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Introduction

Joshua A. Fishman

THE SOCIOLOGY OF LANGUAGE

Professional linguists have long been aware that languages differ from each other in many patterned respects. Similarly, professional sociologists have long been aware that societies differ from each other in many patterned respects. However, for several reasons, there has thus far been too little realization in either camp that language and society reveal various kinds and degrees of patterned co-variation. The sociology of language represents one of several recent approaches to the study of the patterned co-variation of language and society.

Under 'language' one may be concerned with different codes (e.g., English, Chinese, Swahili), regional varieties within a single code (e.g., the English of Boston, New York, Philadelphia or Norfolk), social class varieties of a particular regional variant (e.g., the English of lower-middle- and upper-class Bostonians), stylistic varieties related to levels of formality (e.g., public address vs. casual conversational usage), etc. Each of these varieties may be studied either from the point of view of actual verbal communication or from the point of view of idealized language norms. Furthermore, each of these language varieties may be examined at the level of *grammar*, at the level of *vocabulary*, at the level of *grammatical features*, at the level of *meaning*, etc. Under "society" one may be concerned with dyadic encounters, small group interaction, large group functioning, the articulation of social classes and sectors, contacts and contrasts between entire nations, etc. Furthermore, each of these social groupings may be examined with respect to heterogeneity of composition, permeability of group barriers, status-role patterns, context of interaction, norm restrictiveness and stability, etc.

Obviously languages and societies are both highly varied (vis-à-vis others) as well as highly diversified (internally). However, these variations and diversities reveal many patterns or regularities rather than purely random or idiosyncratic manifestations. The sociology of language inquires into the co-variation of diversity and of pattern in these two fields. Since *languages* normally function in a social matrix and since *societies* depend heavily on language as a medium (if not as a symbol) of interaction it is certainly appropriate to expect that their observable manifestations, language behavior and social behavior, will be appreciably related in many lawful ways. Some of the very designations of language variants carry social implications (e.g., formality levels, regional variants, social class variants, etc.). Some of the very designations of social groupings carry distinct communicative implications (dyadic encounters, small group interactions, international contacts, etc.). Thus it may be that language and society not only reveal *lawful co-variation* but that each may provide *additional insight into the other*. To the extent that this is true the sociology of language is not only a "possible field of inquiry" (there are infinitely many such fields) but a "fruitful field of inquiry" (these may be far fewer) as well.

The term "sociolinguistics" is often used interchangeably with "the sociology of language". The latter usage seems to me to be preferable for the purposes of this volume and for some general purposes that may be briefly mentioned here. The primary purpose for which these *Readings* have been brought together is to interest students of social behavior in the language determinants, concomitants or consequences of that behavior. Although particular studies in this field of inquiry may more appropriately view either language behavior or social behavior as the independent or the dependent variable for their immediate purposes it is my fundamental bias to view society as being broader than language and, therefore, as providing the context in which all language behavior must ultimately be viewed. It seems to me that the concept "sociology of language" more fully implies this bias than does the term "sociolinguistics", which implies quite the opposite bias. However, I have certainly made no effort to rule out of these *Readings* studies whose methodological and conceptual apparatus indicate that "sociolinguistics" rather than "sociology of language" is closer to their authors' point of departure or ultimate goal. Quite the contrary. There is nothing that the sociology of language needs at the *present* time as much as it needs work and workers with sensitivity and sympathy for the contributions of "the other field". As a newly developing interdisciplinary field the sociology of language may well be approached, at the present time, either via topics, con-

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cepts and methods primarily derived from linguistics, or via topics, concepts and methods derived from the sciences of social behavior. Indeed, it is inevitable that "borrowed" topics, concepts and methods will predominate until students of the sociology of language clarify a sufficient number of topics, concepts and methods that are more uniquely appropriate and more fully integrated in terms of their own needs and interests. Thus, the expression "sociology of language" is more an indication of future-oriented perspectives than of currently feasible or desirable differentiation and delimitation.

There are many reasons for the mutual isolation of sociology and linguistics that go beyond those usually applicable to distantly related fields with separate academic recognition and separate scholarly traditions. Linguistics, particularly American linguistics during at least the first half of this century, has been primarily a "formal discipline", almost along the lines of abstract mathematics. It has concentrated on the analysis of language structure. Thus, language "per se", in the form of a corpus of sounds and smaller or larger units of meaning, has been examined for its patterns, as if it were something that existed above and beyond its users and its uses. Psychologizing and sociologizing have not only been *ignored* (as leading in "exolinguistic" directions) but have been *attacked* in former years by the most distinguished American linguists as dangerous and misleading pursuits. In contrast to the mainstream of American linguistics, linguists with strong sociocultural interests have represented a smaller parallel tradition, usually under the rubric of "anthropological linguistics". Unfortunately, this co-tradition long considered language and culture as monolithic (though relatable) wholes.

Any objective evaluation of linguistics would have to admit that its early strictures resulted in much rigorous and fruitful work within a narrow sphere of interests. The obvious successes of linguistics within this narrow sphere probably underlie the greater security feelings evident in recent years with respect to stepping outside the usual topics of this discipline. In addition, these successes have led to a greater awareness of the unnecessary and unwise limitations imposed by procrustean frameworks relative to the *current* frontiers and unsolved problems of the discipline. Thus it is that various schools of "mentalistic linguistics" have recently become major sources of stimulation in modern linguistics science. Hopefully, "sociolinguistics" may prove to be similarly stimulating when it reaches greater consensus as to its goal and procedures.

If the development of linguistics has been such as to produce a particular insensitivity to the relationship between language behavior and social behavior the same has been true for sociology, particularly

for American sociology. American sociology has also sought rigor and respectability via formalism. It has gravitated away from its early interests in the ethnology of social progress and social problems to a predominant concern with large-scale social structure and quantitative analysis, neither of which are likely to draw upon language behavior as a source of primary data. A concern with language has been contra-indicated on yet another score; namely, language is often considered to be omnipresent and therefore of no significance in differentiating social behavior. The latter view is undoubtedly related to the monoglot and urbanized nature of the societies best known to the founding fathers of American and European sociology. In addition, American sociology has long been primarily non-comparative and American sociologists themselves, overwhelmingly monolingual. As a result of all of the above limitations in outlook, most macrotopics in the sociology of language (i.e., those topics that represent the traditional core of this field, e.g., multilingualism and ethno-national solidarity, long term trends in language maintenance and language shift, language standardization and language planning, etc.) strike many American sociologists as dealing with matters both foreign and marginal to "society" as they know it. It is only in quite recent years that interest in the developing nations, in small group dynamics, in social change as a community or neighborhood process, and in the network concomitants of unity and diversity at the national level have made many sociologists more receptive to the pursuit of several traditionally "sociolinguistic" topics and to the development of new ones.

Many of the above observations imply that the two parent-disciplines involved in the sociology of language would each stand to gain if their joint offspring developed into a robust interdisciplinary field of specialization. Sociology might gain a number of very reliable (linguistic) indicators of social class and social interaction. In addition, sociology might gain new insight into processes of group formation and dissolution, into social change, social integration and social cleavage. Above all, sociology would come to realize that this "taken for granted" variable, language, shows great and yet patterned diversity in its own characteristics and in the characteristics of its uses and users. Linguists, on the other hand, stand to gain even more, for there is a very real sense in which the sociology of language might be said to be crucial for the solution of many of the "hard core" problems of modern structural linguistics. If the sociology of language were to provide a fuller realization that what has hitherto been viewed as merely "free variation" around an ideal norm of language structure or usage is itself socially patterned in terms of users and uses, this would be a major contribution to linguistics per se. In addition, more and more linguists

might come to realize that the categories represented by "natural" human groups (whether these be generational, religious, ethnic, educational, occupational, etc.) merely represent a reflection of "folk sociology". The sociologist's categories and strata are frequently no more than handy ways of getting at recognizably different rates of various social behaviors: friendship patterns, attitudes, competitive or cooperative processes, socialization patterns, leisure activities, political behaviors, interactions across group boundaries, etc. An awareness of *these behaviors* (other than of the categories through which they are easily located) probably represents the basic potential contribution of the sociology of language to the science of linguistics.

It is certainly true that sociologists spend a great deal of time defining social categories and refining the ways of operationally recognizing them. It is also true that linguists spend a great deal of time on exhaustive presentations and analyses of the phonology and morphology of languages. However, in both cases these pursuits are really means or way-stations in a programmatic progression. The community of sociologists recognizes, however dimly, that it must go on from categories and rates to relationships and processes. Thus, it may be highly disturbing to sociologists to discover that some linguists not only have a superficial interest in the *nature* of social categories but that they are also content to stop their "social inquiries" at the categorical level. Similarly, linguists are rightly concerned when sociologists who become interested in language merely recognize such linguistic categories as "pure language" and "mixed language" (or language and dialect) without due concern for the complexity of the linguistic designata involved. Thus, the sociology of language may well become the avenue whereby the sociologist interested in behavior through language will lose his naive "linguistic enlightenment" at the same time that the linguist aware of the social context of language will lose his naive "social outlook". Ultimately this field will prepare its own interdisciplinary specialists (not unlike the anthropological linguists and the social psychologists of today) who will be fully at home in both parent disciplines at the same time that they seek to explore and to organize the co-varying diversities within the sociology of language proper. Until that time arrives most work in the sociology of language will tend to fall short of the ideal, either on the linguistic or on the sociological side. The *Readings* here presented to the student should therefore be considered as representing an *approximation* to a field which is in the process of conceptual and methodological development. They do not represent ideal solutions to the recognized problems of this field. All of them, I hope, represent interesting attempts to cope with these problems. Most of them, I believe, are representative of

what is currently considered to be "work of good quality" (although frequently of a preliminary or introductory nature) in this field. Nevertheless, I hope and expect that many of them will be replaced by much better studies within a relatively few years.

A final difference (between the parent disciplines of a sociology of language) deserves to be mentioned here, for it pertains directly to the selection of items for inclusion in these *Readings*. Linguistic field work and linguistic publications frequently reveal a tradition (akin to that of folkloristic and ethnographic studies) of exhaustive enumeration devoid of major theoretical guidelines. Indeed, linguists point with pride at their ability to derive benefit from old grammars based upon intensive work with a single informant, even when the theoretical portions of such publications no longer deserve any attention whatsoever. Sociologists are not only rarely able to understand the technical analyses lavished upon such exhaustive inventories, but, more importantly, they are rarely likely to consider them *worth* analyzing, regardless of whether they deal with the morphophonemics of southern apple pickers, the epithets of northern delinquents, or the language of kings. Sociological research is normally approached from a more theoretical point of view, such that certain concerns at a level "higher than description" guide data collection and data analysis. The data themselves, while ideally gathered in painstaking detail, are usually analyzed and presented statistically (both in descriptive and in inferential terms) rather than enumeratively. Since the methodology of social research has improved markedly in recent years, it is not infrequent for sociologists to be more pleased with their old theories than with their old data.

All in all, most linguistic presentations are likely to prompt the sociologist to ask, "How can you be sure of your findings?" By this query he indicates that he is looking for a demonstration (such as those with which he is familiar) that in *appropriately selected individuals or groups* among whom certain behavioral patterns are shown to occur (or not to occur, or to occur more or less frequently than in other groups) there is a marked *tendency* for certain linguistic regularities (in terms of the *basic structure* rather than the *manifest content* of communication) also to be present. He expects many exceptions to this co-occurrence tendency but also expects to account for these exceptions (subsequently) via factors temporarily assigned to "error variance". The linguist is equally likely to ask, "How can you be sure of your findings?" when faced with sociological presentations. He is looking for a complete inventory of language data (rather than for categorical summaries of data) and for a demonstration of complete lawfulness in relationships (rather than "tendencies" strong enough to

come through tests of significance or repeated samples). In view of the audience for which the present volume is intended, and in view of this field of inquiry as I would like to see it, I have tended to prefer the sociologists to the linguist's definition of data and of demonstration. Nevertheless, once again, I have included several papers that clearly represent quite a different approach to these matters.

At this early point in the development of the sociology of language, it seemed premature to impose a highly detailed conceptual framework on a book of *Readings*. Not only have I been concerned that this selection be useful to a wide variety of differently organized courses in departments of sociology, anthropology, speech, communication and linguistics, but I have also been eager to include provocative papers and topics even where I have not been entirely sure whether a more tightly organized or conceptually integrated approach to the sociology of language would find them to be substantively admissible. Thus, while denying admission to most studies in psycholinguistics and in mass communication, I have not tried to be similarly exclusivist with respect to studies of an anthropological, historical, social-psychological or political science nature. Finally, while relying mainly on a number of established topic areas as the basis for grouping studies into sections I have also ventured a few broad groupings that are less widely recognized. These approaches to selecting *Readings* and to grouping them result from some *compromises* between my personal topical biases and my personal conceptual hunches as to the most likely lines of development in the sociology of language during the next few years. As a result of these two quite different approaches to the selection and organization of readings, many of the items included lend themselves to inclusion in more than one section of this volume.

To begin with (in Section I) I have tried to present a number of papers that may provide the student with greater perspective on the sociology of language as only one of several disciplines viewing language in a behavioral context. It is my hope that this section will do more than provide the student with many crucial terms and concepts. Hopefully, it will also indicate that as much as the sociology of language represents a broader view (than either of its parent disciplines thus far holds with respect to language and social behavior) it too must be seen in broader scientific and intellectual perspective.

The following section (Section II) represents an attempt to enter the sociology of language from its more microscopic pole. Here we encounter studies of small group processes, beginning with dyadic encounters and progressing to much longer interactions between somewhat larger face-to-face groups. Unfortunately this area within the sociology of language is still rather meagerly developed. My prediction is

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that it will receive much more attention during the next few years, to the end that interlocutor, setting, topic and other integrative variables will loom large in our efforts to organize the entire field of the sociology of language.

Section III presents studies that are concerned with larger categories of mankind (social stratification) and with the within-group and between-group organization (social structure) of these categories. Here I have examined the literature on economic, religious, racial, and other traditioned groups functioning within a common national or cultural framework.

In Section IV the size of the social groupings under consideration is once more enlarged, this time to the full socio-cultural level. However, in addition, the studies presented were selected from the point of view of *reflecting* cultural values and socio-cultural change.

Section V is one of two devoted to multilingualism. Multilingualism has long been a topic recognized by sociologists, linguists, anthropologists, and others as shedding light on many aspects of language learning, language use and behaviors toward language, all of these being topics that are theoretically crucial and yet extremely difficult to analyze in monolingual settings. This fact may justify the inclusion of two sections on multilingualism. However, whereas Section V concentrates on the social, cultural, political and other concomitants of relatively widespread and enduring multilingualism, Section VI is concerned with the circumstances and processes that result in stable or unstable multilingualism.

The final section, Section VII may strike some readers as representing an "applied concern". Actually, language planning is often guided by quite theoretical considerations and, often yet, its procedures and outcomes may be productive of new theoretical insights into language-society relationships.

I expect that this particular sectional organization may seem less useful within a few years, particularly as the sociology of language begins to crystallize around integrative concepts and methodologies.

A few guiding principles or self-imposed limitations were adhered to in preparing this selection of readings.

1. No selections from the "classics" of linguistics or of sociology;
2. No selections authored by editor;
3. No more than a single selection by any given author (except in cases of co-authorships);
4. No selections from other *Readers* familiar to students of the sociology of language (unless items appeared nowhere else);
5. Minimization of technical linguistic material beyond the grasp of most social scientists;

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6. No substantive comments or corrections by editor;
7. Articles in commonly known European languages to be given in the original language of publication;
8. Preference for recent and integrative presentations.

These principles reflect personal biases concerning the desired relationship between *Readings* and other texts that should be brought to the attention of students, as well as biases concerning the ethics of preparing *Readers*. I do not necessarily recommend these biases to others since they may reflect nothing more than one individual's approach to working with students and colleagues.

I am indebted to many individuals for their help in the preparation of this volume. Several friends and colleagues suggested readings for possible inclusion and helped me revise earlier outlines. Foremost among these are Susan Ervin, John J. Gumperz, Dell Hymes, William Labov, and, particularly, Leonard Savitz. My indebtedness to the authors and publishers who permitted me to reprint their works is obvious. Finally, to the staff and Fellows of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, with whose help this volume was originally conceived during the 1963-64 academic year, and to my fellow participants in the SSRC-NSF Sociolinguistic Seminar held at Indiana University during the Summer of 1964, with whose help many additional readings were located and this preface was written, go my boundless thanks for truly collegial interest and assistance.

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Editor's note: In the nearly four years since the papers included in this volume were selected and the foregoing introductory remarks written the sociology of language has undergone a remarkable growth and a very encouraging degree of acceptance within the ranks of both sociology and linguistics. As a result, some of the formulations advanced four years ago no longer seem to be as appropriate today as they were at that time, while others, on the other hand, have been confirmed or appear to be even more strongly supported now than they were then. This selection of papers should still be found to be stimulating and useful, to instructors and students alike, even though a large number of outstanding new papers dealing with the sociology of language have recently been published. In a rapidly maturing field such as this, collections of readings may need to be revised frequently although, at the same time, a smaller group of papers will doubtlessly come to be regarded as "classics" of a kind. Many papers of this latter type are doubtlessly included in this volume.

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