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978-0-521-29590-1 - Social Markers in Speech
Edited by Klaus R. Scherer and Howard Giles
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European Studies in Social Psychology

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Elle comprend essentiellement des ouvrages sur des thèmes spécifiques permettant de mettre en rapport la psychologie sociale et d'autres disciplines, avec à l'occasion des volumes consacrés à des 'recherches en cours'. *Social markers in speech* est le premier volume à paraître dans cette série. Il s'intègre dans le programme de co-édition établi en 1977 par la Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme et les Syndics de Cambridge University Press.

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Preface

The importance of speech as a marker of social identity has been convincingly illustrated by Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower girl transformed into a lady of high standing in part by changing some of the social markers in her speech. While Shaw's Professor Higgins in *Pygmalion* slightly exaggerated the propelling power of social class markers for status climbing even in Victorian England, there is little doubt that for most speakers in most cultures and language groups of the world, speech cues provide information about geographical origin, age, sex, occupational roles, group membership, social status, personal dispositions and the nature of the speech situation. The present volume attempts to survey systematically the current state of knowledge concerning the ways in which various biological, psychological and social characteristics of individuals are reflected or 'marked' in speech and the influence of situational and cultural contexts on the occurrence and interpretation of such speech markers. While many disciplines in the social and behavioural sciences have shown a lively interest in the information speech transmits about the speaker over and above the linguistically encoded meaning of his utterances, there has been a remarkable lack of interdisciplinary cooperation in this area of research. Owing to the resulting fragmentation of research efforts and the fact that relevant publications appear in a wide variety of journals and periodicals, there appears to be a great terminological confusion, a lack of comparability of theoretical and operational concepts, and an absence of an accumulation of the research findings. Although these perennial ills cannot be cured simply by providing exposure to relevant approaches in neighbouring disciplines, it is hoped that a selective survey of research in anthropological linguistics, sociolinguistics, and the social psychology of language, will be a first step towards more integrated and cumulative interdisciplinary work in this area. The present volume attempts to provide just that.

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The editors are cognizant of the fact that the introduction of the term 'marker' in a very general sense may add to the terminological confusion criticized above. However, the use of alternative terms such as sign, index, symptom, indicator, clue, seemed equally if not more problematical given their history and connotation in different disciplines. Since the term 'marker' has not been extensively used in the social and behavioural sciences (except in linguistics), it was hoped that it could provide a fairly neutral designation of the phenomenon to be studied, which would be acceptable to all disciplines concerned.

Thus, in the chapters to follow, the term 'marker' should be taken in a fairly general sense to mean speech cues that potentially provide the receiver with information concerning the sender's biological, psychological and social characteristics. The term 'social markers' as a superordinate concept was chosen for the title of this work not only to avoid cumbersome enumeration in the title but also to highlight the fact that the markers with which we are concerned play an important role in *social interaction*.

The collection of review chapters in this volume, which in itself is an international and interdisciplinary effort, grew out of a colloquium which the editors organized under the auspices of the Laboratoire Européen de la Psychologie Sociale at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris from 6–8 October 1977. All of the participants in the colloquium were interested in and had done work on the social functions of speech markers in terms of interpersonal and intergroup dynamics. In addition to the contributors to this volume, the following social psychologists were active participants in the colloquium: Jean-Léon Beauvois, Guy Fielding, Rodolphe Ghiglione and Jo Kleiven. The editors and contributors to this volume are most grateful for the important contributions of Peter Schönbach, Thomas Luckmann and Serge Moscovici who served as discussants to the colloquium. Special thanks are due to Clemens Heller and Adriana Touraine for their invaluable support in the organization of the colloquium which was supported by grants from the Thyssen Foundation, W. Germany, the DGRST, France, the Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, France and the Social Science Research Council, Great Britain.

While most of the following chapters were originally written for this colloquium, the present volume should not be considered as a publication of the conference proceedings. First, the original papers went through a series of revisions incorporating comments and suggestions from a large number of critical readers. In their final form, chapters were written specifically as contributions to a reference work on social markers in

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speech. Second, the chapters by Laver & Trudgill (ch. 1) and Brown & Levinson (ch. 8) were commissioned to round off and complement the coverage of the volume.

In spite of exercising considerable editorial influence, the editors have abstained from imposing requirements for absolute uniformity of terminology, approach and style on the authors. Such an attempt would not only have been difficult, given the interdisciplinary nature of the enterprise, but possibly damaging considering that this is a first attempt to explore the nature and the functioning of social markers in speech. The purpose of this volume is to present facts and ideas rather than a tight terminological and conceptual framework. Consequently, the reader will have to be prepared for some conceptual looseness as well as for some degree of dissension concerning the use of the term 'marker'. Furthermore, each of the authors approaches the speaker characteristic with which he or she is concerned from a somewhat different angle reflecting his discipline or the specific problem of the scientific assessment of the characteristics dealt with. This diversity of the approaches taken has an important positive side-effect; it ensures that the reader does not have to cope with a tiring enumeration of speech markers. In the final chapter by Giles, Scherer & Taylor (ch. 9), there is an attempt to integrate wherever possible some of these perspectives. What is presented is not a 'marker theory', given the present state of the art, but rather a heuristic to provide a vocabulary and foundation for the development of interdisciplinary research on speech markers.

The volume should be useful to various classes of readers. Scholars and researchers in anthropology, linguistics, ethology, sociology, psychology and social psychology may find it helpful as an orientation and reference tool for work in the general areas of language and communication. Independently of their specific research interests, many behavioural and social scientists may be interested in the remarkable wealth of information about speakers which is conveyed by various aspects of their speech patterns, and the way in which such information is used in everyday social interaction. Finally, the volume should be useful in graduate and undergraduate courses concerned with the pragmatic aspects of human language.

K. R. SCHERER
H. GILES

Giessen/Bristol, August 1978