

1-1-2014

Linguistic Advocacy as a Bridge Between Disciplines

David Bowie
University of Alaska Anchorage

Clare Dannenberg
University of Alaska Anchorage



Linguistic Society of America

Advancing the Scientific Study of Language

Taking Linguistics Beyond Linguistics Programs and Departments

Linguistic advocacy as a bridge between disciplines

David Bowie & Clare Dannenberg
University of Alaska Anchorage

Undergraduate research

- Undergraduate research has laudable goals
 - Enhance research skills
 - Foster professional and scholarly development
 - Engage students more deeply in education
 - Provide faculty mentoring
 - Introduce students to new topics
- But how do we attract students?

Linguistics as advocacy

- Linguistics has a tradition of advocacy
 - Endangered languages
 - Multilingualism in education
 - Descriptivism vs. prescriptivism
- Advocacy is a great “hook”

Flu vaccine initiative

- Sponsored by Virginia Health Department
 - Goal: Increase rate of flu vaccination
 - Focus on economically disenfranchised areas
- This project
 - Goal: Discover why parents weren't opting in
 - Several possibilities
 - Disengagement: Didn't even see the forms
 - Logistics: Factors such as low literacy rates
 - Intent: Decision to not vaccinate

Flu vaccine initiative

- Involvement in presentation, publication
- Intuiting linguistic theory through practice
- Ability to read the linguistic literature
- Students had a voice in project development
- Students accomplished something real
- Students developed personal research portfolios

Alaskan Englishes

- At an earlier stage than the flu vaccine project
- How do Native languages, English interact?
- Alaska is a highly multilingual state
 - 19 surviving Native languages
 - 2 surviving colonial languages
 - Nearly 100 other immigrant languages
- Linguistic diversity is part of local identity, pride
- Recognition of local accents
- High linguistic security (at least in urban areas)

Alaskan Englishes

- Urban Alaskan English part of Third Dialect
- Perception of Nativeness in English
 - Nativeness viewed as uneducated, poor
 - Nativeness viewed as authentic, intelligent
 - Positive view of Native-origin borrowings
- Recognizing local accents, with linguistic security
- Discourse of agreeing vs. understanding

Alaskan Englishes

- Involvement in presentation, writing theses
- Ability to read the linguistic literature
- Development of fieldwork, sampling methods
- Students attracted from multiple disciplines
 - English
 - Modern languages
 - History
 - Anthropology
 - Psychology



Linguistic Society of America

Advancing the Scientific Study of Language

Taking Linguistics Beyond Linguistics Programs and Departments

**David Bowie & Clare Dannenberg
University of Alaska Anchorage**

**david.bowie@uaa.alaska.edu &
cjdannenberg@uaa.alaska.edu**

THANK YOU

Linguistic advocacy as a bridge between disciplines

David Bowie
david.bowie@uaa.alaska.edu @sociolx
Clare Dannenberg
cjdannenberg@uaa.alaska.edu
University of Alaska Anchorage

LSA 2014
3 January 2014

Undergraduate research

- ❖ Undergraduate research has laudable goals
 - Enhance research skills
 - Foster professional and scholarly development
 - Engage students more deeply in education
 - Provide faculty mentoring
 - Introduce students to new topics
- ❖ But to do undergraduate research we have to attract students
- ❖ So how do we attract students?

Linguistics as advocacy

- ❖ Linguistics has a tradition of advocacy
 - Endangered languages
 - Multilingualism and in education
 - Descriptivism vs. prescriptivism
- ❖ Advocacy is a great “hook”
- ❖ Today: A couple examples from our own experience

Flu vaccine initiative: The project

- ❖ Run out of Virginia Tech, sponsored by Virginia Health Department
 - Goal: Increase rate of child flu vaccination
 - Focus on rural, economically disenfranchised areas
- ❖ This part of the project
 - Immunizations offered free through schools, but low opt-in rates
 - Goal: Discover why parents weren't opting in
 - Several possibilities
 - Disengagement: Parents never even saw the permission forms
 - Logistics: Factors such as low adult literacy rates
 - Intent: Conscious decision not to vaccinate
 - Students conducted in-depth interviews, conducted discourse analysis
 - Finding: Reason was intent, with objection to top-down approach
 - Result: Change in tactics, now working through local contacts
 - Ultimate result: Likely to improve health outcomes in the region

Flu vaccine initiative: Student involvement

- ❖ Students came in with little to no background in research methods
- ❖ Through participation, they have experienced:
 - Involvement in presentation, publication
 - Intuiting linguistic theory through practice
 - Developing ability to read the linguistic literature
 - Having a voice in project development
 - Accomplishing something “real”
 - Developing personal research portfolios

Alaskan Englishes: The project

- ❖ At an earlier stage than the flu vaccine project
- ❖ Ultimate question: How do Native languages, English interact?
- ❖ Alaskan students find linguistic issues interesting
 - Alaska is a highly multilingual state
 - Linguistic diversity is part of local identity, pride
- ❖ Students conducted fieldwork, have found initial results
 - Urban Alaskan English is part of the Third Dialect
 - Alaskans perceive Nativeness in some speakers' English
 - Alaskans recognize own accents, but have high linguistic security
 - Local discourses of agreeing vs. understanding

Alaskan Englishes: Student involvement

- ❖ Students came in with little to no background in linguistics
- ❖ Through participation, they have experienced:
 - Involvement in presentation, writing theses
 - Developing ability to read the linguistic literature
 - Participation in developing fieldwork, sampling methods
 - Learning statistical analysis

Attracting students

- ❖ University of Alaska Anchorage has no linguistics major, few courses
- ❖ Students have come into project from other disciplines
→English, modern languages, history, anthropology, psychology...

Sending students on

- ❖ Students have gone from these projects into graduate study
→Rhetoric, speech pathology, computer game design...
- ❖ Primary goal has not been to recruit these students into linguistics
- ❖ Goal is to give students in many disciplines understanding of linguistics
- ❖ Hope: Serve the discipline by having those elsewhere view us positively
- ❖ Hope: Linguistics is viewed as a field that does something useful