

synthesis of information on the EVS and reading processes, the text is not productive in suggesting further research in this area, but it is a valuable source to educators interested in the theoretical aspects of reading.

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**Anne Gere and Eugene Smith.**  
**ATTITUDES, LANGUAGE AND CHANGE.**  
**Urbana, Illinois: National Council Teachers of English, 1979.**  
**108 pp., \$4.75.**

The authors have divided this book into three sections: attitudes toward language, conflicts between attitudes, and attitudes toward language usage. They do not define these terms clearly, but they do avow their purpose is "to examine the nature of linguistic attitudes and the processes whereby they may be changed." The authors link attitudes toward language with emotional feelings toward specific languages such as "Black English." They cite research studies which have concluded that people often establish complex relationships among races, or decide character traits, on the basis of dialectal speech characteristics. The conflicts appear when the same people are confronted with the actual speech and the speakers. At that point, people may find that neither the speech nor the speakers fit into any preconceived stereotype.

Yet attitudes toward language are only part of the larger framework, for language allows people to relate to their environment. As the authors point out, whether people rely upon the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis that language shapes thought by categorizing the world, or upon the Bruner theory that language "predisposes" the mind to certain modes of thought — thus arranging subjective reality within the linguistic community — people know that world and share their meanings, all of which are formed from experiences rich in emotional content. These shared meanings take shape as myths, filled with personal and community feelings, beliefs, and values. According to Gere and Smith, it is the combination of language and myth which determine behaviour and shape attitudes within the linguistic community.

The authors cite some of the more popular language myths, such as that children who grow up in urban ghettos are verbally deprived when they enter school, or that people who speak a dialect use a version of English that is degenerate. Another popular myth supports standard English as the best vehicle for the expression of logical and abstract thought, a myth which remains in conflict with the myth that logic is not the property of language but of thought.

The authors maintain that these myths suggest a need for changes in at-

titude toward language. They point out that, while English teachers are the most aware of change, they are often the most resistant to change. The most typical teacher attitudes toward language usage vary from the denial of any standard for the use of the language, to strict adherence to rhetorical rules, to reverence for past traditions, to acceptance of any social and economic usage which enables students to "rise in the world." Since teachers have great influence upon language usage in the classrooms, they may, in fact, be the greatest transmitters of myths.

The authors suggest that teachers begin the change process by changing their own attitudes toward language and toward language usage. This can be done, according to Gere and Smith, through the formation of discussion groups to raise the sensitivity to language, as well as through the development of English usage inventories and questionnaires. Once the teachers have changed their attitudes, they should become involved in changing attitudes in the community.

The authors insist that language change does not necessarily equal language decay. Rather, language change is an indication of vitality and growth. The question of whether or not the language attitudes of teachers can indeed be changed remains unanswered.

This book is poorly organized and difficult to read. The authors interchange the terms of language and language usage to the confusion of the reader. While the authors have a message, they submerge it in verbiage. They cite too many studies with too little information concerning these studies; they cite the work of too many linguists but with little analysis. Overall, the authors appear not to have considered that the comprehensive language policy which they seek must concern itself with the linguistic processes of the people and the community which uses the language.

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