How English teachers lead students to code-switch linguistically

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Reporting:
Linguistic theory into practice
in the
African American writing classroom
Virginia
First, Imagine a day without no television to watch. It would be so boring. I would have to keep the light on the bulb would be not as tire. Since there no television, you would have to go to bed early. To keep yourself busy you can do educational things such as reading books.

Second, Imagine a day without no television to watch. I wouldn't be able to watch my shows. Such as Girlfriends the episode were Tani takes Joni's ex-boyfriend, and bring him to Joni's birthday party. Another shows was The Road Show were different college boys vs. girls, and the two hosts are Justisa, and Modhanks the girls mostly win. When they win its a sound they make such as click, click, clap, boom! Last episode is The Parkers were Kim goes off with Jerona to Los Vergas to get married without Ms. Parker permission. There was
In response…

*teachers correct* …

Adding-in “missing” letters, endings, & words
However, while “various strategies can be useful for learning Standard English equivalents…

[one that does not work is correcting vernacular features.”

*(Dialects in Schools and Communities Adger, Wolfram & Christian, 2006)*
My goldfish name is Scaley
Mama jeep out of gas

**Traditional approach**
- Assesses: grammar error
- Responds: correction

**MIS-DIAGNOSIS**
of
African American student grammar
My goldfish name is Scaley. 
Mama jeep out of gas.

NOT mistakes in Standard English.

Linguistically-informed approach CORRECTLY:

- Assesses: grammar pattern in Everyday English
- Responds: compare/contrast; code-switching
QuickTime™ and a H.264 decompressor are needed to see this picture.

NCLB test results ...

- **Before Code-switching**
  - Achievement gap (30 points)

- **After/with Code-switching**
  - Achievement gap gone
    - 100% AfAm students pass 100% of tests

- 2006 NCLB Scores
  - Math: 100% passed
  - Reading: 100% passed
  - Science: 94% passed
  - Social studies: 94% passed

19 students: 1 white child failed Science and Social studies
(3 white, 2 Hispanic, 1 Native American, 1 Asian, 12 Black)
Core tool: Code-switching chart...
...Applying comparison/contrast to grammar
Elementary students learn ...

... styles vary by setting...

I wear my shirt and jean at wallmart

I wear unifort clothse at my school labeery.
Middle school students learn ...

... styles vary by setting...
High school students learn...

...styles vary by setting...
Children contrast formal vs. informal language
Students owning ...

...language choices

Reading group scenario

- Traditional teacher misdiagnoses, interrupts/corrects/demoralizes student
  - 3rd grade student reads... “Mama walk to the store Saturdays”

- CS child successfully interprets/unpacks language choices
  - “I know you’re using informal English. But the book uses Formal English. Look at the endings and say those in school.”
Middle School, Virginia
Code-switching transforms

Student/teacher work & relationships
Before code-switching: Teacher as police, language enforcer...

With cs: "I join with my students, choosing the language to fit the setting."
Code-switching students command language choices

David and Spy Mouse

Uses Informal English to create voice, character
Code-switching students
command language choices

David’s author’s note in full Standard English

My name is David Council.
I like to play basketball and football.
I am in the 3rd grade.
I like math and writing.
I was born in Virginia and I was born in 1993.
Thank you!

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Select References


See also Wheeler’s NCTE consultant website:
http://www.ncte.org/profdev/onsite/consultants/wheeler