborhoods. We need a single national language. Our culture needs to sponsor more reading, the single skill that helps further education the most. (350)

I’m mainly concerned that students do not feel language really matters--either theirs or that of others. Beyond that I’m concerned with basic teaching, with the need for more people to value reading and writing. (0010)

Standard English must be encouraged. (0527)

The use of correct standard English. Both radio and TV are full of glaring misuse of our language, e.g., “A person never realizes their potential...,” “Between you and I,” “Him and her went skiing,” etc. The attitude in general seems to be, “you know what I mean.” (0222)

Translations. Words as symbols. Source of language. How to use language as a communication tool. Differences based on ethnicity concern me. It’s part of who we are like our names, our gestures, the way we move through the world. (0328)

I am fortunate to have very small classes (behavioral/emotionally disturbed) and to individualize my curriculum. Students who have special needs are lost in the maze of end-of-course testing and curriculum inflexibility. I also work with ESL students, and I believe, for both populations, we need to spend more time on grammar, composition, standard English and the confidence/com-fort required to acquire those skills. I am concerned that students who otherwise have no control over their lives fail to believe that an English class is a place to gain power. (0001)

That students learn to express themselves well in written as well as in oral form. That class size be managed at a level that speaking and writing can be emphasized. That students leaving college to become English teachers have strong backgrounds in language as well as literature. (0393)

My major concern is that future teachers usually believe that all students should speak a “standard English” usually defined by their own dialect. Students also believe that children should only speak English and be taught in English. (0218)

## **DETAILED ANALYSES AND FINDINGS**

### Academic Training in Language Diversity

Based on the pilot survey data, a list of the most common college courses in language was compiled, and training was operationalized as college training in these particular courses. The courses were: African American English; American Dialects; Introduction to the English Language; Linguistics for Teachers. “No training” was operationalized as having had none of the aforementioned courses.

There was no statistically significant difference between training in language and any of the seven demographic groups in the survey: race, age, gender, educational level, level of education, membership in CCCC or NCTE, and number of years of teaching. In fact, nearly one third of all demographic groups had had no college course in language. (See Table One.) However, training in language and language diversity was recognized as necessary for anyone preparing to be a language arts teacher today. The study’s prediction was that those who had themselves undergone such training would be more likely to recommend training for others, but there was no statistically significant difference between those who had had training and those who had not had training. Both groups recognized the need for such training, and both groups overwhelmingly recommended that a course in language be taken by those in language arts teacher preparation programs today. As mentioned in the “Summary Results” section, 95.5% of the respondents recommended a course in language.

Respondents were asked to rank the recommended course in order of importance. The courses were ranked as follows (the lower the mean score, the higher, or more important, the ranking):

	<u>MEAN RANKING/SCORE</u>
Introduction to the English Language	1.60
Linguistics for Teachers	2.04
American Dialects	2.42
African American English	3.49

Interestingly, although African American English (AAE) and American Dialects (AD) were ranked lowest in importance (i.e., in terms of courses necessary for language arts teachers), these two courses had a statistically significant effect on several of the attitudinal responses toward language variation and bi/multilingualism issues (as measured by agreement or disagreement with Statements 1-7 of the survey). By contrast, the two highest ranked courses-- Introduction to the English Language and Linguistics for Teachers--were not statistically significant in this regard. Since one goal of the study was concerned with the type of training in language diversity necessary to prepare language arts teachers for a future diverse world, it is worth examining this aspect of the survey's results in greater detail. Significance was found in terms of responses to Statements 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Statement #1: A student whose primary language is not English should be taught solely in English.

Significantly more respondents who had taken an AAE course strongly disagreed with this statement--34.8%-- than those who had not taken an AAE course--18.7% strongly disagreed (sig.007).

Statement #3: In the home, students should be exposed to standard English only.

Again, African American English proved statistically significant in terms of responses to this statement. **NONE** of the AAE course group strongly agreed with this statement, and compared to those who had not taken AAE, 49.2% strongly disagreed, whereas only 32.1% strongly disagreed among those who had not taken AAE (sig. .01).

Statement #4: Students who use nonstandard dialects should be taught in standard English.

Here, both those who had taken African American English and those who had taken American Dialects (AD) responded in significantly different ways from those who had taken Introduction to English Language and Linguistics for Teachers. In the case of the AAE course group, 7.6% strongly disagreed, in comparison with only 1.8% strong disagreement among those who had not taken an AAE course (sig. .008). In the case of 21 the AD course group, 5.1% strongly disagreed, compared to only 1.6% strong disagreement among those who had not taken an AD course (sig. .01).

Statement #5: There are valid reasons for using nonstandard dialects.

Again, both the AAE and the AD course groups differed significantly from the Introduction to the English Language and the Linguistics for Teachers course groups. Significantly more of the AAE course group strongly agreed with the statement (49.3%) than those in the non-AAE course group (24.3%). Further, among the AAE course group, **NONE** strongly disagreed with the statement, compared to 6.7% of the non-AAE group (sig. .000). Among those who did not have an American Dialects course, the percentage of those disagreeing with the statement (14.9%) was **TWICE** that of those who took an AD course (7.1%). (sig. .001).

Statement #6: There are valid reasons for using languages other than English.

Among those who took AAE, 62.7% agreed with the statement, whereas only 39.1% agreed among those who did not take AAE. Further, **NONE** of the AAE course group strongly disagreed (sig. .002).

In terms of academic training in language diversity and the impact of this training on language arts professionals, these results seem to suggest that research and information on dialect variation and bi/multilingualism are being conveyed in courses dealing with African American English and American Dialects, and this information has had an impact on some language arts teachers who have taken such courses. However, the same knowledge and impact were not found among those language arts professionals who took Introduction to the English Language and Linguistics for Teachers courses. In light of these results, it is also critical to repeat the finding stated earlier, namely that almost a **THIRD (28.4%)** of the membership of the two leading language arts organizations--NCTE and CCCC--have had **NO** academic training in language diversity.

#### Attitudes Toward Language Variation and Bi/Multilingualism

One of the study's key bases for ascertaining attitudes about language variation, bi/multilingualism, and grammar teaching were responses to Statements 1-7 of the survey. These statements were derived from the pilot study. Some reflect persistent myths and misconceptions about language and language diversity. Taken as a whole, they provide an index of trends in the thinking of high school, community college and university language arts professionals who are members of NCTE and CCCC.

One or more of the demographics proved significant in responses to each of the seven statements, and consistently, with all seven statements, membership (i.e., in NCTE or CCCC), educational level, and teaching level proved statistically significant in differentiating respondents' attitudes. Race was significant in responses to six of the seven statements. For example, in the case of responses to Statements 1 and 2:

Statement #1:

\*Significantly more (POC) (32.6%) than NonPOC (17.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement that students whose primary language is not English should be taught solely in English (sig. .002).

\*Significantly more respondents with Doctorates disagreed than those who had Bachelor's degrees. (sig. .000).

\*Significantly more members of CCCC disagreed than did members of NCTE (sig. .001).

\*University teachers disagreed more than high school teachers (sig. .000).

Statement #2

\*All seven demographic variables were significant in regard to the statement: Students need to master standard English for upward mobility. Thus:

\*Significantly more males strongly disagreed with the statement than did females (sig. .03).

\*Significantly more POC than NonPOC strongly disagreed (sig. .01).

\*Respondents who were sixty years or older agreed more than those who were in the age group 21-40 (sig. .03).

\*Respondents with Doctorates disagreed more than those with Bachelor's or

Master's degrees (sig. .000).

\*Members of NCTE agreed more than members of CCCC (sig. .000).

\*Respondents who had been teaching fifteen years or more agreed more than those who had been teaching 1-6 years.

\*Significantly more high school teachers agreed with the statement than did university teachers.

Table Two summarizes the response of each demographic group in terms of agreement or disagreement with each of the seven statements.

### Members' Attitudes Toward Their Own Language

Four categories for describing respondents' language now and in the past were derived from the pilot study. These were: 1) multilingual; 2) multidialectal; 3) standard American English most of the time; and 4) nonstandard American English. Comparisons were made within demographic groups to ascertain which particular group within a demographic set tended to select a category more than another group within that set. Using this kind of comparison, several statistically significant results (at .05 or lower) were found. (Results should be viewed as relative, not absolutes.)

Language now multilingual: POC; holders of Doctorates

Language now multidialectal: POC; males; holders of doctorates; CCCC members; university teachers

Language now standard American English most of the time: NonPOC; respondents 41-60 years old; holders of Bachelor's degrees; NCTE members; high school teachers; respondents teaching 15 yrs.+

Language now nonstandard American English: POC

Past language multilingual: POC; community college teachers

Past language multidialectal: males; POC; holders of Doctorates; CCCC

members; university teachers

Past language standard American English most of the time: NonPOC; respondents 60+ yrs. old; holders of Bachelor's degrees; NCTE members; respondents teaching 15+ yrs.; high school teachers

Past language nonstandard: males; POC

Knowledge of and Support for CCCC Language Policies (“Students’ Right to Their Own Language” and “English Plus” [i.e., CCCC “National Language Policy”])

As mentioned in the “Summary Results” section, about **two-thirds** of the membership of NCTE and CCCC (in this representative sample in this study) are **not familiar** with the two CCCC organizational policies THAT support language variation and multilingualism, namely “The Students’ Right to Their Own Language” and the “National Language Policy.”

The “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” policy was a resolution passed by CCCC in 1974. That policy resolution reads as follows:

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language--the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.

The “National Language Policy,” essentially an “English Plus” organizational

policy, was passed by CCCC in 1988. This policy has three inseparable parts, which read as follows:

1. To provide resources to enable native and nonnative speakers to achieve oral and literate competence in English, the language of wider communication.
2. To support programs that assert the legitimacy of native languages and dialects and ensure that proficiency in one's mother tongue will not be lost.
3. To foster the teaching of languages other than English so that native speakers of English can rediscover the language of their heritage or learn a second language.

The difference between those who have no knowledge of the two organizational language policies and those who are familiar with the policies can be accounted for in terms of the seven demographic characteristics, all of which proved to be statistically significant. (See Table Three.) These results parallel results in other areas of the survey relative to differences in response between demographic groups. Generally, People of Color tend to be more familiar with "Students' Right" and "English Plus" than European Americans (i.e., NonPOC); respondents with Doctorates more familiar than those with Bachelor's degrees; members of CCCC more familiar than NCTE members; university teachers more than high school teachers. Males are generally more familiar than females. Those who have been teaching fifteen years or more are more likely to have knowledge of the policies more than those who have been teaching 1-6 years. In terms of age, the trend is that the older the member, the greater the likelihood of familiarity with the policies. (However, the same does not hold true in terms of support or opposition to the policies; more below.)

Of those who were familiar with the two policies--some 35% in each case--there was, however, considerably more support for "English Plus" than for "Students' Right" (82.3% and

67.9% respectively). In great measure, this may be attributable to the tremendous controversy stemming from passage of the “Students’ Right” Resolution a generation ago, a language policy which was formulated during the tremendous social changes of the 1960s and 1970s. By contrast, there was little opposition to the “English Plus” policy passed in 1988.

Analysis of the sources of support or opposition in terms of demographics uncovered only four statistically significant demographic characteristics, both for “Students’ Right” and “English Plus”: race, educational level, membership, and teaching level. More People of Color support the two policies; those with Doctorates support it more than those with Bachelors’ or Master’s degrees; CCC members support both policies more than NCTE members; and respondents teaching on the university level support the policies more than those teaching on the high school and community college levels. (See Tables Four and Five.) Interestingly enough, age was not significant in terms of support or opposition to the policy although it was significant in terms of knowledge of the policy, with older respondents tending to be more familiar than their younger counterparts. However, older and younger respondents indicated similar levels of support for the policies.

#### **OTHER STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS**

\*Respondents who took a course in American Dialects more strongly supported the “National Language Policy” than those who took other courses in language diversity or those who took no courses in language diversity.

\*Respondents who ranked race as the most important factor influencing their language more strongly supported the “National Language Policy” than those who ranked race as least important.

\*More females than males, more respondents age 60+ than those in the younger age groups, and more respondents with 15+ years of teaching than those with fewer years of teaching experience found corrections of their grammar helpful. (Teachers and family members were cited as the most frequent source of corrections of grammar.)

\*Significantly more members of CCCC than NCTE had had a course in Introduction to the English Language.

\*Race was significant in terms of the ranking of language diversity courses recommended for future language arts professionals, with more People of Color recommending courses in African American English and American Dialects. NonPOC respondents significantly recommended Introduction to the English Language and Linguistics for Teachers.

\*Respondents who disagreed with the statement, AA student whose primary language is not English should be taught solely in English, discussed language diversity with their students “a lot” or “moderately.” Those who agreed with the statement discussed language diversity “a little” or “not at all.”

\*Those who used readings in their approach to discussions of language diversity responded significantly different to Statements (1) and (2), namely: “A student whose primary language is not English should be taught solely in English” and “Students need to master standard English for upward mobility.” Those who used readings disagreed with these two statements more than those who did not use readings in their teaching about language diversity.

\*In terms of responses to Statement (5), “There are valid reasons for using nonstandard dialects,” those respondents who don’t discuss language diversity at all tended to disagree more strongly than those who discuss language diversity in some form in the classroom.

\*In terms of response to the “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” policy resolution, those who had had at least one college course in language diversity (which we defined as “training”) tended to support the Resolution more strongly than those who had had no courses in language diversity (“no training”). However, training was not statistically significant in terms of support for the “National Language Policy.”

### **IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

It is clear that the overwhelming majority of those surveyed believe that the country’s dialects and languages are worthy of respect, and that, at least outside the schools, dialects and languages other than the prestige form--Standard American English--should be maintained and nurtured to the extent that is possible. As would be expected, the greatest support for the maintenance of other-than-standard dialects and for languages other than English comes from those respondents who self-identified as People of Color.

Significantly, the majority of those surveyed, while believing in the need for training in linguistic diversity, were unaware of the published positions of their professional organizations, namely the 1974 resolution, *Students’ Right to Their Own Language*, and the 1988 *National Language Policy*. Those who were aware could be distinguished along the lines of education, teaching level, and organizational affiliation. That is, those most aware of the CCCC policies were overwhelmingly CCCC members and thereby college instructors, generally holders of doctorates. Conversely, those least aware were NCTE members, secondary school instructors and holders of bachelor’s or master’s degrees.

If teachers are to be sensitized to linguistic diversity, and if that sensitivity is to be translated into actual classroom practice, something more needs to be done in the preparation and continuing professional development of language arts teachers. For instance, results of this study

pointed to the insufficiency of a class on “Introduction to the English Language” (or “History of the English Language”) for sensitizing teachers to the burgeoning linguistic diversity in the Nation’s schools. A simple knowledge of the diverse linguistic history of English does not apparently translate sufficiently into classroom practice, certainly not with the kind of resonance suggested by those who have had courses in “American Dialects” or “African American English.”

The implications of this study, then, recall the majority report of the “CCCC Committee on the Advisability of a Language Statement for the 1980s and 1990s.” Although the CCCC Language Policy Committee, which conducted the research reported here, did so with no explicit tie to, and generally, with no prior knowledge of, the earlier committee’s 1983 report, the findings of this study bear out that earlier committee’s findings.<sup>1</sup> The earlier report suggested that

as a bold but isolated philosophical statement *The Students’ Right* has had little discernible effect upon English teaching in the elementary and secondary schools. It has largely been ignored in the preparation of English language arts teachers for those schools. Yet if the philosophical position asserted in *The Students’ Right* resolution has a moral imperative in the college field, it must have an even stronger moral imperative for positive action in the English-teaching profession as a whole, in the beginning and intermediate years as well as in the college period.

The research reported here bears that out. Further, the concerns of the earlier committee can be extrapolated to apply to the CCCC *National Language Policy* as well, although has recently adopted that policy.<sup>2</sup>

The needs expressed in 1983, and in 1971 when *Students’ Right* was first formulated, continue to apply since it is clear that the *Students’ Right* and the more recently formulated *National Language Policy* remain unknown to the majority of the CCCC and NCTE membership and, one would surmise, unknown to non-member teachers of English and the general public.

Although the recommendations of the 1983 committee were never enacted, the kind of awareness that those recommendations entail continue to apply to a great extent, as the results of this study make clear. We thus submit the following recommendations to NCTE and CCCC as leaders and opinion-makers in the language arts field:

- \* Teachers should be aware of current social and regional dialects, including the grammar and lexicon of those dialects.
- \* Teachers should not only be aware of some of the methods of the teaching of English as a second language but also principles of teaching Standard English as a second dialect.
- \* Teachers should become familiar with methods for (to quote from the 1983 report) “meeting the language needs of students in a classroom where a variety of language and dialect backgrounds is represented.”
- \* Teachers should remain distinctly conscious of their covert attitudes toward their students’ language and the impact of those attitudes “upon the academic achievement of those students.”
- \* Teachers should recognize the overall benefit, for all students, of learning a language other than English and being conversant in more than one dialect of English.
- \* Teachers should remain apprised of new findings in research and theory in Linguistics and Composition Studies pertaining to the teaching of speakers of other languages and other dialects.
- \* Teachers need to be made aware of the principles embodied in *Students’ Right* and the *National Language Policy*
- \* A *Students’ Right* document for the Twenty-First Century should be developed, one that would reflect the last quarter century’s advances in research on language and linguistic diversity.

## NOTES

1. At the time of the submission of the 1983 report from the CCCC Committee on the Advisability of a Language Statement for the 1980s and 1990s, a minority report was also submitted. A minority of the Committee took issue with the very notion of any training in the standard dialect, preferring that the Committee take the position that *Students' Right* should not be qualified, so that the political task of CCCC would be the deconstruction of and eventual dismantling of the very notion of a necessary prestige or standard dialect.
2. The NCTE Executive Committee voted on 29 January 1998, "to accept NCTE endorsement of the CCCC Language Policy Document." (Motion 98:057).

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**TABLE ONE - PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS WITH NO  
COLLEGE COURSE IN LANGUAGE DIVERSITY  
(BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP)**

<u>CHARACTERISTIC</u>	<u>GROUP</u>	<u>PERCENT WITH NO COURSE IN LANGUAGE DIVERSITY</u>
RACE	POC	25.0
	NonPOC	29.0
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Bachelor's	28.2
	Master's/Master's Plus	28.7
	Doctorate	28.7
MEMBERSHIP	NCTE	29.8
	CCCC	27.5
NUMBER YEARS TEACHING	1-6	27.3
	7-14	29.3
	15+	28.3
CURRENT TEACHING LEVEL	High School	28.3
	Community College	23.4
	University	31.9
AGE	21-40	29.1
	41-60	27.9
	60+	31.9
GENDER	Female	28.0
	Male	30.3

**TABLE TWO - DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS' ATTITUDES TOWARD LANGUAGE VARIATION, GRAMMAR, BI/MULTILINGUALISM**

<u>STATEMENT</u>	<u>TEND TO AGREE</u>	<u>TEND TO DISAGREE</u>	<u>SIG.</u>
1)A student whose primary language is not English should be taught solely in English.	NonPOC	POC	.002
	Bachelor's NCTE	Doctorate	.000
	H.S.	CCCC	.001
		Univ.	.000
2)Students need to master standard English for upward mobility.	Females	Males	.03
	NonPOC	POC	.01
	41-60 yrs. old	21-40	.03
	Bachelor's	Doctorate	.000
	NCTE	CCCC	.000
	15 yrs. teaching	1-6 yrs.	.02
	H.S.	Univ.	.000
3)In the home, students should be exposed to standard English only.	NonPOC	POC	.01
	Bachelor's	Doctorate	.000
	NCTE	CCCC	.000
	H.S.	Univ.	.000
4)Students who use nonstandard dialects should be taught in standard English.	NonPOC	POC	.001
	60+yrs. old	21-40	.002
	Bachelor's	Doctorate	.000
	NCTE	CCCC	.000
	1-14 yrs. teaching	15 yrs.	.001
	H.S.	Univ.	.000
5)There are valid reasons for using nonstandard dialects.	Males	Females	.008
	POC	NonPOC	.000
	21-40 yrs. old	60+	.01
	CCCC	NCTE	.000
	Univ.& CC	H.S.	.000
	Doctorate	Bachelor's	.000
6)There are valid reasons for using languages other than English.	Males	Females	.04
	POC	NonPOC	.007

**TABLE TWO (CON'T.) - DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS' ATTITUDES  
TOWARD LANGUAGE VARIATION, GRAMMAR,  
BI/MULTILINGUALISM**

<u>STATEMENT</u>	<u>TEND TO AGREE</u>	<u>TEND TO DISAGREE</u>	<u>SIG.</u>
6)There are valid reasons for using languages other than English.	Doctorate	Bachelor's & Master's	.000
	CCCC	NCTE	.000
	Univ. & CC	H.S.	.000
7)Students should learn grammar rules to improve their ability to understand and communicate concepts and information.	Bachelor's	Doctorate	.000
	NCTE	CCCC	.000
	H.S.	Univ.	.000

**TABLE THREE -FAMILIARITY WITH “STUDENTS’ RIGHT TO THEIR OWN LANGUAGE” AND “ENGLISH PLUS” X DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP**

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Familiar with Students’ Right</u>			<u>Familiar with English Plus</u>		
	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>Sig.</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
<u>Race</u>						
POC	51.1	48.9	.000	54.9	45.1	.000
NonPOC	31.9	68.1		30.0	70.0	
<u>Ed. Level</u>						
Bachelor’s	16.5	83.5	.000	25.0	75.0	.000
Master’s	24.1	75.9		27.5	72.5	
Doctorate	59.3	40.7		48.1	51.9	
<u>Membership</u>						
NCTE	20.7	79.3	.000	27.7	72.3	.000
CCCC	58.4	41.6		44.4	55.6	
<u>Teaching Level</u>						
High School	16.5	83.5	.000	24.4	75.6	.000
Community College	44.4	55.6		37.7	62.3	
University	61.5	38.5		47.6	52.4	
<u>Gender</u>						
Female	30.3	69.7	.000	Not significant		
Male	48.5	51.5				
<u>Age</u>						
21-40	23.8	76.2	.000	Near significance at .066, trend for older respondents to be more familiar with the policies		
41-60	36.9	63.1				
60+	48.5	51.5				
<u>Years Teaching</u>						
1-6	23.2	76.8	.000	Near significance at .059, trend for respondents who’ve been teaching longer to be more familiar with the policies		
7-14	28.1	71.9				
15+	39.1	60.9				

**TABLE FOUR - SUPPORT FOR “STUDENTS’ RIGHT TO THEIR OWN LANGUAGE” X DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP  
(statistically significant results only)**

<u>CHARACTERISTIC</u>	<u>SUPPORT</u>	<u>OPPOSE</u>	<u>SIG.</u>
<u>Educational Level</u>			
Bachelor’s	34.7	65.3	.000
Master’s	50.4	49.6	
Doctorate	81.4	18.6	
<u>Membership</u>			
NCTE	51.2	48.8	.000
CCCC	78.0	22.0	
<u>Race</u>			
POC	79.7	20.3	.001
NonPOC	64.8	35.2	
<u>Teaching Level</u>			
High School	40.0	60.0	.000
Comm. College	57.1	42.9	
University	83.3	16.7	

**TABLE FIVE - SUPPORT FOR “ENGLISH PLUS” X DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP (statistically significant results only)**

<u>CHARACTERISTIC</u>	<u>SUPPORT</u>	<u>OPPOSE</u>	<u>SIG.</u>
<u>Race</u>			
POC	92.0	8.0	.008
NonPOC	80.0	20.0	
<u>Ed. Level</u>			
Bachelor’s	67.7	32.3	.000
Master’s	77.9	22.1	
Doctorate	88.8	11.2	
<u>Membership</u>			
NCTE	77.4	22.6	.001
CCCC	87.8	12.2	
<u>Teaching Level</u>			
High School	73.4	26.6	.000
Comm. College	80.0	20.0	
University	91.0	9.0	

# CCCC/NCTE LANGUAGE SURVEY

(Please return by April 20, 1998)

## PART ONE

Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Circle the number that represents your response.

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
1. A student whose primary language is not English should be taught solely in English.	1	2	3	4
2. Students need to master standard English for upward mobility.	1	2	3	4
3. In the home, students should be exposed to standard English only.	1	2	3	4
4. Students who use nonstandard dialects should be taught in standard English.	1	2	3	4
5. There are valid reasons for using nonstandard dialects.	1	2	3	4
6. There are valid reasons for using languages other than English.	1	2	3	4
7. Students should learn grammar rules to improve their ability to understand and communicate concepts and information.	1	2	3	4

## PART TWO

8. To what extent do you discuss language diversity with your students? Please circle the letter that represents your response.
- a) a lot
  - b) moderately
  - c) a little
  - d) not at all

9. Which approaches do you use in discussing language diversity with your students? Circle all that apply.
- a) readings on language matters
  - b) analysis of language in literature and other creative art forms
  - c) affirmation of equality of all languages and language varieties
  - d) I do not discuss language diversity in my classroom
10. List the most important issues or topics about language diversity that your students raise with you. Circle all that apply.
- a) differences between dialect and language, or between dialect and slang
  - b) why everyone doesn't speak the same way
  - c) status and appropriateness of languages and language varieties older than standard English
  - d) My students do not raise issues about language diversity.
11. What approaches do you use with students who use nonstandard dialect features in their speech? Circle all that apply.
- a) I correct their writing, not their speech.
  - b) I discuss knowing both standard and nonstandard and the contexts when each is appropriate.
  - c) I use private conferences to discuss issues of correctness
  - d) I might say nothing.
  - e) I tell them that for an English class only standard English is appropriate.
12. What approaches do you use with students who use nonstandard dialect features in their writing? Circle all that apply.
- a) I discuss knowing both standard and nonstandard and the contexts when each is appropriate.
  - b) I use private conferences to discuss issues of correctness.
  - c) I might say nothing.
  - d) I tell them for an English class only standard English is appropriate.
13. How would you characterize the teaching style of the best English teacher you ever had? Circle all that apply.
- a) was a strict grammarian
  - b) had high expectations and was demanding
  - c) was open-minded, a good listener
  - d) gave constructive feedback on writing
  - e) encouraged risk-taking in writing
  - f) stressed creativity and critical thinking
  - g) I never had an outstanding English teacher.

14. Which courses in language diversity were part of your college education? Circle all that apply.
- a) African American English
  - b) American Dialects
  - c) Introduction to the English Language
  - d) Linguistics for Teachers
  - e) I didn't have any courses in language diversity in college.
15. Which courses would you recommend for anyone preparing to be a teacher today? Please rank in order of importance, from 1, "most important," to 4, "least important," or check "e."
- a) \_\_\_\_\_ African American English
  - b) \_\_\_\_\_ American Dialects
  - c) \_\_\_\_\_ Introduction to the English Language
  - d) \_\_\_\_\_ Linguistics for Teachers
  - e) \_\_\_\_\_ I don't think courses in language are necessary for anyone preparing to be a teacher today.
16. Give the title and author of the text you use to teach about language issues.
- Title: \_\_\_\_\_
- Author: \_\_\_\_\_
17. My grammar was most often corrected by (circle the letter that represents your response):
- a) a friend
  - b) a family member
  - c) my teacher
  - d) a supervisor
18. How helpful was this correction? Circle the letter that represents your response.
- a) very helpful
  - b) helpful
  - c) somewhat helpful
  - d) not helpful at all
19. How would you describe your language now? Circle all that apply.
- a) multilingual
  - b) multidialectal
  - c) standard American English most of the time
  - d) nonstandard American English

20. How would you describe your language in the past? Circle all that apply.
- a) multilingual
  - b) multidialectal
  - c) standard American English most of the time
  - d) nonstandard American English
21. What factors do you believe have influenced your language? Rank in order of importance, from 1 “most important,” to 6, “least important.”
- a) \_\_\_\_\_ race/ethnicity
  - b) \_\_\_\_\_ cultural background
  - c) \_\_\_\_\_ neighborhood/community language
  - d) \_\_\_\_\_ geographic background
  - e) \_\_\_\_\_ socioeconomic class
  - f) \_\_\_\_\_ education
22. Are you familiar with the “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” resolution? Circle the letter that represents your response. (If your answer is “no”, go to question 24.)
- a) Yes
  - b) No
23. To what extent do you support the “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” resolution? Circle the letter that represents your response.
- a) strongly support
  - b) support
  - c) oppose
  - d) strongly oppose
24. Are you familiar with “English Plus,” the view that students should be encouraged to use and learn not only standard English but other languages and dialects for multilingual/multidialectal ability? Circle the letter that represents your response. (If your answer is “no,” go to **Part Three**.)
- a) Yes
  - b) No
25. To what extent do you support “English Plus”? Circle the letter that represents your response.
- a) strongly support
  - b) support
  - c) oppose
  - d) strongly oppose

**PART THREE**

Please circle the letter of the appropriate demographic information.

26. Gender:

- a) Female
- b) Male

27. Racial/Ethnic Identification:

- a) African American
- b) Asian American
- c) European American/Caucasian, non-Latino
- d) Latino
- e) Native American/Alaskan Native
- f) Pacific Islander
- g) Other (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

28. Age Range:

- a) 21-30
- b) 31-40
- c) 41-50
- d) 51-60
- e) Over 60

29. Highest level of education obtained:

- a) Bachelor's degree
- b) Master's Degree
- c) Master's plus several semester hours beyond
- d) Educational Specialist degree
- e) Doctorate (Specify area): \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Other (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

30. Member of:

- a) NCTE
- b) CCCC
- c) Both NCTE and CCCC

31. Number of years teaching:
- a) less than 1 year
  - b) 1-3 years
  - c) 4-6 years
  - d) 7-10 years
  - e) 11-14 years
  - f) 15 years or more
32. Current teaching level:
- a) Grades 9-12
  - b) Community college
  - c) 4-year college
  - d) University
  - e) Other (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_
33. As a teacher of English, what language issues most concern you? What language issues least concern you?
34. Please comment on this survey. We are interested in your suggestions and reactions. Thank you for your help.

**Please return completed survey by April 20, 1998 to: Dr. Geneva Smitherman, Chair, CCCC Language Policy Committee, Department of English, Michigan State University, East Lansing MI 48824. (Business reply envelope provided.)**