DISCOVERING *DARE*: IMPLEMENTING A *DARE* CURRICULUM ON LANGUAGE VARIATION

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Many scholars have encouraged sociolinguists to be involved in the educational system. Some have suggested and implemented teacher training in language variation (Charity Hudley and Mallinson 2011, 2013; Reaser 2016), thereby providing examples of how knowledge of dialect, variation, and change can positively alter teachers' language attitudes and contribute to culturally relevant classrooms (Ladson-Billings 1995). Others have proposed that researchers create language-based materials for cultural, historic, and language studies in the classroom (Wolfram 2008, 2012; Reaser 2006). The *Voices of North Carolina* curriculum (Reaser and Wolfram 2007a, 2007b) and the *Do You Speak American?* curriculum (Reaser, Adger, and Hoyle 2005) are two comprehensive secondary and postsecondary resources available for language awareness curricula in education; the former focuses on language varieties in North Carolina, and the latter has a larger geographic scope, accompanying the PBS documentary of the same name. Several scholars have successfully used the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (*DARE* 1985–2013) materials to teach linguistics in a university classroom, arguing that it provides an understanding of research, demographics, and language variation (Bowie 2012; Hazen 2012). This article examines a curriculum that builds upon these previous efforts: Discovering *DARE*: Linguistic Lessons from the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (henceforth, Discovering *DARE*) (Abrams and Stickle 2017).

Discovering *DARE* integrally employs the print, online, and archival material of the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (*DARE*) as a means to introduce students to language varieties within the United States, the social consequence of dialect, and the processes of language change. The multidisciplinary curriculum includes audio and written materials available online and based on the materials of the comprehensive *DARE* archive, including six volumes of the print dictionary, the online version Digital *DARE*, as well as over a thousand original recordings. This curriculum is available at the Discovering *DARE* website (http://discoveringdare.wordpress.com) at no cost so that it is accessible to as many educators as possible. While the material is appropriate for both secondary and postsecondary classrooms, this article

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focuses on the latter by first presenting an overview of the curriculum as a whole and then discussing how it is implemented within two postsecondary classrooms: a first-year composition course and an upper-level language course for preservice teachers. In providing these examples, specifically, we will show how the curriculum could be used in a variety of contexts, including the courses that seem to be less conducive to units on language variation.

DISCOVERING *DARE*. The goal of Discovering *DARE* is to provide 225 minutes of instruction time, or 45 minutes per day for five days, on language variation and change in American English based on *DARE* materials. Although a detailed overview of the organization of the curriculum is found in the following section, the general arc of the materials moves from exploring different types of dictionaries and the elements that are part of these different dictionary entries to regional and ethnic dialects, including heritage languages, to examining how language and identity interact.

This curriculum is designed so that it can be used by secondary and postsecondary teachers even if they have little to no training in linguistics and language variation. The instructor's manual includes background information and additional resources that can be used to prepare for each lesson, with minimal-to-no independent research.[1] Moreover, due to the subject of this curriculum—language—students will have experiences with and knowledge about their own language varieties and can therefore engage in discussion immediately, feeling empowered as experts in their own language. However, because students may have preconceived notions about language, much of this curriculum is designed to encourage students to question their attitudes about language diversity and dialects.

As an overview of the curriculum, students are first introduced to the differences between language and dialect, as well as the distinctions between a standard and dialect variety of a language. The curriculum is purposefully designed to be flexible in its implementation. It can be implemented as a five-day coherent unit on the introduction to language variation, the social consequence of dialect, and language change, or individual lessons can be implemented within an instructor's course based on topic. Supplemental readings are included in the appendices, which may be used as homework assignments for students to gain a deeper knowledge of the material. Alternatively, smaller sections could be adapted for in-class use. The goals of the curriculum are the following: (1) to develop an awareness of and respect for language variation within one's own dialect and that of others; (2) to listen to and analyze authentic voices with varied language patterns; and (3) to realize how language authorities are constructed. Included is a pre- and postinstruction survey (based on Reaser and Wolfram 2007a, 2007b) that

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can be used to gauge students' beginning language attitudes and to identify whether the goals of the curriculum have been met.

OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM. To better illustrate the scope of the curriculum, the following section summarizes some of the introductory material from the instructors' manual and outlines accompanying activities for each day.

Day 1: Language and Dialect
Day 2: Dictionaries
Day 3: Regional Dialect Variation
Day 4: Ethnic Dialects
Day 5: Identity

Day 1: Language and Dialect. In Day 1, students are introduced to the concept that all languages have variation, including different kinds of dialects, and that languages have a prescriptive, formal standard that is controlled by particular "authorities" (textbooks, dictionaries, grammar books, education systems). The first listed activity is the aforementioned optional preinstructional survey on language attitudes. In activity 1.B, students make grammaticality judgments about several different sentences and phrases after listening to various *DARE* speakers and considering why they may or may not judge something to be grammatical. This activity activates student knowledge and encourages them to think critically about why they have the language attitudes that they do. Next, in activity 1.C students are encouraged to realize that dialect differences can occur at various levels of language, from phonetics to syntax. Finally, in 1.D, students learn the difference between descriptivism and prescriptivism when looking at language variation.

Day 2: Dictionaries. Dictionaries are often treated as authorities of language and use, but a common misconception among students is that dictionaries are all the same. In 2.A, students deconstruct the elements of a dictionary entry from *DARE.* In 2.B, students are asked to compare different entries for the same word from different kinds of dictionaries to examine the rhetorical choices of dictionaries as well as identifying language authorities. Students quickly realize that *DARE* is different from any other dictionary they have likely encountered.

Day 3: Regional Dialects. Many judgments are made about people based on their voices, and students do this in activity 3.A where they listen to clips of different *DARE* speakers reading "Arthur the Rat." While they listen to various voices, students identify demographic characteristics of the speakers, including region, age, gender, and ethnicity (see the appendix for a sample answer sheet for 3.A). In activity 3.B, students listen to the speakers again and

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judge personality characteristics about the speakers, including whether the speakers sound correct or pleasant. The end of the activity concludes with a discussion about students' responses and why they think they responded the way that they did. These activities encourage students to reflect on the variety of judgments they make daily about people based solely on their voice.

Day 4: Ethnic Dialects. While it is hard to deny the correlation between ethnicity and language features, it is often hard to define exactly how this happens, and students are encouraged to reflect on this process in Day 4. In 4.A, students are asked to uncover some of the rules governing African American English as a means to understand how nonstandard dialects are rule-governed. In activity 4.B, students are asked to trace their own family's language history until they reach one or more relatives who were functioning with more than one language in their daily lives: a heritage and a regional language. From this search, students are then asked to create a heritage dictionary from actual interviews or outside research.

Day 5: Identity. An individual's identity is often closely tied to the language and dialect he or she speaks, and in 5.A students are asked to consider their own language identity and whether it is reflected (or allowed) in school. In activity 5.B, students write an essay in which they discuss their own language. Finally, the curriculum concludes with the optional postinstructional survey in 5.C. There is also an optional extended-length fieldwork project that encourages students to participate in linguistic fieldwork in their own communities.

IMPLEMENTING DISCOVERING *DARE*. While a curriculum on language variation is most relevant in a postsecondary linguistics course, the concise and self-contained nature of the curriculum is beneficial to other courses where only a brief introduction to language variation is desired. The following discussion illustrates the application of Discovering *DARE* in two postsecondary settings: a first-year composition course and an upper-level language course for preservice teachers. These two courses are often part of undergraduate coursework and lend themselves to a brief unit on language variation.

Using select Discovering *DARE* activities within a composition class, instructors are able to draw upon their students' intuitions and assumptions of language dialects, variation, and the social judgments associated with language use. These activities provide classroom discussions on the varieties of language within various contexts that spark independent research and composition, specifically on broader social issues such as stereotyping, prejudice, and linguistic and racial profiling. The focus on language expectations and judgments, initially within conversational speech, allows instructors to build

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students' understanding of the expectations required of them for academic language use and argumentation, including such things as "appropriate" vocabulary, grammatical and punctuation standardization, voice, and register.

Select activities from Discovering *DARE* were implemented in three sections of an introductory college composition course in a large university in the Southern United States. As a prewriting activity, composition students listened to a variety of speakers and were asked to make demographic and character assessments of each speaker (see earlier description of Day 3, Activity 3.A and 3.B). From their assessments, students were then asked to write a character sketch of one of the speakers based on their assessment of the speaker's age, sex, education level, socioeconomic status, and personality or character traits. This activity initially and intentionally activated students' own biases. However, in writing and reflecting about their judgments, they are afforded the opportunity to think critically about why they have the language attitudes that they do. They are encouraged to write in different genres, such as an award ceremony, a prosecutor's summation, or an obituary, which is an important aspect of composition courses.

The following is an example of the introduction to one character sketch followed by the student's reflection of the social implications behind the character sketch.

1. STUDENT CHARACTER SKETCH

> This lady is what Yankees would consider an Antebellum Belle. Although she is in her fifties, it would be "un-Southernly" and "un-ladylike" for her to own up to her true age. She is a typical southern lady as she has devoted her life to being a mother and caretaker of her family. She and her late husband successfully raised five sons, all of whom have followed after their father's example. Mrs. Baily has been a faithful member of her church since the time of her marriage. She has been the back-up piano player since she joined. The congregation appreciates her not only for her constant knowledge of the current gossip but also for her praised fruit pies that she brings to each revival.

The student's assessment and fictional background of this speaker resulted from listening to a 29-second audio clip. Despite the short duration of language exposure, the student's perception is, in some ways, quite accurate. The actual speaker is a 55-year-old white woman from Tifton, Georgia, a small city with a population of approximately 10,000 that lies about 200 miles southeast of Atlanta. The speaker was an elementary teacher who raised a family with her husband, a common experience for women of this generation. While the student's characterization is wrought with stereotypes, these biases are brought to a conscious level in the reflection piece (see excerpt 2).

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2. STUDENT REFLECTION
The South has always had the reputation of two extremes: Southern plantations owners with money and power, and the poor, uneducated, barefoot people. My description of Mrs. Baily represents a well-known and loved stereotype of American regional characters: the Southern Belle. She is what we all love in our southern women and is easily visualized through her peculiar grammar and long drawl.

In the reflection, the student recognizes the common stereotype described in the character assessment—associations that are described as educated, well-to-do, and devoted to family and church. The student acknowledges a general propensity for hearers to associate these social characteristics with speakers based on the syntax and phonetics of dialect. Additionally, these conscious revelations raise students' awareness of the way language and biases form and, thus, make the lessons of sociolinguistic research most salient.

This activity concludes with a class discussion of the demographics of the speakers and encourages students to further reflect on the judgments they make daily about people based solely on their speech patterns and on the importance of language choice in both speech and writing contexts. In this particular composition class, the students build on these encounters with their own language biases to then research and write about stereotypes, biases, prejudices, and the social, health, and economic disparities resulting from such views. Furthermore, it is hoped that students continue this language awareness in their daily encounters in and outside of the classroom.

In conjunction with completing several of the Discovering *DARE* activities (e.g., character assessment, grammaticality judgments) as part of the short unit on language variation, students are asked to write essays on their own experiences with linguistic stereotyping; excerpts of this work follows:

3. STUDENT LANGUAGE AWARENESS CRITICAL ESSAY (in response to Baugh 2003)
I am not of African American decent, nor do I speak in a way that could reflect as though I am. However, I have been the victim of linguistic profiling. At the time I experienced linguistic biases, I did not have the words—Linguistic Profiling, Linguistic Prejudice or Bias—in my vocabulary to describe the experience. I was not able to put a finger on exactly what I had experienced. Still, I did understand what it felt like to be viewed in a demeaning manner for nothing more than the way I spoke. And, the way I spoke was something that was a part of me that I did not choose but rather was taught. The intended purpose of this essay is to educate the readers on what linguistic profiling and prejudice are and to make readers aware of how prevalent it is in our everyday lives in an attempt to potentially alter how we view others.
4. STUDENT LANGUAGE AWARENESS CRITICAL ESSAY
Seven years ago, while attending Naval Basic Training in Great Lakes in,

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> Chicago, IL, I was faced with the harsh biases of one of my Recruit Division Commanders. While participating in our Sunday morning routine, I was sitting among a group of fellow recruits. We were discussing our upcoming graduation ceremony and reunion with family and friends. The topic of our intended career paths upon graduation was the highlight of our conversation. While sharing my future goals with my shipmates, I was approached by the individual mentioned above. The comment he made to me was this, "I pity the pilot who gets you on the other end, I can only imagine…" As he walked away laughing, the words he left me had imbedded themselves in my mind. I felt defeated, and I had yet to begin. I felt belittled and judged based on the little knowledge this individual had of me. From that point forward, how I spoke, my dialect, were all a reminder of his words. I became self-aware, paranoid (if you will), to the point that nearly every time I went on mic, I found myself fearful of how I was being received.

As the excerpts above show, these first-year college students are recognizing how social judgments are assigned to language; they are responding to their own personal language biases as well as those that have been directed at them. After having participated in many in-class activities that work to heighten awareness of the students' own assumptions about language use and having acquired an introductory linguistic vocabulary, the first-year composition students continue this unit with further reading and research on language use and linguistic prejudice, or they may collect linguistic data from their own communities. This culminates in an academic argument paper on such topics as linguistic prejudice, profiling (racial, socioeconomic, geographic, or gender), or the appropriateness of using linguistic evidence in court cases, specifically the validity of witness accounts and forensic evidence presented by linguistic experts. While our data on the use of these activities in a first-year composition course is, thus far, quite limited, we see initial evidence that students' develop an awareness of and respect for language variation in one's own dialect and that of others.

In two sections of a preservice language course required for educators, the Discovering *DARE* materials on dictionaries prove to be an appropriate introduction to how dictionaries can be used in language arts classes. The instructor used several of the dictionary activities (see aforementioned Day 2 activities) to engage student teachers with the ways in which print, online, specialty, and, in particular, *DARE* could be used in language coursework at all levels of education (K–12 and postsecondary). Initial surveys found that preservice teachers overwhelmingly did not use dictionaries in their own studies. Instead, these students report that they confirm spelling and clarify definitions through basic search engine inquiries in which they do not routinely observe where the source of the information originates.

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Additionally, they report that the use of dictionaries (paper or online) in their own experiences and in the classrooms they had observed was rare or nonexistent. So while the postsecondary students indicated that the use of dictionaries in education seems to be an archaic practice, these activities show how dictionaries could, again, be used in language arts classrooms to convey the wealth of linguistic data contained within.

As students worked through the activities comparing the information encoded in the entry, showing grammatical versatility of words and the source of the examples, they were asked whether and how they might use different dictionaries in their own classrooms. The excerpts below represent the scope of the student responses.

5. STUDENT TEACHER RESPONSE ON USING DICTIONARIES
Dictionaries can, and should, be included in the classroom in a variety of ways. One activity I can think of is having the students research their spelling words. It is important for kids to grasp the concept of where the words come from. It would also be interesting to teach dictionary use when teaching all the [grammatical] classifications of the words. Children seem to think that one word has one meaning. By assigning the students to look up words, like *ditch* for example, students would see multiple meanings and even multiple word classifications. This activity would only work with an age group that can read and also comprehend different word classifications. I think an activity similar to this one would need to be done with a fourth to sixth grade classroom. Any language background would be sufficient as long as they could read and efficiently translate to the English they were reading in the dictionary.

6. STUDENT TEACHER RESPONSE ON USING DICTIONARIES
The purpose of this dictionary lesson would be to introduce and instill the importance of dictionaries and online resources as well as the opportunities that these resources give. By ensuring that these students are familiar with these resources, you are setting them up to be successful writers, speakers, and readers.

Implementation: From observing many classes, I have noticed that dictionary exercises have become very rare even though it is critical for students to be familiar with dictionary research. In my classroom, I would implement a dictionary activity that included the use 1 or 2 paper dictionaries and 2 or 3 web dictionaries. The class would be split into groups of 4 or 5 and be given a list of words (4 or 5) to search for at each station. At each station, they must find the word, definition, 2 synonyms, 2 antonyms, and use the word in a sentence. When each station is completed, then they must answer a few questions and reflect on their experience.

Some questions that could be asked at the end of the lesson could be:

1. Discuss which resource you found most beneficial. Why was it the most helpful?

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2. Which resource(s) do you think were easiest to understand and read? Why?
3. Why do you think that certain resources give more information than others?
4. Compare and contrast the paper dictionaries and the web dictionaries. Please give at least 2 examples in each area.

The following observations, demonstrated in excerpts (5) and (6), were consistently expressed by student teachers: the activities that they participated in from the Discovering *DARE* curriculum could be modified for any student population with reading skills; their own experiences in primary and secondary school did not include using dictionaries or instruction on the many uses of dictionary sources; and they did find value in using dictionary sources in all grades. Lastly, the engagement with material from the *Dictionary of American Regional English* prompted one student to write, “Before this class I knew very little about grammar or Standard and non-Standard English use. This class has taught me topics I can use throughout my future classrooms.”

The Discovering *DARE* dictionary activities instruct students on how to identify elements of dictionary entries and how to identify different types of dictionaries and compare them. In language courses required by preservice teachers, these activities have the potential to do something even greater: they can encourage future teachers to prioritize the language in Language Arts, regenerate the role of dictionaries in classrooms as sources for language exploration and reflection, and initiate the use of dialect and variation materials at all levels of the educational system.

CONCLUSION. In this article we have presented Discovering *DARE* and a range of ways it can be used in postsecondary classrooms. The most transparent application of this curriculum is to use it in introductory linguistics classes, such as Introduction to Linguistics, Language and Society, or American Dialects, although we argue that most any language course would benefit from a brief unit on language variation and change. As demonstrated by the student writing excerpts, though, this material allows a bridge to broader social issues and voice, register, and standardization within a variety of courses, including composition. In language courses for preservice teachers, these materials renew interests in dictionaries while opening the door to how dialect and variation can be part of the elementary and secondary language arts curriculum.

Discovering *DARE* can also be a valuable resource for English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. Indeed, several early reviewers have used the curriculum in ESL classes as a brief way to introduce students to language variation. One author of this article has used aspects of this curriculum to discuss literacy, while the other is exploring the use of this material in literature courses. The *DARE* materials are a treasure of American voices and as

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such, this curriculum is one way that *DARE* may long continue to enhance our awareness of how language variety and change contribute to our sense of individual, regional, and national identities.

APPENDIX

Sample Activity from Day 3

Day 3: Activities 3.A **Arthur Demographics**

(Approximate Time: 20 minutes)

3.A

You will hear a story compiled from nine different speakers who were *DARE* Informants (INF) from around the United States. As you listen to their story of Arthur the Rat, imagine who these speakers were: are they male or female; old or young; how much education do you think they have; what race/ethnicity are they; are they from a big city, a rural area, a village; do they sound friendly or not, smart or not; and where in the U.S. do you think they lived?

After the whole story is played, you will hear the individual speakers, in their respective order, saying their parts. For activity 3.A, you must fill in the left section of the chart with check marks according to your perceptions. These features are considered the INF's demographic information.

3.A	Sex		Age			Location			Race			State
INF	M	F	Young	Middle	Old	Big city/ Urban	Sm city/ Village	Rural	White	Black	Other	
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												

NOTES

We are grateful to two anonymous reviewers and the editor who substantially helped us shape this paper, thereby creating a richer article. We are also indebted to the numerous students who graciously allowed us to share their writing and experiences with this curriculum.

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1. While readers of *American Speech* will have substantially more expertise on language variation and linguistics than a typical secondary teacher, the background information provided in the curriculum can be used as a quick reference rather than as an introduction to the material for the instructor. Instructors can take comfort knowing that they will have less to prepare if using the curriculum.

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INTERACTIVE NAME DATABASES AS AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL FACTORS AND GRAPH INTERPRETATION

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This article introduces two data visualization tools linked to large databases of American first names and illustrates how they may be used as an interactive introduction to an undergraduate class in sociolinguistics and/or dialectology. Although first names are adjacent to language in a sense, the fact that they are familiar and not at all technical makes them a good starting point. As with language, what students may not realize in advance is that names are full of patterns, especially with respect to change over time, geography, and other unconscious but powerful factors in the speech community (Lieberson 2000; Lieberson and Lynn 2003; see also Labov 2010, 194–95).

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