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Introduction: the sociolinguistic enterprise

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1.1 Sociolinguistics within linguistics

This handbook focuses on the wealth of research undertaken by sociolinguists concerned with language variation and use in society. The core of this specialisation comes from those working within linguistics, especially the field of language variation and change. Other theoreticians coming from backgrounds integral to this focal area are anthropological linguists, social psychologists, specialists in the study of discourse and power, conversation analysts, theorists of style and styling, language contact specialists, and applied sociolinguists. It was once customary for such scholars interested in language and society to defend their scholarly pursuits in the face of more hegemonic approaches in linguistics (see e.g. Labov 1963; Hymes 1972b). Chomskyans in particular sought to define the essence of language in mentalistic grammars of so abstract and broad a nature that they could capture the entire human capacity for language (see Chomsky 1965). Whilst Chomskyan linguistics remains set in its task of describing human competence of "I-language" (as internally represented in the mind), other scholars of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have gone about their business of describing concrete language use rooted in peoples' actual experiences, needs, and exchanges (E- or external language for Chomsky, "real language" for others). Chomskyan linguistics seems better aligned with the fields of robotics and artificial intelligence: the business of computer scientists, robot designers, automatic translation experts, and so forth. And gains in these fields have been impressive since the second half of the twentieth century. It is thanks to the Chomskyan revolution that we have learned an impressive amount about how humans acquire language, store it in the mind, and process it.

As Chomskyan linguistics unfolded after the 1960s, it also quietly incorporated more "messy" facts about human languages. The theory of

parameters drew on work outside the field interested in the ways that languages varied in their syntax. This work – initially cross-linguistic – opened up the way for related studies of dialects within a language. Theories of competence also accepted the idea of a pragmatic component that made the ideal speaker–hearer automaton a lot less inhuman. When the automatons wish to turn human, they will need to learn about individual and communal language identities, relations of status, gender, and age between humans, and the rules of social interaction. They will also need to learn to handle a system that is not just open-ended, but fuzzy and changing in time, and liable to merge with other quite different subsystems. Truly, linguistics is a fascinating subject in both its sociolinguistic and non-sociolinguistic (cognitive-biological) aspects. This linguistics would embrace the dialectics of *langue* and *parole* (Saussure 1959) and competence and performance (Chomsky 1965). Indeed, scholars of style and interaction already use "performance" (an enactment of a particular genre, style, or facet of identity) in a way that challenges Chomsky and reinforces Hymes' notion of communicative competence (see Coupland 2007a). Finally, just as genetics and sociology are involved in an increasing degree of rapprochement in recognizing both as crucial dimensions of human behavior, so too it is possible to imagine a socio-biology of language that reconciles different branches of linguistics. This handbook provides a practitioner's overview of the multifaceted field of sociolinguistics that is an integral part of that linguistics.

1.2 Sociolinguistic foundations

Chapters 2 to 6 survey the foundations of the discipline of sociolinguistics. John Baugh (Ch. 2) examines the linguistic bases of power and the role of language in social diversity. He draws on a range of research traditions that offer the student of sociolinguistics important pointers: approaches from ethnography of language, language ecology, power, interaction and accommodation, and variationist studies. As Baugh emphasizes, despite the focus in sociolinguistics on societies and their subgroups human beings are individuals as well. Linguistic analyses must therefore also consider dissimilarities within speech communities and languages. He further stresses the need for developing local strategies to promote the acceptance of linguistic diversities. In this context he surveys linguistic work in the field of education as well as his own research on the linguistic basis of discrimination in housing allocations in the United States.

Alessandro Duranti (Ch. 3) emphasizes the approach taken to the study of language by anthropologists interested in linguistics. Their ontological commitment (or programmatic interest in the essential nature of language) ranges over three basic properties of language: (a) as a code for representing information, (b) as a form of social organization, and (c) as a

system of differentiation. Duranti identifies an overarching commitment that perhaps distinguishes the field of anthropological linguistics from most branches of linguistics, namely, the insistence that language is a non-neutral medium. This view is best articulated in the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity (that nature is segmented by language, hence there can be no neutral non-linguistic context and the "outside world" is shaped by the lens of our specific language). Duranti takes us through a range of topics and approaches to the social in language in which this ontological commitment is central: conversation analysis, the study of genres and registers, language ideologies, narrative structure and honorifics. At the same time, the chapter affords an overview of the role of language in understanding and characterizing changes in localized social contexts in the modern world.

W. Peter Robinson and Abigail Locke (Ch. 4) provide a perspective from the social psychology of language. Given the pervasiveness of speaking, signing, reading, and writing in peoples' lives, it is surprising how little attention was paid to language by social psychologists prior to the 1960s. Social roles have a large linguistic underpinning. As the authors show, the way speakers address each other, the manner in which they regulate the behavior of others with requests, the speech acts people engage in beyond communication (e.g. pronouncing judgment or issuing a command) all contribute to a richer social psychology. Above all, communication accommodation theory examines how language affects relations between people in dynamic ways, via accent, tone, and syntax.

The next two chapters pay attention to the different modalities of language. Lowrie Hemphill (Ch. 5) provides an overview of the contrasting yet overlapping nature of speech and writing. The chapter adopts a bottom-up perspective, namely, that of a child acquiring the spoken norms of his or her community and having to match these against the more formal requirements of writing. As the author emphasizes, speech and writing are not easily relatable: each modality requires immersion in a different set of social practices and a gradual absorption of a distinct set of language values. Ethnographic research in the home and school is accordingly a continuing desideratum, an overview of which is provided within the chapter.

Robert Bayley and Ceil Lucas' chapter (6) on sign languages focuses on the other important modality. They discuss the relationship between sign languages and social structure, showing that this is parallel to the interrelationship between spoken language and social structure. Both modalities serve not only to communicate information, but to define or redefine the social situation between interlocutors. It would have been possible not to treat sign language separately in his handbook, but to cover its sociolinguistic aspects in the different thematic chapters covering regional variation, social hierarchies, language contact, etc. However, editor and authors were agreed that more was to be gained in treating

sign in a unified way, showing the different facets of its sociolinguistics and relating them to the social and applied aspects of the topic (language attitudes, language planning, etc.). Sign language study has the greatest potential in helping us understand the essence of language, and of teasing out the differences of the "channel" (speech versus sign). So too it will help us understand the influences of the channel of communication upon sociolinguistic variation. One intriguing difference is in the number of basic articulators: the authors explore – *inter alia* – the consequences of having one tongue for the spoken modality as against two hands for sign variability. But as the authors indicate, there are other pressing issues of a more applied nature facing Deaf communities, notably the demands of having to interface with *speech* communities, the moral dilemmas faced by cochlear implants, which might enhance this interface but weaken the bonds within the Deaf community, and so forth.

1.3 Interaction, style, and discourse

Cynthia Gordon's chapter (7) on conversation and interaction examines the speech modality more closely, emphasizing three related traditions of study that can be considered "sociolinguistic": conversation analysis (or CA as it has come to be better known), ethnography of communication (which is also covered in Duranti's chapter on linguistic anthropology), and interactional sociolinguistics. These approaches also overlap with discourse analysis, which has a narrower meaning in linguistics than in the humanities generally. As the author emphasizes, the approaches summarized in this chapter stress conversation as culture and/or conversation as action. In the first instance, there is a wealth of shared cultural (not just semantic) understandings behind any conversation between members of the same speech community; these are of a "taken for granted" nature but surface strongly between speakers who might share a language but do not belong to the same speech community, in so-called intercultural miscommunication. But as sociolinguists are aware, it is not just a matter of language being a non-neutral medium, but that interlocutors may also use linguistic means to exert power (consciously or unconsciously) or build solidarity. There is thus a potentially strong interface between the social psychological approach (Ch. 4) and the conversational-ethnographic-interactional approaches.

Jan Blommaert's chapter (8) on pragmatics and discourse focuses on aspects of language use that go beyond conversation: discourse, written texts, and multi-modal discourse. These approaches are as much "pragmatic" as "sociolinguistic." In the linguistic sense, pragmatics is a sub-discipline that has a functional view of language that goes beyond grammatical structure: interaction is socially, culturally, and politically constituted. The study of speech acts within philosophy integrated

the study of the shared linguistic code with context and human activities. Co-operativeness is not a stable condition for communication, and texts themselves can be decontextualized and recontextualized. There is thus – as Blommaert emphasizes – a pragmatics of using texts, practices which are socially and culturally organized and regulated. Blommaert provides a short history of the school of critical discourse analysis (CDA), with its interest in power and how it is reproduced by – *inter alia* – linguistic means. Not surprisingly, many practitioners of this field, or scholars who have been influential within it, emanate from outside linguistics – from sociology, political science, and cultural and literary studies. As Blommaert notes, this approach is being overtaken by newer multimodal approaches (MDA) which stress that patterns of textuality have been radically changed by the new technologies. The "communicative shape" of language is changing, texts are no longer merely "read," and the marriage of the visual, tactile (clicking buttons), and orthographic modes results in a new modality, requiring semiotic, not just linguistic or sociolinguistic, analysis.

Nikolas Coupland's chapter (9) on style magnifies the human element in conversational and discourse analysis. Whereas style was once characterized as relatively undimensional (something added on to basic language use), current approaches in sociolinguistics highlight its dynamism. Style is intrinsic to language use: it has no neutral manifestation. As such, the focus shifts to "styling": the active, socially meaningful deployment of linguistic resources. Style goes beyond even the close relation to an audience (whether a physically present authorized interlocutor, an eavesdropper, an absent "referee") as carefully theorized by Alan Bell (2001). In the characterization by Coupland and others, it links to the social roles open to or achievable by an individual. Style, in this view, links to a persona, to having multiple social identities and being open to hybridity, rather than conformity to set roles. Coupland aligns this view of humans with the interactionist school of sociology (see Haralambos & Holborn 2000; Mesthrie *et al.* 2009) which sees social categories as largely constructed from local experiences via language and meaning making, rather than inherited from top-down. The concept of "communities of practice," popularized in sociolinguistics by Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet, foregrounds the "mutual engagements of human agents" (1992: 462, cited by Coupland, this volume) and the relative instability of identity categories like class or gender. In this regard "multiple voicing," as stressed in the Bakhtinian view of language, is particularly important: the speech of an individual carries and projects echoes and traces of disparate identities, that is, the voices of other individuals or social groups. Ben Rampton's notion of crossing is also relevant here: the playful but also challenging use of elements from a language variety that a youngster is not traditionally associated with (e.g. Turkish-influenced German by a youngster of "traditional German"

background and parentage). But the term "traditional" here is a fraught one: from the long lens of history, flux is as common as stability. Hence the view of Le Page and Keller (1985) of language history involving alternations of periods of diffusion and subsequent focusing is an important one for the field. In their words, language involves a series of "acts of identity in which people reveal both their personal identity and their search for social roles" (p. 14). Coupland makes the point that a dialect itself may become stylized to signify certain aspects attached to a local identity. It will often do so in relation to other dialects, other styles in its social or geographic proximity. Above all, the impinging of facets of culture from outside in a globalizing, multiethnic, semiotically saturated locality make multiple styling inevitable.

1.4 Social and regional dialectology

The next section covers five major topics within the variationist school of social and regional dialectology. Gregory Guy's chapter (10) on class and status covers a central topic in sociolinguistics, since class remains at the heart of social organization in most societies. As Guy emphasizes, differences of status and power are the essence of social class distinctions. Guy contrasts Marxist approaches to class with those of functionalists. Marxists emphasize conflict and inequality in social organization, arising from unequal control of and access to the resources or means of production. The existence of class dialects (which Guy notes exist everywhere we look) hinges on divisions and conflicts between classes. The functionalist view from which much of variationist sociolinguistics stems emphasizes societal cohesion, which might be temporarily disturbed by conflict. Class is therefore conceptualized as a linear scale, depending partly upon birth as well as personal achievements via education, occupation, etc. Status (which is downplayed in Marxist structuralist analysis) is therefore seen as a significant part of social classification in fuctionalism. The work of William Labov is "operationalized" more on the functional model but is not incompatible with the idea of long-term conflict and class division. Labovian studies stress shared norms and common evaluations of accent markers within a speech community. The model, which takes social class as basic and style as a significant indicator of the linguistic prestige of individual sounds, shows a gradient that illuminates the nature of social and linguistic stratification. As Guy emphasizes, within this model of variation the nature of class differences hinges on whether the stratification is fine or sharp. In fact, most urban studies show both, suggesting that neither the consensual nor conflict view is fully applicable. Other themes explored by Guy concern (a) the nature of stratification further in relation to language change, (b) the use of one code over another in creolophone societies, (c) gender as

a cross-cutting variable, and (d) related differences according to social class that have been raised by educational sociologists.

Bill Kretzschmar (Ch. 11) gives an account of the notion of region in sociolinguistics. Drawing on modern cultural geography, he argues that a region is not an arbitrary tract with geographical delimitations, but rather a location in time and space in which people behave in relatively cohesive ways. People are less limited by geographical location today than in the past, in terms of speed of travel, resources afforded by new towns, and incomes that give people some freedom in their choice of residence. Kretzschmar notes the growth of "voluntary regions" to which people move because they can and are attracted by particular aspects of a region: a coastal location, a college town, and even a settled military community. Class and income can overcome some of the limitations of geographical accidents of birth.

Barbara Johnstone (Ch. 12) emphasizes the sociolinguistics of traditional dialect study. Like Kretzschmar, she notes how geography is increasingly becoming akin to a social variable. Social networks, popularized in sociolinguistics by the work of Lesley Milroy (1987a), are largely geographically circumscribed; though again the higher the social class, the greater the geographic mobility. In this sense Hazen (2000, cited by Johnstone, this volume) is able to distinguish between a "local" and an "expanded" geographical identity. A local identity correlates with dialect loyalty, while the latter is more open to style shifting. Johnstone's chapter discusses relatively recent work on "linguistic landscapes," in which a sense of place is reinforced by visual and orthographic signage. This line of enquiry links to the social semiotic dimension of sociolinguistics emphasized in the chapter by Blommaert. Finally, Johnstone shows how post-industrial changes can affect firstly one's sense of and degree of spatial belonging, and secondly one's sociolinguistic repertoire.

Natalie Schilling's chapter (13) provides an overview of one of the central concerns of variationist sociolinguistics and sociolinguistics generally – the relation between language, gender, and sexuality. As the author notes, this subfield has matured from the earlier nexus of *linguistic deficit – difference – dominance* to researching and characterizing gender not so much as an attribute but as an interactional achievement, via our relations to others, including – crucially – our use of language. Variationists once sought simple unitary explanations for consistent gender differences in their sociolinguistic surveys – e.g. Trudgill's (1972) much contested belief that in the absence of real power women are forced to project status via language. Schilling points to complications to this idea in Labov's research: women conform more than men to norms that are overtly prescribed, but less so when they are not prescribed (e.g. with a new variant that has not yet been accorded overt evaluation). Furthermore, scholars like Eckert and Labov note how significantly class intersects with gender: "interior classes" show the greatest difference in

gendered variation, the lower-working and upper-middle classes less so. In gender studies, above all, the variationists' emphasis on the vernacular has been complemented by examination of communities of practice, which also are forces of linguistic variation and change. Schilling also reports on studies that tease out the effects of gender by emphasizing other factors like patterns of employment, nature of interactions with outsiders, etc. These were implicit in Labov's earlier work, notably the account of variation in Martha's Vineyard. Current work on communities of practice stress multiple group memberships and the co-construction of individual and group identities. Finally, the chapter points to the significance of work from gay (or "queer") studies in aiding our understanding of identity and contestation of linguistic and other hegemonies.

Chapter 14, by Carmen Fought, forms a bridge between the preoccupations of variation studies in a monolingual setting where one language is dominant, and studies of language use in multilingual settings. Ethnicity is one more category that is being critically re-examined in cultural studies, sociology, and sociolinguistics. We are less certain about the validity of terms like race and ethnic group than scholars of a century ago: these categories are as much dependent on the nature of human interactions as on any biological proclivities. Geographical separation for long time spans which gave rise to language, cultural and racial characteristics is increasingly breached in modern cities, especially in the West. As Fought shows, speakers can sometimes be "re-raced" within a community – i.e. considered a community member on grounds of interaction and participation in events, ignoring salient physical characteristics of birth. Here matters of class are again significant, and class may transcend ethnicity in some instances. However, one cannot ignore the conflicting behavioral and linguistic pressures that individuals might feel between being say middle-class and a member of an ethnic minority. Sociolinguistic outcomes like bidialectism, style shifting, or accent neutralization come into play. Other situations might lead to crossing (Rampton 1995) or cross-overs (Mesthrie 2010). Fought explores the intersection of ethnicity and gender as well: the demands of ethnic conformity may impact upon males and females differently. In synthesizing studies of language form and function, Fought gives a strong sense of the dynamic nature of ethnicity, something lived, achieved, and open to change and realignments.

1.5 Multilingualism and language contact

The next section deals with multilingualism in its own right. It is not that multilingualism has to be singled out for its own sociolinguistics; most analysts would agree that it is monolingualism that is the special case. Many parallels can be found between monolingual and multilingual patterns of behavior: issues of class, ethnicity, gender, and local

identities are played out in parallel ways. For example, style shifting among monolinguals parallels language switching of multilinguals (see Myers-Scotton 1993a). However, just as sign language is deserving of a full treatment in its own right, some of the complexities of multilingual choices and switching are better served by close attention to the details on their own.

Chapter 15 on multilingualism by Ana Deumert ushers in a broader view of sociolinguistics as a field that includes patterns of language use that go beyond those found in a single speech community. Often called the sociology of language, the broader field takes into account patterns of multilingualism, determinants of code choice, overlaps between languages resulting from borrowing, mixing, switching, and convergence, and language use across domains, including more official and bureaucratically controlled ones. In such a frequently sociohistorical view of language and societies, the effects of colonialism and the colonial linguistic order are still with us. In addition, post-colonial migration to the West and Australasia in an era of global technologies and high-speed travel have also impacted upon the communicative economies of these territories. But as Deumert and authors of subsequent chapters show, there is a significant impact for the field of language variation and change, this time via the effects of language contact. Multilingualism and accelerated language change via mixing have implications for all individuals and societies.

Two chapters follow which cover central areas within language contact studies: pidgins and creoles, and code-switching. These chapters deal with the radical restructuring and/or the formation of new languages under conditions of multilingual contact. Both fields can be studied outside of sociolinguistics (e.g. in terms of grammatical structure), but contact linguistics is par excellence a cross-disciplinary field that shows an integration of the social and the linguistic in a unified framework (Winford 2003: 6). Silvia Kouwenberg and John Singler's chapter (16) on pidgins and creoles provides an update of this branch of language contact. As the authors indicate, the field has moved on considerably from early formulations of pidgins as structurally deficient and creoles as necessarily requiring children's acquisition and expansion of such a pidgin. This view is still held by scholars with a generative linguistic bent, drawing on the influential (but ultimately flawed, the authors argue) "bioprogramme" model of Derek Bickerton (1981). The continuing debate between substratists and universalists is an important one for sociolinguists, who have to work out how much of language is social and how much internal to the human mind. Substratists lean toward the influence of an earlier learnt language on a later one, even after the original languages cease to be spoken. But this is not a purely acquisitional or cognitive matter, since new structures that emerge in language contact are negotiated via interaction. The attitudes and status of

individuals also play a role. Universalists in linguistics follow Chomsky (e.g. 1965) in arguing that the essence of language is biologically determined and that in the long run languages show structural regularity irrespective of social variation. Bickerton (1981) argues that creoles show overwhelming structural similarities and that these are due to their special acquisitional circumstances in the elementary-pidgin to full-language cycle hypothesized for the history of slaves on plantations in former times. Bickerton's position is thus one of modified universalism, appealing to the human capacity to structure language in the absence of "full" antecedent languages, yet seeing creoles as a class apart on historical grounds. As Kouwenberg and Singler argue, close studies of creole languages are starting to dispute the notion of cross-creole similarity. In particular, the broad differences between Atlantic and Pacific creoles suggest an important role for the substrate. This is complemented by the psycholinguistic process of nativization as adults and children who are in command of a stable pidgin gradually expand it. These debates show how important the sociohistorical context of language really is, without jettisoning the idea of language having a psycholinguistic, cognitive dimension. The other major contribution of creolistics to general sociolinguistics is the notion of a creole continuum between basilect (older creole forms) and acrolect (variety close to the colonial language), with a series of subvarieties between these poles, which speakers command to different extents and deploy as stylistic resources to express community solidarity, informality (or their opposites), and so forth. Social status (including educational level in the colonial language) may be implicated in the degree of variation.

The next chapter (17) also deals with structural outcomes of language contact with due regard to the social setting, with data entirely from the African continent. Pieter Muysken points out that code-switching is a key topic within the field of multilingualism: why do people, especially in some urban communities, use more than one language during communication, and how do people manage to keep more than one language syntactically active in such cases. The degree of bilingualism (or multilingualism) is a relevant factor in code-switching. So too are sociohistorical relations between languages, or rather speakers of languages. Muysken points out that individual switches can be accounted for by theories of interaction. One such model is provided in Myers-Scotton's (1993a) work that uses notions like negotiations in interaction, the need for a balance between rights and obligations in a community, and a markedness scale for switching. The latter refers to the expected occurrence of one code over the other in particular domains, with speakers of particular languages, or with particular roles and relations between interlocutors. This work was highly successful in teasing out the social and pragmatic rationale for switching between localized languages, the more widely used and statusful Kiswahili, and English in East Africa. However, as