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COMMENTARY ON:

**Communicating about Communication: Multidisciplinary Approaches to
Educating Educators about Language Variation**

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and

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Charity-Hudley and Mallinson present a piece that works in several ways to raise awareness about the importance of educators becoming linguistically/communicatively aware of their students' linguistic repertoires. By highlighting the consequences of the breach in communication of information between researchers and educators, they bring to the forefront issues that plague students, parents, and educators: achievement gaps, low self-esteem, and decreased involvement in school, among others. Touching on these issues that are of importance to all parties involved in the educational pursuits of children, the authors draw academic work out of the ivory tower and argue to place the information gained from so many years of sociolinguistic research in the hands of teachers. While the idea of increased communication between educators and academics is not new in the field of sociolinguistics, the rationale, approaches to delivery of information, and the pilot work described in this piece provide linguists with a number of new

(and not so new) methods to consider for “real world” dissemination of research.

The authors bring to the forefront the most pressing issue in this communication gap between researchers and educators, when they state that “educators may not appreciate the relevance and immediate necessity of the information (from researchers)” (2). The outcome of this statement is a situation where researchers need to package their research outcomes (those that are relevant) for educators. Certainly, this is an ideal enterprise, but as many researchers/college professors lack formal pedagogical training and curriculum development training, the process could be quite difficult and daunting for a researcher. Indeed, the researcher may see the packaging and dissemination as an even larger “project” than that of the actual research project that they have completed. There is no doubt that this piece will make researchers who are reluctant to engage with educators reconsider their stance, but beyond the various methods of educator/researcher partnering suggested and those that are being piloted, it seems that linguists need models of materials that have been tested in the classroom and have been found effective. Developing classes, seminars, and roundtables for linguists where actual instruments, materials and curricula are discussed, shared, modeled and developed could be a beginning. As mentioned, there have been panels that have done that (and some that are planned), but with very few successful and tested resources available for linguists to look toward while developing materials for educators and with little information about what educators really want and need (especially when regions require different materials) we are going to unfortunately see very little researcher engagement with educators.

Without a doubt, the issues raised in this article are some the greatest and most pressing issues facing schools today; however, despite the solutions presented here for linguist/educator partnerships, without community and school system “buy-in” these programs for training will not reach their full potential. One issue that should be addressed is a way to increase community awareness of the importance of these partnerships. With community demand, it would seem that school systems would begin to look for more programs and materials like those mentioned. Further, as the authors point out, many school districts in several states are participating in linguist/educator partnerships and are seeing positive results. After several years of partnerships, data collection, and increased tests scores and positive student self-evaluations proving the efficacy of such programs for teachers and students, it would seem that the LSA or other formal organization may want to approach the school systems, on a large scale (federal/state), to have these

programs endorsed by or integrated more overtly into classrooms and teacher training and preparation.