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Sociolinguistic Justice in the Schools: Student Researchers as Linguistic Experts

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Abstract

The commitment of sociocultural linguistics to the cause of social justice has been central to the discipline since its foundation. This commitment is nowhere more evident than in the educational domain and particularly in the development of sociolinguistically informed curricula and teacher preparation programs. Such programs help ensure that students who speak politically subordinated linguistic varieties have the same opportunities in classrooms, college, and careers as their standard English-speaking peers. Informed by previous and current efforts to forge linguistic partnerships with communities, a set of potential goals for those who work toward sociolinguistic justice is proposed. The goals of sociolinguistic justice are then exemplified using a California-based research and academic outreach program that guides youth of diverse linguistic, ethnoracial, and economic backgrounds to carry out original sociocultural linguistic research in their peer groups, families, and local communities.

Introduction: Sociolinguistic Justice

Since its beginnings, sociocultural linguistics has been committed to using the insights of research to address pressing social justice issues.[1] As scholars have long emphasized (Cameron et al. 1992, 1993; Charity 2008; Labov 1982; Rickford 1997; Wolfram 1998; Zentella 1996), such efforts are an ethical obligation for the field. In some cases, researchers draw on their scholarly expertise to raise public awareness and understanding of politically subordinated communities, such as racialized, immigrant, and/or indigenous groups, whose language is often devalued or pathologized. In other instances, scholars make direct interventions in educational, political, and legal arenas in order to challenge inequities on the basis of language. In addition, a number of commentators have highlighted the need for sociocultural linguists to recognize community members as agents of social change in their own right. For example, Rickford's (1997) influential concept of "service in return" challenges researchers to engage in meaningful partnerships with the communities they study in order to solve problems of central concern to those communities. Similarly, Cameron and her colleagues argue that scholars should not simply speak out as expert advocates on behalf of marginalized groups, as important as this responsibility is, but they must also help empower their research participants to take action themselves (Cameron et al. 1992, 1993).

Many of the social justice efforts of sociocultural linguists have focused on the education of schoolchildren who speak subordinated dialects and languages. Beginning with Labov's (1969) groundbreaking work on the education of African American English-speaking children, sociocultural linguistic research has played a vitally important role in challenging language-deficit perspectives. A wealth of programs promoting language awareness in classrooms and teacher preparation have helped change attitudes and outcomes in local communities throughout the United States (Alim 2007; Denham and Lobeck 2005, 2010;

Egan–Robertson and Bloome 1998; Labov 2010; Mallinson and Charity Hudley 2010; Mallinson et al. 2011; Reaser and Wolfram 2007; Rickford and Rickford 1995; Siegel 2006; Smitherman 2000; Wheeler 1999; Wolfram, Adger, and Christian 2007). Yet, in light of ongoing public debates over language, ranging from English-only policies to bans on bilingual education, it is clear that linguists' efforts must be redoubled (Cashman 2006; Jaffe 2012).

Sociocultural linguists' longstanding commitment to justice and equality in the educational arena has a new urgency in the present economic and political climate. Severe budget cuts in many states coupled with public attacks on linguistic and cultural diversity nationwide are quite literally imperiling the country's future: young people from non-dominant language backgrounds, who will soon constitute a majority of the population. The situation is especially grave in California, particularly in the aftermath of the global recession (Freedberg and Frey 2012; Freelon, Bertrand, and Rogers 2012). California's public schools, which serve more linguistically marginalized youth than any other state, consistently rank among the lowest in the country both in national measures of quality and in educational funding.

In response to this crisis, we have taken our own initial steps toward fostering sociolinguistic and educational justice in our local community. As one example of a collaboration that other linguists might wish to adapt for use in their own local context, we describe here a community-based program, School Kids Investigating Language in Life and Society, or SKILLS. The SKILLS program is designed to be a genuine partnership that benefits all participants by combining sociocultural linguistic research, graduate training, undergraduate service learning, community engagement, and academic outreach to underserved students in Santa Barbara County. The program is inspired by the educational insight that meaningful and lasting learning is most readily fostered when academic experiences build on students' existing "funds of knowledge" – especially the linguistic and cultural knowledge they bring from home (González et al. 2005; Yosso 2005). It is equally important for all students to learn about the politics of language and culture and particularly the racial and class-based inequities that systematically advantage some groups over others.

One of the central goals of SKILLS is therefore to promote sociolinguistic justice in classrooms and communities. The term *sociolinguistic justice* has been used in passing by a few scholars over the years (e.g., Fishman 2010:79; Wolfram 2001:300), but there is as yet no formal characterization of the concept. We therefore offer the following definition:

> *sociolinguistic justice*: self-determination for linguistically subordinated individuals and groups in sociopolitical struggles over language

As an idealized goal, what counts as sociolinguistic justice is itself a site of struggle, yet in general, linguistically marginalized individuals and communities can be seen as achieving some measure of sociolinguistic justice whenever they claim the right to define the social, cultural, and political roles of their own linguistic varieties.

Although the notion of sociolinguistic justice may appear similar to the idea of linguistic rights (e.g., Skutnabb–Kangas and Phillipson 1995), we view these two concepts as distinct. The linguistics rights framework has garnered criticism on a number of grounds from scholars who are nonetheless sympathetic to its general goal of equity for speakers of marginalized linguistic varieties (e.g., May 2012; Paulston 1997; Wee 2005). Of particular concern is that the understanding of language as a right and especially as a human right tends toward a universalist perspective that relies on governmental authority for recognition. By contrast, sociolinguistic justice, like other grassroots social justice movements, begins at the local level, among community members and their allies and partners, and hence, the form it takes is not predetermined but is instead contextually emergent from individual community members' own (often differing) priorities. For this reason, although it may and ideally does ultimately

effect larger-scale social change, sociolinguistic justice as we understand it is most immediately rooted in practice rather than policy.

Likewise, any scholarly engagement with the politics of language in contemporary society must grapple with thorny issues regarding what is meant by "language" and "community" and must attend to the ever-shifting locus of power both in local contexts and more widely (Silverstein 1998, 2003). By working from the bottom up rather than the top down, however, scholars seeking to collaborate with individuals and groups can at least avoid arbitrating or imposing the terms of discussion and instead start with the linguistic concerns of those whom they seek to assist. That is, the issues that matter to speakers should also be issues that matter to linguists.

Building on previous work on language and social justice and drawing on our own experiences within the SKILLS program, we sketch five potential goals of linguistically subordinated individuals and/or communities working toward sociolinguistic justice. Linguists seeking to collaborate in such undertakings (who may themselves be community members) may provide information, advice, and resources to help identify and achieve particular goals. Not all of the following are necessarily goals for all language users, and some issues, including issues we may have overlooked here, will inevitably take higher priority than others. Moreover, these goals may be addressed in different ways in different contexts. Thus, what counts as an issue worthy of attention will be a matter of local negotiation and debate. However, all of the goals discussed below can advance sociolinguistic justice by challenging language ideologies that devalue minoritized linguistic varieties and their speakers.

Goal 1: Linguistic valorization
To promote awareness and appreciation of linguistic variation and language diversity of all kinds, including understanding of the systematicity, complexity, and cultural value of one's own and others' ways of using language

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The first goal we propose is the very foundation of sociolinguistic justice as well as a primary motivation of scholarship and teaching in sociocultural linguistics. As many linguistics instructors know, the valorization of linguistic variability in introductory classes can be profoundly transformative for politically subordinated language users as well as for speakers of dominant varieties. In SKILLS, we found that it is relatively easy to extend our disciplinary impact in the educational arena by adapting the resources we use to reach college undergraduates in order to directly engage younger students and their teachers. These groups are often eager to learn about a field that is wholly unfamiliar yet immediately relevant to their daily experience. Crucially, students who participate in SKILLS do not need to wait until college to be affirmed in the knowledge that their linguistic variety has value, and this knowledge helps make it easier for them to imagine themselves as college students in the first place.

Goal 2: Linguistic legitimation
To promote the validity of one's own and others' full linguistic repertoires for symbolic and/or communicative use in a wide range of social spheres, including not only the intimate and informal settings of home and community but also formal, public, and institutional settings

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The second goal takes its general inspiration from the groundbreaking and controversial "Resolution on the Students' Right to Their Own Language," issued by the National

Council of Teachers of English in 1974, which challenged the established educational policy of disparaging and eradicating linguistic difference. This goal recognizes that speakers of subordinated varieties have access to a larger fund of sociolinguistic knowledge than they are authorized to use in many contexts and that such linguistic exclusion is often based on considerations not of communicative practicality but of sociopolitical legitimacy. Restrictive policies and practices thus often have the consequence of quite literally publicly silencing speakers whose language does not conform to dominant norms. Yet, as scholars have long demonstrated both through their research and in their own writing style, minoritized varieties match and often surpass the hegemonic language in their rhetorical power and logical force (e.g., Alim 2004; Anzaldúa 1987; Labov 1969; Richardson and Jackson 2004; Smitherman 1977) and have an important place in public discourse.

Moreover, in the educational domain, sociocultural linguistics and related fields have provided a wealth of empirical evidence that in order to strengthen students academically – including strengthening their academic language – it is necessary to expand and nurture their linguistic repertoires rather than to impose a single monolingual, standard form of language to which students must always adhere. However, linguists' work to build on young people's linguistic strengths has often been misunderstood and misrepresented by their opponents (see discussion in Perry and Delpit 1998; Rickford 1999). Collaboration with local communities is one way to circumvent uninformed attacks and challenges. In SKILLS, for example, bilingual Latina/o students are encouraged to use their Spanish abilities to collect linguistic data and then to present the research results in both English and Spanish. In this way, families and other community members can see that the use of Spanish strengthens rather than undermines academic development and students can experience Spanish as a language of considerable institutional value.

Goal 3: Linguistic inheritance
To learn and/or learn about the languages, dialects, and styles associated with one's own background and to support others' knowledge and learning of their respective heritage varieties, to the extent each individual chooses

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The focus of the third goal, linguistic heritage, is an increasingly urgent issue within linguistics. The discipline has been galvanized by the alarming rate of disappearance of the world's languages due to political, economic, and other pressures. In 1996, the Linguistic Society of America's "Statement on Language Rights" addressed this global crisis, asserting the legitimacy of the politically subordinated languages of both indigenous and immigrant groups within multicultural societies. Although endangered and minoritized dialects and styles have often been left out of this discussion, they merit equal attention, for such varieties have strong social, cultural, and political meaning for speakers, especially those who have been deprived of their ancestral language. This issue is also an important facet of the SKILLS program, since in the U.S. context, all speakers may lay claim to one or more heritage varieties. Hence, students from very different backgrounds can discover parallels across family histories of language and dialect shift.

While the right of all individuals to learn and speak their heritage varieties has been much discussed within linguistics, of equal importance is the right to reconnect to a lost or disappearing linguistic heritage without necessarily gaining full mastery (Hinton 2002), as well as the right to draw on this heritage only selectively or not at all (Dobrin 2008). Thus, speakers may choose the aspects of their linguistic background that are most significant to

them or select the most accessible or useful elements, and they may elect to engage with their linguistic heritage in different ways at different times. Moreover, many individuals and groups have complex linguistic and cultural histories that may be difficult to retrace, and as a consequence, they may lack a strong sense of connection to their heritage. Yet, they, no less than those who have more recently undergone or are currently experiencing language shift, may wish to reclaim whatever parts of their heritage they consider most personally meaningful; at times, speakers may choose to creatively redefine their heritage. Indeed, even a partial engagement with a variety that is felt to be part of one's heritage can be symbolically powerful in constructing linguistic and cultural identity (Ahlers 2006). In our own work, we have found that the SKILLS program helps students whose families have long been in the United States as well as those who have arrived more recently to strengthen their sense of connection to their family's linguistic past.

Goal 4: Linguistic access
To learn and/or learn about the languages, dialects, and styles of sociopolitical power and to support others' knowledge and learning of these varieties, to the extent each individual chooses

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The fourth goal of sociolinguistic justice acknowledges that the valorization and legitimation of marginalized varieties do not obviate the importance of access to the language(s) of power for all speakers. This goal may seem less crucial than the others we propose, given that much of schooling centers on gaining mastery of the linguistic standard at the expense of other languages, dialects, and styles. Yet, as noted above, even those who are exposed to the dominant variety through education may have difficulties due to educational practices that do not build on the ways of speaking they bring from home. Thus, the opportunity to develop institutionally powerful ways of using language is an important element of sociolinguistic justice.

Moreover, sociolinguistic justice recognizes the reality of inherent variability even of highly regimented forms of language. A powerful variety may be used in ways that differ from the hegemonic source, as with global English (Widdowson 1994) and ethnoracially distinctive standard varieties (Rahman 2008). SKILLS therefore guides young people to develop their own personally meaningful forms of academic English as part of their linguistic repertoires. Students experiment with a range of academic linguistic identities throughout the program through informal classroom presentations and writing, public research presentations and reports, and debate and role play.

Goal 5: Linguistic expertise
To promote recognition of all language users as linguistic experts capable of contributing to linguistic and cultural knowledge, and to promote acknowledgment of those contributions, to the extent each individual chooses

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The fifth goal of sociolinguistic justice relies on the understanding that all language users are linguistic experts. Speakers' expert knowledge has informed linguistic scholarship from the very beginnings of the field, but this expertise has often been treated as ancillary to the disciplinary expertise of the professional linguist. To be sure, a commitment to community engagement is evident in much of the research currently being carried out in language

documentation and revitalization as well as sociocultural linguistics (Hermes 2012; Leonard and Haynes 2010; Wolfram, Hazen, and Schilling-Estes 1999). Yet still more can be done to make collaboration explicitly central to scholarship.

Based on the foregoing goals, sociocultural linguists can make a crucial contribution to sociolinguistic justice for those who participate in our research as well as speakers of minoritized languages more generally simply by taking seriously their expertise as users of language and by enabling their active participation and partnership in the production of scholarly knowledge, from the formulation of research questions to collecting and analyzing data to sharing the results. SKILLS seeks to meet this final goal of sociolinguistic justice by collaborating not only with educators but more importantly with their students, who draw on their rich funds of sociolinguistic knowledge in order to investigate questions of interest to them regarding language and culture in their own communities as well as issues of language, power, and racism in their lives. In this way, over the course of the program, the young people who participate in SKILLS come to see themselves as linguistic experts, researchers, and agents of sociopolitical change in their own right.

Sociolinguistic Justice in Action: The SKILLS Program

As the above discussion suggests, the scholarly and pedagogical philosophy of the SKILLS program rejects the widespread ideology that young speakers of politically subordinated varieties are both linguistically and academically deficient. It instead recognizes all youth as linguistic experts who are already capable of making original contributions to sociocultural linguistic scholarship, regardless of whether they are English language learners or English monolinguals, whether they are bilingual or experiencing language shift, whether they are academically high-achieving or not. Hence, we strive to treat students as knowledge producers rather than knowledge consumers from the very first day of the program and to frame their tasks not as assignments or homework but as research. To this end, student researchers are guided to carry out empirical sociocultural linguistic research in their own peer groups, families, and communities as well as to recognize and challenge linguistic racism through local activism. This process supports young people's construction of powerful identities for themselves, identities in which both their academic aspirations and their linguistic and cultural background have an equal place and are mutually reinforcing rather than conflicting (Nasir and Saxe 2003).

Initiated in 2010, SKILLS has been implemented in multiple forms in a variety of settings in order to meet the varied needs of our partners: as a stand-alone college-level high school class, as part of an existing class for high-aspiring youth, as an after-school enrichment program, and as a weekend university-based college preparation program. It has been taught by a teaching team and by individual instructors, both public school teachers and graduate students. What unites these different manifestations of the program is a focus on acknowledging students as linguistic experts who have as much (and often more) to teach us as we have to teach them. For this reason, among many others, we do not characterize our program as "empowering" or "liberatory." The SKILLS website provides full curricular materials and detailed daily lesson plans for each version of the program (http://www.skills.ucsb.edu).

As described in greater detail elsewhere (Bucholtz and Lee under submission), SKILLS brings teams of Graduate Student Teaching Fellows and Undergraduate Mentors from UC Santa Barbara into educational settings in Santa Barbara County, where they forge teaching and mentoring partnerships with Master Teachers and other academic personnel. Public schools in Santa Barbara County tend to be largely bimodal in their demographics, being socially and academically divided between a generally working-class Latina/o population and a generally middle-class white population, with smaller numbers of other ethnoracial groups.

One challenge of conducting outreach in such contexts is devising a program that will effectively serve students of all linguistic, ethnoracial, and economic backgrounds. The SKILLS program achieves this goal by using a flexible, student-centered curriculum that allows students with very different life experiences (including the considerable differences between members of the same ethnoracial groups) to find common ground and learn from one another.

One way that we aim to overcome social difference and division within the classroom is by emphasizing the shared history of nearly all U.S. residents as either members or descendants of linguistically minoritized groups of one kind or another. This perspective has proven to be especially important for engaging European American youth, who often feel either resentful of or excluded by educational programs with multicultural goals (Bucholtz 2011). Our focus on a shared experience of linguistic diversity enables these students to recognize that they themselves also have a rich family tapestry of languages and dialects. In addition, we help all students to understand the nation's long history of linguistic racism (e.g., Lippi-Green 2012), which raises white students' awareness of the challenges that their peers of color face every day while validating and providing an explanatory framework for the experiences of minoritized youth. At the same time, because the program serves students of widely varied backgrounds, academic levels, and ages, it allows young people to learn a great deal from one another about linguistic and cultural practices as well as the pernicious effects of racism. This focus on common ground and communication further promotes trust and friendship in the classroom across traditional linguistic, social, and even physical boundaries (Daoud 2002), although tensions and conflicts are inevitable and even potentially beneficial as students explore difficult issues of identity, power, and inequality, often for the first time.

In its original form, the SKILLS program consists of a 20-week inquiry-based, technology-rich curriculum structured around four units, each culminating in an original research project. Although the initial focus of SKILLS was primarily on high school students, the program is currently being adapted for use with other age groups. Each unit focuses on a particular level of linguistic life, gradually moving from local to global contexts of language use: language in the peer group, language in the family, language in the local community, and language in the world. Students learn to carry out linguistic analysis not through traditional monologic lectures, textbook readings, and exams but through interactive discovery-driven mini-lectures, activities, and discussions, along with hands-on exploration of real data that they have collected and that are therefore personally meaningful to them. Students simultaneously gain academic skills by publicly sharing their findings in oral, written, and digital formats with peers, family members, scholars, and the wider community at a conference held at the UC Santa Barbara campus each spring as well as on the SKILLS website.

We offer three brief examples of the SKILLS program in action, illustrated by video clips taken from the first full implementation of the program from January through June 2011 at Carpinteria High School, a small, majority working-class Latina/o public school serving a coastal agricultural community south of Santa Barbara. In this phase of the program, SKILLS was implemented as a semester-long social science elective class entitled Language, Culture, and Society team-taught by a high school Master Teacher and a rotating team of three SKILLS Graduate Teaching Fellows and nine Undergraduate Mentors who were each present in the classroom once or twice a week. The class enrolled 15 juniors and seniors, approximately half of them Latina/o and the other half European American; the relatively low enrollment was typical for elective classes in this small school. The course helps students progress toward college in multiple ways: it is an approved prerequisite for entry into California's public universities, it provides students with college credit in linguistics or anthropology through a partnership with a local community college, and it incorporates undergraduate-led presentations, workshops, and mentoring on various aspects of college life.[2]

The video clips illustrating the program are available on the SKILLS website at: http://www.skills.ucsb.edu/team–research/Bucholtzetal2014-LLC. At Carpinteria High School, the SKILLS curriculum begins with a focus on students' language use in their peer groups. Student researchers are trained to collect digital audio data of informal interaction with their friends. After being introduced to basic linguistic tools and concepts such as lexical classes and the International Phonetic Alphabet through an examination of current slang in popular music, they draw on these resources to analyze the structure and function of the slang that they and their friends use, and they learn to distinguish between slang and other forms of colloquial language use (Adams 2009). In order for students to gain confidence in their own authority as researchers at this early stage in the program, they present an abbreviated version of their findings to their classmates.

In the first video clip, a student researcher, Marcial Martínez, presents three of the ten slang terms he collected; this presentation takes place within the first few weeks of the program.[3] Marcial, who was often positioned as a problematic student within the context of the school, emerged as one of the most knowledgeable and insightful participants in the SKILLS program. Through the slang research project, he was able to share considerable linguistic and cultural expertise of a type not usually valued by schools. This formerly disengaged student enthusiastically and successfully pursued higher education after his experience in the class.

The slang terms that students in the SKILLS program collect along with their analyses are uploaded into an online multimedia slang dictionary on the SKILLS website, which contains audio clips illustrating each term in use, details of meaning and pronunciation, and demographic information about the speaker. The dictionary is fully searchable and is thus a rich resource not only for future students in the SKILLS program but also for students, researchers, and members of the general public interested in the development and circulation of slang.

The second unit of the SKILLS curriculum at Carpinteria High School examines language in the family. Students are introduced to issues of linguistic identity, bilingualism, and language shift as well as the larger context of linguistic and racial politics in U.S. history. Students document the linguistic life story of a family elder by conducting an oral history interview focused on linguistic issues. This project is designed to highlight the linguistic expertise and experiences of parents, grandparents, and other family members, which in many cases are unfamiliar to or unappreciated by students before they carry out the research. After students present their work to their peers, they create a final multimedia project for the SKILLS website that includes their written report, the original audio interview, and optionally family photos or other supporting materials. This project thus allows students to develop their ability to move among multiple linguistic varieties, registers, and communicative genres.

In the second video clip, a student researcher, Nancy Aviles, presents her grandmother's linguistic life story to the class. Due to the abolition of bilingual education in California's public schools in 1998 via Proposition 227 (Crawford 2000), most Latina/o youth in California, including those in the SKILLS program, lack opportunities to use their Spanish language abilities in classroom settings. It was therefore a significant and courageous statement of cultural and linguistic pride that Nancy used Spanish to recreate her grandmother's voice in her presentation, then skillfully switched to English to translate for her monolingual classmates.

The third unit of the Carpinteria High School program guides students through the process of carrying out a collaborative video-based ethnography of linguistic and cultural practices in a particular site in their local community, such as a business, community organization, or recreational group. Students document the use of language and culture in their field site through fieldnotes, photographs, ethnographic interviews, and video recordings of interaction.

The third clip is taken from a video footage shot by a team of three Latina student researchers, Carmen Gutierrez, Edith Reyes, and Melinda Sanchez, who chose to investigate

the school's Future Farmers of America (FFA) organization. Carpinteria High School's FFA program is highly successful, with a working farm on the school grounds that provides produce for the cafeteria and also supports a small herd of prize-winning livestock. The organization provides valuable career training and cultural continuity with family traditions for its heavily Spanish-speaking student membership. Yet, the program is at best unfamiliar to and at worst devalued by most other students. The three researchers used their own bilingual expertise to call attention to a poorly understood local community of practice, one of the few within the school where Spanish-dominant youth took center stage in a school-sponsored activity. In the clip, Carmen interviews one of the FFA students at the school's cattle pen.

This exciting and highly original project holds great potential to raise awareness not only of the role of Spanish in agricultural education but also of the robust culture of rural California, which is often invisible even to state residents. In fact, Melinda, a junior, took the class again in 2012 in order to continue with the project and was coauthor of a presentation on her team's research at a national academic conference, together with a graduate student and an undergraduate in the SKILLS program (Sanchez, Arnold, and Alvarado 2012).

Finally, the fourth unit, which we do not have room to discuss here, broadens the focus to language in global media and politics. Students explore the role of language in both new and traditional media, culminating in a classroom mock debate of language policy in education, in which each student conducts research on the issue and then plays an assigned role such as parent, student, school board member, teacher, and – of course – sociolinguist.

The pilot phase of the SKILLS program was successful on a number of measures: all 15 students completed the program, and nearly all continued on to a two-year or four-year college, compared to approximately 27% for the school population as a whole; although self-selection is inevitable in an elective class of this kind, the students in the program ranged from those labeled "at risk" to those labeled "high-achieving," with most somewhere in between. In addition, surveys administered before and after the program indicate that students developed a greater appreciation of language variation and linguistic diversity in society as well as their own linguistic heritage as a result of their participation in SKILLS. Students' academic and personal growth is also evident in the video footage collected over the course of the program, as they became increasingly comfortable with linguistic analysis, scholarly communication, and critical discussion of complex sociopolitical issues.

Although we have focused here on the value of SKILLS for youth, all participants benefit from the program: besides the considerable personal rewards of working with the student participants, Master Teachers gain professional development opportunities, Graduate Teaching Fellows expand their teaching experience, and Undergraduate Mentors apply their education in linguistics and related disciplines to real-world issues through service learning and community engagement (Charity et al. 2008; Fitzgerald 2010). Moreover, faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates are able to build on the efforts of the student researchers: with participants' consent, data collected by students in the program – much of it valuable material that would be difficult to obtain by other means – are archived in UCSB's Center for California Languages and Cultures for further analysis. In addition, video footage of the SKILLS classroom provides a rich record of student development and social interaction in an innovative learning setting. These resources are invaluable for both teaching and research; for example, the first author has used data collected by SKILLS student researchers as the basis for team research projects in an undergraduate sociocultural linguistics class, the results of which were shared with high school student researchers and other audience members at SKILLS Day; the posters are also viewable on the SKILLS website at http://www.skills.ucsb.edu/team-research/LING131-2013. Student and classroom data are additionally being drawn on for individual and coauthored research in a variety of topics within sociocultural

linguistics (e.g., Bucholtz forthcoming). Thus, the research and teaching impact of SKILLS continues well beyond the duration of the 20-week program.

Conclusion

Projects such as SKILLS, along with the many others cited in this article, clearly demonstrate the educational importance of providing young people with access to tools that will give them – as well as scholars, teachers, parents, and the general public – insight into their linguistic lives. Students from kindergarten to high school bring to the classroom a great deal of linguistic expertise that is rarely acknowledged or put to use in academic contexts. Meanwhile, instructors of sociocultural linguistics regularly incorporate their students' own language into the learning process, but such opportunities to validate students' funds of sociolinguistic knowledge and to place these in sociopolitical context are typically not available until college. Yet, the basic insights of sociocultural linguistics – that all language is at once variable, systematic, and ever-changing, that all language use is intimately bound to social, cultural, and political processes – can easily be introduced much earlier in students' educational development. And as the SKILLS program demonstrates, young people are fully capable of making original research contributions and of instigating sociopolitical change, if they are simply given the chance to do so.

Even as societies are encountering new linguistic varieties due to immigration and the transnational flow of populations, language rights are under attack, and linguistic diversity is contracting around the world. At such a time, programs that work in partnership with linguistically subordinated students and their teachers are especially necessary. These collaborations offer a small but significant challenge to dominant language ideologies by putting the ideals of sociolinguistic justice into practice in local classrooms and communities.

Short Biographies

Mary Bucholtz is a sociocultural linguist specializing in language and identity, with a particular focus on youth, gender, and race. She is the author of *White Kids: Language, Race, and Styles of Youth Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), an ethnographic study of how European American teenagers in a "majority minority" California high school use language to position themselves racially in relation to available youth styles. She has published in *Discourse and Society, Discourse Studies, Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, Journal of Sociolinguistics, Language and Communication, Language in Society, Pragmatics*, and many other journals and edited volumes arguing for the role of language in constituting social identities and power relations. She has received grants and fellowships from the National Science Foundation, the Spencer

Foundation, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, among others. She is a professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and is an affiliated faculty member of the Departments of Education, Feminist Studies, and Spanish and Portuguese. At UCSB, she is the director of the SKILLS academic outreach and community research program as well as the Center for California Languages and Cultures. She has also taught at Texas A&M University and Stanford University. She holds a BA in Classics from Grinnell College and an MA and PhD in Linguistics from the University of California, Berkeley.

Audrey Lopez is a PhD student in the Department of Linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara, specializing in sociocultural linguistics with a dual emphasis in Applied Linguistics and Language, Interaction, and Social Organization. She earned her BA in Linguistics from the University of Maryland and her MA in Hispanic Linguistics from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her current research centers on issues of youth language, power, and education, with a focus on language in interaction among international youth working in sustainable development contexts. Most recently, she has carried out ethnographic research with teams of Ghanaian youth interpreters and U.S. undergraduate students who work together to implement development projects in rural communities. She has served as a Graduate Teaching Fellow and curriculum developer for the SKILLS program.

Allina Mojarro is a PhD student in the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara, specializing in Cultural Perspectives and Comparative Education. She holds a BA in Psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her dissertation research is an ethnographic study focusing on strategies that assist in the framing of cultural knowledge in mathematics and science for Latino/a student groups; the goal is to observe interaction and language within the learning experiences of students exposed to Mayan and Aztec cultural history. In addition to serving as a SKILLS Graduate Teaching Fellow, she has worked as an Upward Bound instructor. She is also a Student Affairs professional at UCSB, where she currently works as the Community Education Outreach Coordinator for the Associated Students tutoring program America Reads America Counts.

Elena Skapoulli is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She earned her MA and PhD in UCSB's Graduate School of Education, with emphases in Applied Linguistics and Language, Interaction, and Social Organization. Her area of specialization is language and identity, with a particular focus on youth culture and gender. She has published in *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, Pragmatics*, and the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*. She has collaborated with Mary Bucholtz on a National Science Foundation-funded research project on undergraduate scientist identities as well as serving as coordinator of the SKILLS program.

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Notes

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[1] *Sociocultural linguistic(s)* is used here as a broad cover term for the study of language, culture, and society (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2008). We use the adjective *sociolinguistic* to refer to the relationship of language to sociocultural issues rather than to a scholarly field.

[2] We have not yet sought to formally align the course or other versions of the program with California's content standards or the Common Core because of lack of school interest as well as the difficulty of fitting linguistics into governmentally designed educational frameworks. However, this is a long-term goal of the program.

[3] In order to recognize the student researchers' accomplishments, we use their real names.

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