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In this article, George Ann Gregory deconstructs the notion of a single, standard English by exploring the historical development of different standards for oral and written English in various academic disciplines and by analyzing the written discourse of inexperienced Anglo and Navajo writers. Through statistical analysis, she demonstrates that the discourse texture of essays written by the Navajo writers closely approximates that of the Anglo counterparts in her study. However, among the total population of writers whom she analyzed, the Navajo students fail college-level composition classes four times more frequently than do Anglos. Gregory attributes this discrepancy to the intolerance of College writing instructors to the language traditions of Navajo and other American Indian learners.

Introduction

At a recent symposium sponsored by the bilingual education office of the State of Oklahoma on the topic of evaluating American Indian writing, I was not shocked to learn that the original, and still primary, purpose of standardized tests is to preserve the socio-economic status quo and assert the assumed superiority of men (O'Neil, personal communication, June 25, 1993). Standardized tests continue to stand as guardians of standards and standard English, notions that my own experience has taught me to question, that nonetheless harken back to an era in the history of this country characterized by elitism associated with the wealth gained through the exploitation of others through slavery and indentured servitude. Pre-Civil War education in this country was for gentlemen only. There was a single curriculum based upon the reading and discussion of a limited number of authors, limited because of the lack of amount of printed material. Its primary purpose, like that of the early Greek and Roman schools, was to train orators. This was a time when educated men in this country could still orate in either Latin or English and when being educated meant speaking and reading more than one language. Interestingly enough, many tribes from those areas occupied by the fledgling United States during this period also sent young men to be educated in this system. It was during this era that Greenwood LeFlore, a Choctaw and U.S. Representative from the new State of Mississippi, delivered an hour-long speech to the House of Representatives entirely in Choctaw. Much has changed in this country since then, yet the ideals represented by that educational paradigm, i.e., the one based upon elitism, continue to dominate current thinking. The two societal transformations that seem to have created the greatest need for educational change are the democratization of education and the advancement of technology. Whereas the older system stressed oratory skills, technology has increased the reliance on literacy. Technology, additionally, stands at the flowering of all major societal/cultural changes. Writing itself represents one such example of a technological advance that transformed forever the face of Western European culture. As technology advances so does the need for literacy. In no period is this more true than in the past hundred years. The shift in educational needs, moreover, parallels the economic shift in this country from an agrarian base to an industrial base. As a consequence, expanding industrialization and a developing middle-class demanded modifications in education (Berlin, 1984; Russell, 1991).

In order to meet the rapidly increasing specialization spawned by technology, Americans borrowed the German university model. Within this paradigm, the curriculum of the new American college was to allow both scientific and technological disciplines as well as a proliferation of electives. The purposes of such a model were to serve the middle class, spurn upward socio-economic mobility, and commit college curriculum to material success and progress (Berlin, 1984: 60). Previously the primary purpose of reading was to understand the ideas of the great philosophers of the Western European world; however, specialized uses of language demanded greater duplication and immediate application. Additionally, previously people wrote the way they talked. For example, writers spelled words the way the words sounded to them. In this newspecialized curriculum, however, the emphasis of oral rhetoric on correctness of form became transferred to writing.

Literacy, then, became the focus of teaching, and for the first time colleges required composition courses.

Unfortunately, while the demands on literacy increased, the development of successful literacy pedagogy lagged.

In 1891 a committee at Harvard convened to investigate the matter of poor writing skills at the college level. This committee concluded that the teaching of writing was a matter for secondary schools and recommended stiffer entrance requirements. Since none of the members had any background in composition theory, they reported what they could recognize as problems: errors in spelling, grammar, usage, and handwriting. As a result of this report, composition courses focused on teaching students how to write legibly and grammatically correct sentences. Current standardized tests reflect this bias. At the same time, the new science and technologically based curricula produced new rhetorical demands on writing with the resulting emphasis on appeal to reason as its sole basis. This new rhetoric demanded that writers rid themselves of "trappings of culture that distort [their] perceptions" (Berlin, 1984: 63). Because of the increased need for literacy, more children were sent to schools. Additionally, with industrialization children became less important contributors to the economy. Hence, schools began to serve their current dual role of baby-sitter and educator (Levis-Pilz, personal communication: 1982). Consequently, the educational levels of regions still dominated by agrarian economies—for example, most of the South—remained low until the economy shifted to a more industrialized base. The one notable exception was Indian Territory, where at least two of the so-called "Five Civilized Tribes" provided literacy programs for both adults and children, males and females, and had achieved eighty percent literacy in their own languages by the late nineteenth century (Debo, 1934). Before the turn of the twentieth century, many of these tribes were providing education to non-Indians living within Indian Territory. In essence, these schools and programs anticipated the democratization of education and current multi-cultural, bilingual education. Since the inception of this country, education has moved from being for White gentlemen only to being for middle-class White children to being for everyone; current estimates place future school populations as being predominately, non-Anglo, non-middle-class.

As with the previous shift at the end of the Civil War, literacy pedagogy in schools continues to lag behind both the increasing demands generated by technology and the increasing numbers of so-called non-standard English speaking children. The term non-standard, of course, implies that there is such a creature called Standard English. However, recent research unveils widening use differences among academic disciplines (Biber, 1988). Other genres, such as conversations and academic discourse, show even greater disparity in their usage. Another example of differences can be found in what is often called stylistics; for example, journalistic punctuation, paragraphing, and coherence patterns vary from what is advocated as good writing in most college handbooks. Even at a glance, literary language appears worlds apart from that of such specialized disciplines as medicine, law, education, and engineering. None of these styles, even excluding vocabulary, are necessarily mutually intelligible.

American colleges and universities have responded to this increasing necessity for specialized literacy by offering freshmen composition courses. Moreover, as more non-traditional, i.e., non-White, non-middle class, and non-male, students entered college studies, so-called remedial literacy courses were born. There is, however, a recent shift back to elitism in some colleges as evidenced by the University of New Mexico's virtual elimination of such programs, an interesting move given the composition of the state's population. Most required composition programs are housed within English departments, where they are generally viewed as step-children because the primary focus of English departments remains literature not composition. Moreover, the content of most freshmen composition courses remains literature-based. In most cases, remedial level literacy courses focus on mechanics and composition assignments remain generic in nature (Berlin, 1984; Grabe & Biber, 1989; Gregory, 1993).

Within academia itself there is already an inherent gap between instruction and reality: composition courses make no pretense of addressing specialization, nor do curricula at the lower levels. Indeed, while recently teaching an elementary language arts curriculum class, I found most of the students in the class initially unaware of such specialization: none of their other instructors—this was an upper division class—had mentioned this. For the most part, literacy curricula cling to the notion of one standard. American Indians participating in English literacy programs are generally viewed in a negative light because their productions are judged non-standard. This denies the reality of academic specialization as well as denigrating the language traditions of American Indians. It is well to remember that some American Indians easily achieved

higher literacy rates than their non-Indian counterparts only a hundred years ago. With the shift of academic uses of language to appeal to reason only, however, and tied to empirical data as the most legitimate source for an argument, most of the non-traditional populations have experienced increased difficulty in achieving academic excellence. Statistically, American Indians have one of the poorest academic records.

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Background and Purpose of the Project

Given the large numbers of Diné failing at the college level and a high correlation between composition requirements and this failure rate (Crowl & Gregory, 1990; American Indian Studies, 1991), this project was prompted by a desire to understand what Diné students were actually doing in their compositions. It begins with the assumption that the greatest variation is likely to occur at the basic writing level; hence, all the selections are written by basic writers. A multivariate statistical approach was used to capture the texture, or relationships of specific linguistic items within discourse of the compositions. Additionally, earlier research indicates that linguistic choices in English are dictated by genre (Biber 1987) and that exposition is an identifiable genre (Grabe 1987); thus, all of the samples were expository in nature. Another assumption is that greater variation generally produces greater reliability in the results.

The study worked from a comparison of basic writing compositions produced by two groups: Anglo/English speakers, referred to as Anglo in this article, and Navajo/English bilinguals, referred to as Diné. The project served two purposes: first, it aimed to describe the texture of basic writing itself; second, it sought to explore quantifiable differences between the Anglo and Dine writers. Towards this end, sixty-two essays were selected: thirty-one from each group. The two sets were judged rhetorically equivalent based upon holistic scoring; on a scale of one to four, the mean score for the Anglo groups was 2.5 and the mean score for the Diné group was 2.3.

The majority of samples were collected at various community colleges with a few samples collected at the University of New Mexico. All programs represented were fairly eclectic. On the whole, however, most Diné samples came from rural campuses while most Anglo samples came from one urban campus. There were a wide variety of topics discussed although none of the directions or writing prompts specifically directed students to discuss personal experiences; consequently, I assumed that all samples represented non-introspective exposition: Additionally, Diné samples represent possible linguistic/cultural variation among this population as they were collected from various communalities and programs. All Dine participants were self-identified bilinguals.

A multivariate factor analysis approach helped untangle co-relationships among significant linguistic items. This approach allows for the reductions of a large number of variables to a smaller set of derived variables, called factors. The purpose of the reductions is to discover possible generalizations about discourse so that a factor represents an area of high frequency of co-occurrence of linguistic items. The correlation between variables indicates to what degree the two linguistic items vary. For example, in the following sample correlation matrix (see Table 1 below), a high negative correlation indicates that the items co-vary in a systematic but complimentary way whereas a high positive correlation indicates that the two items tend to co-occur in the same environment. The numbers that represent the correlation are called correlation coefficients. The square of the correlation coefficient, or R-squared, measures the importance of the correlation. For example, in the above hypothetical illustration, correlations occur for third person pronouns and contractions and for negation and modals. All other correlations are low. Therefore, two factors can be derived from this data. Additionally, the matrix indicates that these two factors are relatively independent since linguistic items of Factor 1 show low correlation with linguistic items of Factor 2. The following example shows how the process works:

Factor 1 = .89 (third person pronoun) + .89 (contractions) - .23 (negation) - .07 (modals).

Factor 2 = .63 (negation) + .63 (modals) + .17 (contractions) - .08 (third person pronouns).

Here, the numbers in front of each linguistic item represent factor loadings or weights. These loadings, while not having a strict one-to-one correspondence to the correlation coefficients, represent the same pattern

and measure the degree of generalization found between each variable, or, in this case, linguistic item. The farther the factor loading is from zero the more of a generalization it represents; consequently, the larger the loading the greater priority that item is given in the interpretation. While factor analysis engages complex mathematical models and hence ideally requires the use of computers, the logical processes utilized often have an intuitive basis. Since this is an exploratory study, a common factor analysis is used (Gorusch 1974).

Given the small sample (approximately 16,000 words), only twenty-seven linguistic categories were counted.

Each of the categories had been identified previously as representing a specific discourse function, e.g., past tense associated with literary uses. Additionally, items selected appeared to be most indicative of compositions by basic writers included in this study: selections of specific items was done impressionistically and were not based upon actual counts. The twenty-seven categories included the following:

1. Past tense/perfect aspect
2. Present tense
3. First & second person pronouns
4. Third person pronouns
5. It, demonstrative pronouns, and indefinite pronouns
6. All nominalizations
7. All passives
8. Statives
9. Infinitives
10. All relatives-subject and object positions
11. Participles
12. Causative subordination
13. Conditional subordination
14. Prepositions
15. All adverbs
16. Mean word length
17. Conjuncts and downtoners
18. Hedges, amplifiers, discourse particles, demonstratives
19. Modals
20. Public verbs
21. Private verbs
22. Contractions, that-deletion
23. Phrasal coordination
24. Independent clause coordination
25. Synthetic negation
26. Analytic negation
27. Words/sentence

The scree plot of the initial factor analysis, accomplished with an SAS package, indicated a three-factor solution as the most likely. Consequently, a final solution consisted of three factors containing nineteen linguistic items. Finally, a two-way analysis of variance was done to determine significance between the two language groups.

Project Results

As indicated in Table 2 below, the final factor solution accounts for one-hundred percent of the variance with Factor 1 dominating the study and accounting for almost half the variance (49.80%). Factor 2 accounts for 34.95% of the variance, and Factor 3 accounts for 15.25% of the variance. The positive loadings indicate the texture of compositions written by Diné while the negative loadings indicate the texture of those written by Anglos. An ANOVA indicates that there is significant difference between the two groups at a 99% level of confidentiality (Gregory, 1993: 88).

Table 1:	Sample	Correlation	Matrix	
Linguistic Item	Third Person pronouns	Contractions	Modals	Negations
third person pronouns	1.00			
contractions	.94	1.00		
modals	-.03	.12	1.00	
negations	-.32	.17	.75	1.00

Interpretation of Factors

While linguistic choices in English have been shown to be genre dictated (Grabe, 1987), no such comparable study exists for Diné bizaad (the Navajo language). However, two linguistic studies of Diné discourse (McCreedy, 1983; Midgette, 1987), as well as conversations with knowledgeable Diné speakers, indicate that topic, not genre, dictates linguistic choices. This makes sense in terms of the history of the two languages. The history of western rhetoric, including its use in English, began with the Ancient Greeks. The arrival of genre specific language may be as recent as industrialization, if the divergence in educational disciplines (Russell, 1991) can be used as an indicator, or it may be as old as the Middle Ages (Golden, Berquest, & Coleman, 1978). The use of Diné bizaad, however, remains entrenched in the oral traditions of the Diné; there are no parallels in their respective histories. Moreover, if the linguistic combinations are only interpreted from the viewpoint of current text-type English, or English genre (the term "text-type," while not strictly synonymous with genre, carries a similar sense and is being used interchangeably in this discussion), they make little sense.

TABLE 2: Final Three Factor Solution

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Diné topic-centered vs. English text-type discourse	Pedagogical authority_by presentation of evidence	Establishing personal authority
word length 1.00	public verbs..... .95	contractions63
conditional sub..... .95	synthetic negatives......90	first person pronouns.58
hedges91	causative verbs69	analytic negatives......4 5
private verbs..... .53	words/sentences..... .65	
passives42		
nominalizations..... -48		
present tense.....-43		
prepositions..... -39		

At first glance, for example, the combination of positive loadings seems incongruent with previous conclusions drawn regarding form-function relationships for these English linguistic features: the categories of hedges and private verbs, generally associated with oral discourse, seem at direct odds with word length and passive, associated with planned, or written discourse. However, these combinations make more sense if viewed from the perspective of the Navajo language. Willie (personal communication, July 2, 1992) shared that for her, a speaker of Navajo and a linguist, passive, private verbs, and conditional subordination all relate to the humanness of the topic. This observation appears consistent with the choices of topics of the essays, many self-selected, written by Diné (see Appendix for a list of topics).

Example A:

All other unverifiable absence limit should be minimized from school year to school year . . . If a student has a reason for staying at home the parent should notify the bus driver. . . .

Example B:

I think that what was listed as offensive behavior is true . . . I feel that it should not be done . . . if any person tried to burn the flag. . . .

While ordinarily the presence of private verbs, such as think and feel, signal the intimacy and interaction of conversations, native people appear to use these expressions in public forums to indicate that they speak only for themselves (Scollon & Scollon, 1984; Chambers, 1989; Dye, 1989). This usage may also be the result of the writer having a specific audience in mind. Part of what prompts linguistic choices for Diné may be the unwillingness or inability to fictionalize an audience (Ong, 1977) because topic, situation, and audience co-occur in the Diné world (Kluckhohn & Leighton, 1966). Interestingly, the use of passives in this context is somewhat consistent with the usage of passives in English, "where the same agent is presupposed across several clauses and the specific agent of the clause is not important to the discourse purpose" (Biber, 1988: 112). In the examples presented here, the co-occurrence of the passives and conditional subordination if serves two purposes: first, to separate the speaker from the information presented, and second, to allow the speaker to respond personally to it. A similar movement between speaker and information exists in Diné stories where the storyteller explicitly marks the existence of the story and its contents from his or her own interpretation (McCreeedy, 1983).

The use of conditional subordination, furthermore, signals shared knowledge (Ford & Thompson, 1986), a choice that appears consistent with Scollon and Scollon's observations about Athabaskan storytelling traditions (1984). Moreover, the use of hedges by Alaskan Natives indicates detachment from the topic (Kwachka & Basham, 1990). Its use here may be another way for Diné students to decontextualize the composition and deinvolve the writer. This fits the basic demands of exposition and appears to serve a similar communicative function with passives and conditional subordination. Word length is generally associated with the use of precise language. Its presence is consistent with genre expectations as well as following the Dine admonition to choose one's words carefully (Witherspoon, 1977).

Essentially, then, Factor 1 demonstrates that Diné students not only understand the expectations of exposition by also have met them by using the traditions associated with their own language uses.

Conversely, the texture of essays written by Anglo basic writers shows elements of general written elaboration: both nominalization and prepositions represent the kind of elaboration that marks written discourse as different from spoken (Bernstein, 1961). Present tense is generally associated with planned discourse and is used to express generalities (Biber, 1987).

Example C:

Student is one who attends a school. . . I am a student attending college. . . .

Example D:

The millions of Americans trapped in a self-perpetuating state of poverty and malnutrition whose only hope for the future has been tangled in political red tape

The texture of the Anglo samples remains generic to any kind of writing, not genre-specific. By comparison, the texture of these essays lies flat or as one native person put it, it lies "dead" on the page (Connelly, personal communication, February 6, 1993). Moreover, one might observe that the choices represented by word length and passives are more consistent with genre expectations than that produced by the Anglo students in this study. These findings appear consistent with descriptions of the programs producing them. The remaining two factors represent a split between two systems of establishing authority. In one system represented by the imposition of school structure and that particular kind of language use, authority to speak, or to state one's opinion, is generally established by what one knows, that is through the presentation of data or evidence. I call this pedagogical because for most Diné this system only occurs within a school setting (Scollon & Scollon, 1984). In the other system represented by traditional language uses among American Indian communities, authority to speak lies within the person himself or herself (Chambers, 1989; Dye, 1989). Factors 2 and 3 indicate that the Diné writers in this study used both systems.

For example, the presence of public verbs generally associated with spoken language uses (Goosens, 1987), appears to set the stage for the student's own ideas and opinions:

Example E:

Some people say that the mother has the right. . . This may seem like an easy solution. . . (an argument against abortion)

Example F:

It [Macbeth] states that tomorrow comes fast. . . I strongly agree

More often than not, the reported speech of others served to frame the student's own argument. In these examples the student uses the information of others to reinforce his or her own ideas, either through illustration or through contrast. The use of because also is used to present evidence for the student's arguments. Such usage occurs in written descriptions in Diné bizaad, as well (Willie, personal communication, June 29, 1992).

Example G:

Education is important because it helps people get more out of life

Additionally, the use of longer sentences and synthetic negation are consistent with pedagogical expectations.

Finally, Factor 3 may represent the desire of Diné students to maintain interaction with their audience. Diné rely heavily on such interaction to maintain clarity in communication in Diné bizaad (Willie, personal communication, July 2-4, 1992).

Example H:

We must learn English so that we could read and hopefully write well. . . .

In the above example, the writer directly admonishes the assumed audience, other Diné, but maintains his connection to them.

Example I:

In addition customs of certain ethnic groups also offend society. For instance, I read an article a few months ago about some Cambodian refugees eating cats and dogs in California... I find it offensive when I hear and see news on television about black people being discriminated and murdered. . . .

In this case, the writer speaks for herself, giving her own opinion about what is offensive and contrasting her ideas with those expressed in the magazine article that she read. She also uses the first person to indicate how she discovered certain information. In both cases, however, she uses the first person to respond to the task of "defining offensive behavior." Directly addressing the audience occurred infrequently, but its presence usually serves the function of expressing a generality, as in the example below:

Example J:

It hard to travel if you don't have any money.

- In one instance the writer directly admonishes the intended audience.

Example K:

When you see a person mistreating an animal. . . tell that person to quite it or set the animal free.

Both Dyc (1989) and Chambers (1989) have noted that authority for Native people lies within the ethos of the speaker and with the speaker's relationship to the audience. This final factor seems to support that observation. Additionally, Diné philosophy dictates an interrelationship among all things.

Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest inconsistencies in judgment of quality. Given the statistics on failure rates, generic written elaboration as evidenced in the texture of Anglo essays appears to be more highly valued in basic writing courses. Another way of viewing this might be to say that Anglo students are rewarded for producing standard (but generic) English. Despite the overall genre "correctness," i.e., Dine samples indicate a greater awareness and production of the realities of specialized language use, of essays produced by Dine, there is no indication that such correctness has been recognized by the system. Additionally, the higher failure rate of Dine students indicates no tolerance of their language traditions in the classroom. In essence, this represents the same kind of "standard" associated with standardized tests. The inconsistency between the failure rate of Dine students and the findings of this study further violate the notion of democratization of education. Jim Cummins (personal communication, May 5, 1993), an advocate for respecting the language traditions of others within the classroom, recently noted that institutions of higher education have been very slow to respond to adding this to their curricula. Additionally, the denigration of these traditions represents the on-going denial of most Americans to the contribution of First Americans. Indeed, modern technology, the off-spring of industrialization, would never have been possible without the contribution of American Indian cultures to European economic growth. Dine students have managed to produce exposition with not only an appeal to reason but also with maintaining some connection to its audience.

Teachers working with out-dated notions of one standard are more likely to judge the quality of writing produced by Dine, or many others, as inferior. Clearly, language arts and English teacher preparation must include the current data regarding the realities of specialized language use. Additionally, classrooms at all levels must honor the language contributions of its students as an enrichment, as a gift. The Dine samples from this study indicate an important solution to the growing problem of alienation generated by technology. They have combined both kinds of appeal: to reason and to the ethos of the writer.

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