English with an Accent

Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States

Rosina Lippi-Green



London and New York

First published 1997 by Routledge 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada by Routledge 29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

© 1997 Rosina Lippi-Green

Typeset in Times Ten by Florencetype, Stoodleigh, Devon Printed and bound in Great Britain by Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data Lippi-Green, Rosina

English with an accent: language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States/Rosina Lippi-Green.

1. English language – Social aspects – United States. 2. English language – Political aspects – United States. 3. English language – Variation – United States. 4. Speech and social status – United States. 5. Language and culture – United States. 6. Language policy – United States.

7. Discrimination - United States.

I. Title.

PE2808.8.L57 1997 306.4'4'0973-dc20

96-33234

ISBN 0-415-11476-4 (hbk) ISBN 0-415-11477-2 (pbk) In memory of my father, Arturo Lippi 1911–1985 who had an accent that I couldn't hear

The work of an intellectual is not to mould the political will of others; it is, through the analyses that he does in his own field, to re-examine evidence and assumptions, to shake up habitual ways of working and thinking, to dissipate conventional familiarities, to re-evaluate rules and institutions and ... to participate in the formation of a political will (where he has a role as a citizen to play).

Michel Foucault, "The concern for truth" (1989)

Contents

List of figures List of tables	xi xiii
Preface	xiv
Acknowledgements	xvi
Permissions	xviii
Part I Linguistics, language, and ideology	
Introduction: Language ideology: science fiction?	3
1 The linguistic facts of life	7
2 The myth of non-accent	41
3 The standard language myth	53
4 Language ideology and the language subordination model	63
Part II What we sow: institutionalized language ideology	
Introduction: Language subordination at work	77
5 Teaching children how to discriminate: what we learn from the Big Bad Wolf	79
6 The educational system: fixing the message in stone	104
7 The information industry: selling America to Americans	133
8 Language ideology in the workplace and the judicial system	152
Part III What we reap: consent manufactured	
Introduction: Our naked skins	173
9 The real trouble with Black English	176
10 Hillbillies, rednecks, and southern belles: the language rebels	202
11 The stranger within the gates	217

x Contents

Conclusions: Civil (dis)obedience and the shadow of language	240
Notes	244
Bibliography	258
Index	278

Figures

1.1	International Phonetic Symbols for the vowels of English	26
1.2	Use of new vowel [n] in three speech styles for Italian,	
	Irish, and Jewish speakers in the short-forty variable in	
	Boston	32
1.3	Use of postvocalic (r) by style for gang members in	
	Harlem	33
1.4	Use of -in for -ing in reading style for gang members in	
	Harlem	34
1.5	Spatial distribution of /a/ in hawk in Oklahoma	35
1.6	Use of [u] "oo" rather than [ju] "yoo" by social class and	
	contextual formality for speakers in St. Louis, Missouri	36
1.7	Realized multiple negation by social class and sex in	
	Detroit	37
1.8	Use of the discourse marker like for one high-school	
	female, by topic of conversation	38
1.9	Use of "invariant was" by social class, sex, and age in	
	Anniston, Alabama	39
3.1	Ratings of the states for language "correctness" by white	
	undergraduates from southern Indiana	57
4.1	Accepting or rejecting the communicative burden	71
5.1	Average hours per week children watch television	81
5.2	Movie theater attendance 1992, by age	82
5.3	Disney animated characters by language variety used	88
5.4	Disney animated characters by story setting	89
5.5	Disney animated characters by language spoken	
	in country of story setting, and number with foreign-	
	accented English	89
5.6	Disney animated characters by gender and evaluation of	
	actions and motivations	91
5.7	Disney animated characters with negative motivations and	
	actions, by major language group	91
5.8	Disney animated characters of positive, negative, or mixed	
	motivations and actions by major language group	97