

Part I

History of Sociolinguistics

Introduction

Sociolinguistics as an academic field of study, as a discipline if you like, only developed within the last fifty years, in the latter part of the last century. Certainly, an interest in the social aspects of language, in the intersection of language and society, has been with us probably as long as mankind has had language, but its organized formal study can be dated to quite recently; 1964 is a good year to remember as you can find out when you read Roger Shuy's chapter. The word *sociolinguistics* was apparently coined already in 1939 in the title of an article by Thomas C. Hodson, "Sociolinguistics in India" in *Man in India*; it was first used in linguistics by Eugene Nida in the second edition of his *Morphology* (1949: 152), but one often sees the term attributed to Haver Currie (1952), who himself claimed to have invented it.

When sociolinguistics became popularized as a field of study in the late 1960s, there were two labels – sociolinguistics and sociology of language – for the same phenomenon, the study of the intersection and interaction of language and society, and these two terms were used interchangeably. Eventually a difference came to be made, and as an oversimplification one might say that while sociolinguistics is mainly concerned with an increased and wider description of language (and undertaken primarily by linguists and anthropologists), sociology of language is concerned with explanation and prediction of language phenomena in society at the group level (and done mainly by social scientists as well as by a few linguists). But in the beginning, no difference was intended, as no difference is intended in the essays by Shuy and Calvet.

Sociolinguistics turned out to be a very lively and popular field of study, and today many of its subfields can claim to be fields in their own right, with academic courses, textbooks, journals, and conferences; they include pragmatics, language and gender studies, pidgin and creole studies, language planning and policy studies, and education of linguistic minorities studies. The two articles here by Roger Shuy and Louis-Jean Calvet do not attempt an analysis of the history of thought of sociolinguistics; rather they describe and document the genesis, the origin, of sociolinguistics. There is to date no history of the entire field of sociolinguistics; it has after all only been around for about fifty years.

Tucker (1997) summarizes five cross-cutting themes that he found salient, based on 23 autobiographical sketches by the major founding members of sociolinguistics. First, these recollections describe an interdisciplinary field whose beginning can be pinpointed with reasonable accuracy (the major fields contributing to sociolinguistics were lin-

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guistics, anthropology, sociology, and social psychology, with an occasional political scientist). Second, the field appears to have emerged partially in response to a number of well-articulated and compelling social issues. Many of the autobiographies comment that the coalition of members from various disciplines was the natural outcome of the movement for social justice (cf. the US Civil Rights Act of 1964, later a precedent for the Bilingual Education Act of 1968) and for educational reform; an interest in confronting racial segregation, poverty, and the intractability of social structures. There was also a growing awareness that many recently independent ex-colonial governments were making policy decisions involving language, often without an adequate research or knowledge base. This post-colonial sensibility also informs Calvet's essay. As a partial consequence, many of the early US activities were problem- rather than theory-driven. In contrast, Calvet discusses how many of the early European sociolinguists were influenced by classical Marxist theory, still common today in the Latin American literature, while critical theory, a variation of Marxism, with its focus on the twinned concepts of power and conflict has become common today in all the anglophone literature.

Third, Tucker continues, all the evidence points to a small number of key individuals whose work in leadership, publications, and conferences, was essential to nurturing the young field. Fourth, not surprisingly, he finds a difference in worldview, models, questions, and problems between participants from the center and those from the periphery. Fifth and finally, theoretically uninteresting perhaps but still very important: "The early initiatives prospered at least in part because of continuing 'patronage' from a small number of organizations and associations, and because of the availability of ample funding from private as well as public sources for initiatives such as conferences, surveys, the establishment of graduate programs, and publications" (Tucker, 1997: 318).

This part on the genesis of sociolinguistics is meant to set the stage for the readings which follow. Most parts have an early "classic" essay from the time of the early development of the field followed by more recent work which builds on, develops or criticizes the early work. It may be, though, that students new to sociolinguistics will find a better understanding if they read this part last.

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A Brief History of American Sociolinguistics 1949–1989

Roger W. Shuy

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1 Linguistic Ancestry

It is appropriate for modern-day linguists to regularly reexamine the works of leaders of our field upon whose shoulders we continue to stand (despite our apparent need to claim originality for our own recent breakthroughs and revolutions). Koerner (1988) traces much of our current sociolinguistic thought through Saussure by way of William Dwight Whitney (1827–1894), citing the following crucial passage:

Speech is not a personal possession but a social: it belongs, not to the individual, but to the member of society. No item of existing language is the work of an individual; for what we may severally choose to say is not language until it be accepted and employed by our fellows. The whole development of speech, though initiated by the acts of individuals, is wrought out by the community. (Whitney 1867:404)

Koerner goes on to show that there is an intellectual passing along of this concept from Whitney to Saussure to Meillet to Martinet to Weinreich to Labov. There is much to be said for the validity of Koerner's suggestion. On the other hand, it must also be noted that there is seldom a simple strand of development of a truth or a concept. The great psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung, spoke of the development of a collective unconscious, an almost simultaneous awareness of something in many disparate settings at the same period of time. A perusal of the works of the giants of linguistics in the past century reveals a similar awareness. Bloomfield, for example, devoted an entire chapter to *Speech Communities* (Bloomfield 1933:42–56). Much of the more modern work in social dialect, gender differences and age-grading, for example, can be linked to Bloomfield's earlier observations. There are those, including Paul Kiparsky, who claim that Labov's variable rule actually can be traced back to Pāṇini (Kiparsky 1979). But, as Koerner points out, most texts and collections on sociolinguistics skip over historical antecedents, noting only such generalities as "sociolinguistics has been established as a distinct discipline for some years" (Pride & Holmes 1972:7).

Labov, as one might expect, does *not* overlook the thinking of those who preceded modern times, devoting several pages to the topic, "Some Earlier Studies of Language

in Its Social Context” (Labov 1966). He cites the lecture notes of Antoine Meillet in 1905 in which Meillet expressed unwillingness to accept the historical laws discovered in the 19th century and observed that there must be variables as yet undiscovered, continual, even rapid, variation:

... but from the fact that language is a social institution, it follows that linguistics is a social science, and the only variable to which we can turn to account for linguistic change is social change, of which linguistic variations are only consequences. We must determine which social structure corresponds to a given linguistic structure and how, in a general manner, changes in social structure are translated into changes in linguistic structure. (Labov, p.15)

Meillet’s words seem strangely modern, yet neither he nor his colleagues and students seem to have followed up on the idea that social and linguistic phenomena were interrelated. The reason for this is obvious when we examine the theoretical development of the period in which he worked. In the 19th century, language change, etymology and language origins dominated the thinking of linguists. By the 20th century the major interest became the structure of language. The idea of cultural relativity emerged strongly in the work of anthropologists, turning away from what Edward Sapir referred to as “the evolutionary prejudice” of previous concerns about language (Sapir 1921). This relativism in the view of language and culture was accompanied in linguistics proper by a turn toward structuralism, led by Saussure and others. As Labov points out, little was accomplished until the field had developed a more explicit theory of phonological structure, the development of tape recorders, spectrograms, sampling procedures and, even more recently, computers, that were equipped to process large quantities of data (Labov 1966). However right Meillet was in his assessment, the technological and social contexts were simply not yet appropriate for the development of his ideas.

Meanwhile, as structuralism developed with Bloomfield, Sapir, Bloch, Hockett, Pike and others, the focus of linguistics turned inward to the basic outline of languages in general rather than upon variation within those languages. There was nothing essentially wrong with such a direction, for linguistics probably needed to develop in this manner.

2 Anthropological Ancestry

There are some who say that sociolinguistics is actually a modern version of what used to be called anthropological linguistics. There is something to be said in favor of such a position since, in a broad sense at least, sociolinguists extend the description and analysis of language to include aspects of the culture in which it is used. In that sense, sociolinguistics constitutes something of a return to anthropology, in which many believe it had its origins. The classic four-pronged definition of anthropology – cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, archeology and linguistics – however, focuses on the larger analysis of human behavior, its patterns and principles while modern sociolinguistics examines in depth more minute aspects of language in social context.

An early indication of the future development of sociolinguistics can be seen in *Horizons of Anthropology* edited by Sol Tax in 1964, in which Hymes noted that the salient trait of linguistics in the first half of the 20th century, from the viewpoint of anthropology, “has been its quest for autonomy”. He predicted, however, that in the second half of this century “the salient trait will be the quest for integration, and the noted accomplishments will concern the engaging of linguistic structures in social contexts – in short, in the analysis of function” (Hymes 1964b:92).

American anthropology has always recognized language as a branch of its domain, probably because of the importance it has placed on American Indian studies. In the 19th century, the association of linguistics and anthropology was called by many names, such as ‘ethnological philology’ and ‘linguistic ethnology’. In the 20th century this intersection of interests became known as ‘ethnolinguistics’, ‘metalinguistics’ and ‘anthropological linguistics’. In the sixties, Hymes proposed the term ‘linguistic anthropology’, defining it broadly as the study of language in an anthropological context. Hymes noted that fields like anthropology and linguistics overlap in practice, but do not coincide. Anthropology uses linguistics to shed light on its proper task, coordinating knowledge about language from the viewpoint of humanity. The proper task of linguistics, on the other hand, is to coordinate knowledge about language from the viewpoint of culture.

Courses called “Language and Culture” had been offered, for example, as early as 1955 at Harvard (by Hymes in the Department of Social Relations), at the University of California at Berkeley and at the University of Pennsylvania. Hymes reports that such courses became increasingly sociolinguistic over time but that they depended increasingly upon prerequisite courses in descriptive linguistics. This was important, as Hymes notes, because:

One wanted an introduction to linguistic description that recognized the need to specify social position and context for the data; and that recognized in phonetics the manifestation of a plurality of functions (identificational, expressive, directive, metalinguistic), as well as the processes of change. In fact to consider descriptive linguistics from a social point of view is to reconsider it, and to begin to envisage a somewhat distinctive content and mode of presentation. (Hymes 1966)

In this same report, Hymes goes on to point out that the more traditional minimal training of social scientists in only descriptive linguistics, though essential, was not sufficient for the kinds of research they were increasingly attempting to carry out. Social scientists need to know how to control linguistic forms, to be sure, but also how to control social valuations of language varieties, of their use with regard to persons, channels, topics and settings. In effect, the social scientist needs to apply the results of a sociolinguistic description.

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3 Sociological Ancestry

The anthropological origins of sociolinguistics were not the only progenitor. As early as April of 1966, sociologists had organized a session on sociolinguistics as part of the

Ohio Valley Sociological Society's annual meeting. Hymes reports that one of the most prominent questions asked at that meeting was "Where can a sociologist go to study sociolinguistics?" (1966). To address this question more deeply, a follow-up meeting was held in Los Angeles three months later. To emphasize the fact that disciplinary developments do not require the trappings of an academic society annual meeting, this meeting was held in the home of William Bright. A number of scholars who would become the leaders in this emerging field happened to be in Los Angeles that summer and were invited, including Charles A. Ferguson, Joshua A. Fishman, Harold Garfinkel, Erving Goffman, John Gumperz, Dell Hymes, William Labov, Harvey Sacks, Edgar Polomé, Leonard Savitz and Emanuel Schegloff. The sociologists present shared their experiences in teaching sociolinguistics at their universities. Savitz stressed the need for training in linguistics for sociologists. Fishman supported this notion and added that sociologists were interested in linguistic variables but not necessarily in linguistics while linguists seemed interested in broad contextualization but not necessarily in sociology. It might be noted that this distinction of concerns appears to be current to this day (Hymes 1966).

In sociology, comparative studies programs began to develop in the early sixties, and many sociology students were sent to foreign countries. They were made aware of the need for language competence but not the need for linguistics. That is, these students wanted to learn the language of the people they were studying but they apparently did not see language as a source of sociological data.

Most of the early courses in sociolinguistics taught by sociologists were called 'Sociology of Language'. Joshua Fishman first taught a course by that name in 1960, at the University of Pennsylvania. Subsequently he continued to teach that course at Yeshiva, primarily to psychology majors. Fishman's approach reflected his own special interests in this area: language maintenance, language displacement and the social context of language planning.

In 1965 Joyce O. Hertzler's book, *The Sociology of Language*, was published. A sociologist himself, Hertzler noted:

Among the social scientists, the chief contributors to language study have been anthropologists and psychologists. The anthropologists have been concerned with language as a cardinal aspect of culture, language origins and development, the analysis of primitive languages and the reciprocal relationships of these languages with primitive mental and social life. [. . .] The general, social educational and abnormal psychologists have been concerned with the stages of speech development in human beings, especially the speech development of children, the relationships of speech and abnormal psychological states, the strategic significance of language in personality development and in the socialization of the individual, and its relationship to the processes of thought. (Hertzler 1965:4-5)

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Other sociologists interested in language were also pursuing their own special research concerns in the sixties. Although there was no course called the sociology of language at UCLA at that time, Harold Garfinkel reported that this subject entered into all of his teaching. In the same department, Harvey Sacks was teaching the analysis of conversation to sociology and anthropology majors. It appears that individual

sociologists pursued their own language topics in sociology departments but without labels that might identify them as linguistic. Erving Goffman's research interest, for example, in the sixties, was in lying in public and on small social behaviors in public order. He saw linguistics as essential to the description of the structure and organization of small pieces of behavior. Most linguistically oriented sociologists, however, were at odds with the larger departmental requirements. If a sociology major were to invest the time and effort to become well enough grounded in linguistics to replicate the work of a Goffman, a Garfinkel or a Sacks, they ran the serious risk of sacrificing other aspects of sociological knowledge required by that field. Naturally, the same thing could be said of anthropologists and, conversely, of linguists.

4 The Cross-Disciplinary Dilemma

In order for the field of sociolinguistics to fully benefit from the combined disciplines upon which it was based, something had to give in the traditional academic structure. The ethnographic insights of anthropologists, the social theory and methods of sociology and the basic information of linguistics had to be merged more comfortably. To this point, they obviously were not. Anthropology students were getting a taste of linguistics, but not enough to do the type of work visualized by Hymes. Sociology departments were even less willing to stretch their traditional curricula to accommodate enough linguistics to further the seminal work of Sacks, Garfinkel, Fishman, and Goffman.

At the same time, there seems to have been considerably less concern on the part of linguists concerning the need for their students to be trained in anthropology and sociology. By 1966 Ferguson had taught a course called Sociolinguistics at two LSA Institutes and at Georgetown University. His students had a background in linguistics but not in sociology. Likewise Edgar Polomé reports that by then he had taught a course called sociolinguistics at the University of Texas, but almost exclusively to linguists. Labov argued that the sheer amount of linguistic training needed to bring about a change in the character of basic linguistic research and theory was so great that he preferred to train only those committed to linguistics. This thought was supported by Gumperz who also argued for a serious commitment to sociolinguistic analysis, not just an interest in it. Thus the mid sixties revealed great ferment and coming together of social scientists to try to determine how to cooperate across traditional disciplinary lines. There was both agreement and disagreement.

The agreement centered on the growing need for a kind of cross-cultural research that cut across disciplinary territories. Some saw the world as becoming reintegrated as one society, growing smaller in a sense, while at the same time there was a reestablishment of the plurality of societies and languages within societies. Both trends required a shift in focus and theory by sociologists, anthropologists and linguists.

In American society, it was the time of increased problems with racial segregation, poverty education and social structures. The problems were clear enough and these three disciplines had some of the tools needed to address them, but not apart from each other. But these fields faced the traditional problems that academics always face. Social scientists did not want to give up anything to get linguistics. Nor did linguists want to

give up anything to get social science. Each wanted to keep its own field, goals and theory-building foremost while enjoying the most minimal fruits of the other.

We have already noted some of the origins of sociolinguistic thought in the giants of linguistics who preceded us, Saussure, Meillet and Bloomfield in particular. In England, the Firthian heritage of linguistics created a strong tradition for a sociolinguistic perspective, most recently in the work of Michael Halliday. In fact in 1966, Basil Bernstein wrote a memorandum called "Culture and Linguistics" which encouraged the development of the field of sociolinguistics in England. One of the recommendations of Hymes to the Social Science Research Council (1966) was to develop a handful of training centers or 'laboratories' for training in aspects of sociolinguistics, including London, New York, and Washington, D.C. One can assume that Hymes recommended London largely because the theoretical tradition of linguistics was oriented to a more functional rather than formal approach.

American linguistics in the mid sixties had clearly taken a more formalist bent. The period of structuralist, descriptive grammars, in particular, was now waning. Since much of what the modern sociolinguists such as Hymes, Gumperz, Labov and Ferguson had envisaged depended first on rich description, the advent of a modern sociolinguistics seemed out of time with the rapidly developing dominant linguistic theory. A major thread of continuity for a sociolinguistic tradition was found, however, in regional dialectology, in which language variability had been celebrated for many years.

5 Linguistic Geography

Linguistic geography, at least in Western countries, is said to have its origins in late 19th century Germany, when Georg Wenker mailed out forty sentences to thousands of village schoolmasters. These sentences contained words which were known to vary locally in pronunciation. With whatever semi-phonetic skills they could muster, these schoolmasters dutifully responded, creating a data base which still exists in Marburg and is now being computerized. The point here, however, is that the focus of Wenker's effort was on the rich *variation* that characterizes the German language.

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In 1896, a French Atlas was devised and directed by Jules Gilliéron, who determined that it would be possible to achieve more consistent and accurate representations of the actual speech of informants if a single field worker with good phonetics skills would interview subjects and transcribe their speech phonetically. So he sent Edmond Edmont out on his bicycle to various French communities. In a period of four years, Edmont completed the 200-item questionnaire with 700 informants and the *Atlas Linguistique de la France* was published between 1902 and 1910.

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The American atlas project, under the initial direction of Hans Kurath, began in 1931. The original idea was to produce a dialect dictionary. Concerned scholars, including George Kittredge and James Russell Lowell, gathered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1889 and formed the American Dialect Society. After thirty years, although the society had not come close to publishing a dialect dictionary, it had collected over 26,000 interesting dialect words and phrases in its publication, *Dialect Notes*.¹ By 1929 the

interests of many American dialectologists had turned away from a dialect dictionary to that of a linguistic atlas. With the assistance of the American Council of Learned Societies, a plan for such an atlas was published and Kurath was appointed its director. The plan was to produce a set of ‘work sheets’ containing over seven hundred items arranged roughly according to topics. This unique approach formulated the informants’ answers but did not specify the questions, leaving that to the ingenuity of the fieldworker.

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Linguistic Atlas research in the United States continues on a somewhat regular but slow pace today, aided by computerization of data and by the hard work of a few talented scholars. Many scholars question the value of the methods by which the data were elicited, the accuracy of pre-tape-recorded phonetic transcriptions, the biases of sampling, the focus only on lexicon and pronunciation, the omission of analytical procedures such as discourse analysis and pragmatic meaning, that developed after the atlas procedure was unchangeably determined.

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In linguistic geography, there were many early features of modern sociolinguistics. The American Atlas traditionally attempted to get informants of three general social classes in more urban communities, but it was Raven I. McDavid who made the clearest connection between social factors and pronunciation variables. In his classic article, “Postvocalic /-r/ in South Carolina: A Social Analysis” (1948), he noted that in communities where postvocalic /r/ occurs with constriction, three variables decrease it: the more urban, younger, better educated speakers use less constriction. Such sensitivity to social influences of variation were not common, however, until the sixties, when language variation studies in America entered a kind of renaissance.

5.1 Developments

As new interest in minorities developed, the country, under President Kennedy’s leadership, began viewing its citizens in a new way. Those who are products of later societies might not realize the tremendous impact such ideas had on linguistics at that time. As it often happens, a specific set of events framed the staging ground for a number of changes within our field, some related but others more serendipitous. One of these events was the annual Linguistic Institute at Indiana University in 1964. The major proponents of structuralism and generative grammar were matched against each other in a series of week-long lectures, first by Chomsky, then by Pike. It was an unusually well-attended institute that summer and, along with the Linguistic Society of America summer meeting, it provided one of the most exciting programs in the history of the field. One reason that the Institute was so well attended has already been mentioned – the arm-to-arm combat for theoretical leadership in the field. But there were other reasons as well.

In May of 1964, a month or so before the LSA Institute, the UCLA Center for Research in Language and Linguistics sponsored a conference on ‘Sociolinguistics’ at Lake Arrowhead, California. The edited papers of this conference appeared under the title, *Sociolinguistics* (Bright 1966). To give an idea of the recency of the term ‘sociolinguistics’, it should be noted that the 1961 Third Edition of Webster’s New

International Dictionary does not list this word at all, although the term had appeared as early as 1952 in an article by Haver C. Currie in the *Southern Speech Journal*. At the time of the Lake Arrowhead conference, a number of scholars had been investigating the relationship between language and society, including Henry M. Hoenigswald, John Gumperz, Einar Haugen, Raven I. McDavid, Jr., Dell Hymes, John Fischer, William Samarin, Paul Friedrich, and Charles Ferguson. One bright new star on the horizon, a student of Uriel Weinreich at Columbia, named William Labov, was also invited to Lake Arrowhead to describe his dissertation research on New York City speech. This cadre of participants represented a number of quite different research traditions – linguistic geography, language contact, historical changes, ethnography, and language planning. Out of this conference-induced blending of traditions it was only natural to find terms into which each research tradition might fit. ‘Language and Society’ and ‘Sociolinguistics’ were the most logical choices and it was determined that two courses by these names should be offered at the 1964 LSA Institute.

John Gumperz had been carrying out earlier research in India and Norway on the differences in language used among people of various castes and social status. Those who had heard him talk about this in the past prevailed upon him to offer a summer institute course dealing with the broad issues involved in such variability. Gumperz had been trained in the linguistic geography tradition at Michigan but had found, in his recent work, new territories to study besides geographical variety. He taught the course called “Language and Society”.

Charles Ferguson’s research began with Bengali and Arabic studies, which led him to focus on different uses and/or varieties of those languages. By the fifties he had written about Arabic politeness and baby talk, for example. In the early sixties he, along with Gumperz, edited an issue of *IJAL* called “Linguistic Diversity in South Asia”. He also wrote about diglossia as a language teaching problem. At the 1964 Institute he conducted a seminar in sociolinguistics. It is often the coming together of a nucleus of scholars with the same growing concerns that frees it and lets new ideas bloom. It is not my purpose to pinpoint the creation of modern sociolinguistics at the Lake Arrowhead conference or LSA Institute alone, but rather the combination of both in a continuous period from mid-May to mid-August of 1964. Just as linguistic geographers had broken from the view of language study which treated languages as homogenous and unified, so sociolinguists broke from structural linguists in their treatment of languages “as completely uniform, homogeneous or monolithic in their structure” (Bright 1966:11).

In addition to Gumperz’ and Ferguson’s courses in sociolinguistics, the 1964 LSA summer institute provided still another impetus for the development of language variation study. Alva L. Davis, a linguistic geographer then at Illinois Institute of Technology, along with Robert F. Hogan, of the National Council of Teachers of English, secured funding for a conference on Social Dialects and Language Learning, to be held in conjunction with this same LSA Summer Institute at Bloomington. Twenty-five participants, including linguists, educators, sociologists and psychologists, were invited. Gumperz, Labov, McDavid, and Ferguson represented continuity from the Lake Arrowhead group. All other linguists were from dialectology, language contact or multilingualism specialties. The publications of the papers at this meeting (Shuy 1965) focused on the equality of dialects, on the need for research on urban language,

on the adequacy of past approaches to dialectology research, on the pedagogical usefulness of deeper information about language variation, and on whether non-standard varieties should be eliminated or added to by standard English.

Today, these topics seem rather common. But in the Summer of 1964 they were startlingly new issues. Several of the educators present argued, traditionally, for holding the line against substandard English. The conference came to grips with terminological issues such as ‘substandard’ vs. ‘nonstandard’ and ‘culturally deprived’ vs. ‘culturally different’. Haugen called into question the approach suggested by many: that we use English as a Second Language methodology to teach English as a second dialect. He pointed out that language learning and dialect learning are not the same things, despite what seemed to be similarities.

With the Lake Arrowhead meeting, with the LSA Institute, with Gumperz’ and Ferguson’s courses in sociolinguistics and with the conference on Social Dialects, the Summer of 1964 was very important for the establishment of the field of sociolinguistics. What happened afterward proves this. Many of the participants in these meetings began teaching courses called sociolinguistics at their home universities.

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Concurrent with the growth of the sort of work carried out by Labov in New York and others in Detroit and Washington DC in the sixties was the development of more ethnographic research on language variation. Hymes, Gumperz and their colleagues and students focused on language as a social fact and studied the interaction between communication and culture. Perhaps out of dissatisfaction with the generativists’ limitation of ‘competence’ to grammatical knowledge, Hymes extended the notion to ‘communicative competence’, the most general term for the speaking and hearing capabilities of a person (Hymes 1964a). Although Newmeyer asserts that Hymes intended ‘communicative competence’ to exclude grammatical competence (Newmeyer 1983), this was not Hymes’ intention at all. Hymes did not reject grammatical competence, rather, he believed it to be a part of a larger competence that was worthy of study.

By the late 1960s, then, several strands of research approaches were fermenting and coming together. The regional dialectology strand had been around for almost a century, the language contact strand, evidenced by the work of Ferguson, Haugen, Weinreich, Fishman, and others, had strongly made its presence known, and the ethnography of communication strand had made a powerful impact in a relatively short time. All strands were concerned with language in its social context and all were composed of scholars who considered themselves to be doing linguistics. The term ‘sociolinguistics’, began to crop up in university course catalogues, in journal articles and in book titles. With this approaching harmony, however, were discordant tones brought about by the fact that the practitioners of this work were found in separate academic disciplines, at least as university structure defined them.

6 Changes from the Ancestral Heritage

It should be clear that modern linguistics was in severe labor pains in the mid-sixties, ready and apparently eager to deliver its offspring, sociolinguistics. One might expect this child to bear certain resemblances to both its parents, linguistics and social science.

One would even like to believe that the new child would bring these two parents closer together. In the period described in some detail earlier, from 1964 to 1966, the problems in doing this were recognized. What to name this new child was discussed by the leaders in this field (Hymes 1966). How to rear this child was discussed at virtually every meeting of such scholars (training at universities). Once this child was born it would need professional conferences, journals, meetings, institutes, texts, and training centers to help it grow to maturity.

Now, one quarter of a century after those mid-sixties planning meetings, early courses and collections of papers, it is time to take inventory of what actually happened. Did the disciplines of linguistics, sociology and anthropology ever accomplish the rapprochement that was so eagerly wished in the sixties? Did the young child get christened with an enduring name? Did the field of linguistics come to accept sociolinguistics as one of its own offspring? How is sociolinguistics doing in the fields of anthropology and sociology? Have specialized journals been created?

It is not accidental that many of the early sociolinguists looked to the analytical routines of sociology in addition to anthropology. Quantifiable approaches to socio-economic status were one such routine. Census data were also found useful, along with the more sophisticated sampling procedures and data gathering procedures of sociology.

7 Methodology

Sociolinguists charted their own course, however, even when borrowing from sociology and, for this reason, suffered criticism from that field. It became clear early on, for example, that language data are quite different from conventional sociological data. A sociologist could interview subjects concerning voting or purchasing patterns, daily activities, attitudes or values and still remain uncertain about the accuracy or truthfulness of their responses. It is relatively easy to stretch the truth about how many times one brushes one's teeth or exactly who one voted for but it is much more difficult for humans to consciously change or modify the consonants or vowels they use as they produce coherent ideas in their speech.² This relative stability of language used in natural contexts makes a small sample of language more useful to researchers than would be an equally small sample of the type of self-report data found in other social science research.

Sociolinguists also argue for parting company with the methods of determining socio-economic status that are common in sociology, while acknowledging that they benefited greatly from sociological procedures, particularly in the early days of sociolinguistic research. The first large sociolinguistic research projects (Labov 1965; Shuy, Wolfram & Riley 1968) essentially used language data to correlate with socio-economic status (SES) as defined by the Warner scale. As knowledge and theory grew, however, sociolinguists began to ask themselves: "Why should language be selected as the variable to correlate with SES? Why not let language *be* the SES?" If sociolinguists were true to their belief that language is the best available window to social structure and cognition, why use it to correlate with other, less adequate windows?

With the development of sociolinguistic quantitative analysis came more sophisticated statistical analyses. It has been said that there are two types of linguistic analysts:

those who search for universals (what languages have in common), and those who search for variability (how languages differ).

It became apparent that the search for language universals required less quantitative measures than the search for variability. To be sure, research in universals can use statistical analysis and it is also true that our long tradition of dialectology research had essentially avoided statistics. But as tightly focused research projects made use of multiple occurrences of language samples in different contexts, it became evident that a very important feature of language was that of frequency of occurrence, not just categorical presence or absence. [. . .]

In the 1960s, sociolinguistic quantification resulted in rather simple statistics, usually represented in percentages. There is nothing wrong with such statistics, of course, as long as the claims are clear and accurate. In fact, such statistical representation was a tremendous improvement over previous representations of all-or-none presence or absence of a feature. As linguists became acquainted with computers, however, larger and more sophisticated statistical routines became popular (Fasold 1984). From anthropology, some sociolinguists have borrowed the methodology of participant observation and ethnography. Although ethnographic approaches to language analysis existed for many years, it is noteworthy that the University of Pennsylvania is responsible for a burst of training and research in the sixties, one that produced a major impact on work in this area. Dell Hymes was largely responsible for this flurry of activity.

It should be stressed that even though sociolinguists reached out for ideas and approaches from sociology and anthropology, such ideas and approaches were not borrowed in their entirety or in their purest form. They were modified to the specific purposes of the newly perceived field. Both sociologists and anthropologists might complain, with justification perhaps, that these modifications dilute or distort the purposes of their own field. However true this may be, the criticism has less force when we recognize that sociolinguistics is *not* sociology and it is *not* anthropology, per se. There are those who agree, in fact, that neither is it linguistics per se, since sociolinguists go beyond the traditional limits of linguistic analysis, but this criticism is tempered by the fact that sociolinguists recognize this fact by calling the field sociolinguistics.

From the onset of the existence of a field of study called sociolinguistics, there has been debate about whether or not there should be something called sociolinguistics at all. Labov, regarded by most as one of the major forces in this field's birth, himself objected to the term as early as 1965. For Labov, there was no need for calling this field by a separate name. He preferred that the parent field, linguistics, adjust and accept social variability within its scope. In short, Labov didn't have any particular need for a concept or field like sociolinguistics. [. . .]

8 Names

In November of 1966, when Hymes submitted his report on Training in Sociolinguistics, no name for the field had been agreed upon. He reports that sociolinguistic subject matter was then being taught under the headings of 'linguistics', 'language and culture', 'sociology of language' and 'language behavior' as well as 'sociolinguistics'. Over twenty

years later, the same labels appear, although, among linguists at least, ‘sociolinguistics’ has come to be the common term. Annual meetings of the Linguistic Society of America have had sessions labeled ‘sociolinguistics’ for over 15 years. In fact a recent brochure describing the entire field of linguistics, distributed by the LSA, describes sociolinguistics as one of the major components of our discipline. Today sociolinguistics may be defined differently by different scholars but there is general agreement that it includes topics such as language planning, language variability (social and regional dialects), registers, and pidgins and creoles. There is mixed agreement about whether sociolinguistics includes language change or whether the study of language change includes a subcategory of study which is sociolinguistic. Likewise, the more recent developments of discourse analysis, pragmatics and speech acts are by some scholars considered to be a part of sociolinguistics proper and by others to be separate areas of study in themselves. David Crystal, in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, defines ‘sociolinguistics’ as “The study of the interaction between language and the structures and functioning of society” (p. 412). Absent from the above topics are fields of study such as ‘the ethnography of communication’ and ‘language and culture’, which are still generally believed to be the province of anthropology, and ‘the sociology of language’ and ‘ethnomethodology’, which are still generally believed to be the province of sociology. Few, if any, departments of linguistics offer all of the above-mentioned topics as specializations in which students can receive training.

[. . .]

Notes

This reading is much abbreviated from the full version in *Historiographia Linguistica* XVII (1/2): 183–209, 1990, to which the interested reader is referred.

- 1 The title of this journal was later changed to *Publications of the American Dialect Society* and remains the same today.
- 2 The same essential truthfulness or validity has been noted for morphological and syntactic features as well.

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