DIKTAT BAHAN PENGAJARAN MATA KULIAH

SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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chapter 1

WHAT IS LANGUAGE?

In this chapter, the reader is introduced to the sociology of language and those aspects of behavior with which it is concerned. The reader is asked to stand back from language, and think about how it is constructed. Later chapters will show how speakers use the very structure of language to govern social interactions. The way that children learn their native languages also seems to be related to social uses of language.

1.1 *The subject of sociolinguistics*

Have you ever wanted desperately to voice an opinion but had the words "stick in your throat"? Have you ever had the opposite experience of feeling compelled to speak when you didn't want to? Do you sometimes find yourself forcing small talk with someone you either don't know or don't much care for? Have you noticed how some people can make you do things you don't want to do, even though they've never given an overt command? Do you ever find that you want to flee when someone heaps praise on you to your face and yet you don't get angry at all when someone else insults you, such as calling you "cheap"? Why are some insults taken seriously, while others are just considered teasing?

Has anyone ever accused you of having an accent? Do you notice that other people have accents? Why are there different accents at all, anyway? Why have some immigrant groups lost the languages that their forebears spoke, whereas others have retained those languages? Do you ever feel uncomfortable talking to people from cultures different from your own? Do they seem to stare too much, or, conversely, never to look you in the eye? Have you ever noticed how some people smile too much and others are stony-faced? These are the kinds of questions that interest people who study the sociology of language, the field also known as **sociolinguistics**.

1.2 *Language and society*

Language and society are so intertwined that it is impossible to understand one without the other. There is no human society that does not depend upon, is not shaped by, and does not itself shape language.

Every social institution is maintained by language. Law, religion, government, education, the family—all are carried on with language. Individually, we use language to "carry on" love and to "carry out" hate. We use language to reveal or conceal our personal identity, our character, and our background, often wholly unconscious that we are doing so. Almost all of our contact with family and friends, and much of our contact with strangers, involves speaking. And, much of that speaking is strongly governed by rules, rules that dictate not only what we should say, but also how we say it. We manipulate others with language, and they manipulate us, often without either party being at all aware of the manipulation.

Sociolinguistics is the study of the ways people use language in social interaction. The sociolinguist is concerned with the stuff of everyday life: how you talk to your friends, family, and teachers, as well as to storekeepers and strangers—everyone you meet in the course of a day—and why you talk as you do and they talk as they do. Sociolinguistics is concerned with apparently trivial matters, with the talk on streetcorners as well as in the classroom, the things that people do when they want to talk and the ways they signal that they are listening. Even matters like where you choose to sit in a cafeteria or at a meeting, or the amount of space you want between you and someone else when you are talking, concern the sociolinguist.

Such everyday matters are highly revealing, showing how a given society is stratified, that is, what groups make up that society. Examining the speech activities of different social groups casts light on the conditions, values, and beliefs that have helped shape the groups. Conversely, it also shows how social situations determine what kinds of speech will be used and how speech develops to meet social needs. Perhaps most important, sociology of language tells us what messages we are really giving when we speak, messages that are not necessarily put into actual words. It shows how and why we feel uncomfortable, even hostile, to some people, especially those who do not share the rules of speech behavior that we abide by, rules so thoroughly learned that we are not even aware of them.

Most people find that an academic course in the sociology of language is both interesting and exciting, a true consciousness-raising experience. Students become more aware of their own behaviors, how they are responding to other people, and how others behave and respond. What many find most exciting about the sociology of language is the heightening of their sensitivity not only to their own speech behavior, but to the speech of others, and even to song lyrics and TV shows and movies. Above all, students of sociolinguistics gain new respect for all peoples, more than any number of lectures on brotherhood or sisterhood could ever give them. This is because the sociology of language shows the true genius involved in all language activities, even those that do not depend on book learning or that are carried out in speech considered incorrect or casual. Before delving into the fascinating topics of sociolinguistics proper, it is necessary to consider what language itself is.

1.3 *Language is multilayered*

Linguistics is the academic discipline that deals with the structure of human language. Here we will consider only those general properties of language essential to understanding social interaction. Throughout most of this book, dialects rather than language as a whole will concern us. Dialects are varieties of a language, usually mutually comprehensible. They are often called accents. Strictly speaking, however, accent refers only to differences in the way words are pronounced. The term dialect includes accent, but also differences in grammar and word choice between speakers.

Human language is multilayered. It is composed of a system of meaningless elements that combine by rules into meaningful structures. (These rules are learned automatically, almost instinctively, by children who are learning to speak. Because the rules do not have to be taught, they are considered by many linguists to be governed by an innate language learning faculty of the brain.) Sounds, meaningless in themselves, form meaningful words or parts of words. Technically, these parts of words are called morphemes. The word *renewed*, for instance, is composed of three morphemes, *re-*, *new*, and *-ed*. These are considered morphemes in English because we recognize *re-* as a prefix that is attached to many words to convey the meaning 'again'. *New* is a morpheme that is also a word in itself. That is, it can stand alone with no other morphemes attached. The ending *-ed* is an English morpheme for past tense, required by the grammar of English. The word *renewed* thus illustrates the different kinds of morphemes that appear in languages: those used to add meaning to a given word; words in themselves; and affixes that are required by the grammar of a language. Affixes are morphemes that appear at the beginning or end of words. Those, like English *re-*, that appear at the beginning are called prefixes. Those that appear at the end, like English *-ed*, are called suffixes.

In English and other European languages, typically, morphemes required by grammar are put at the end of words, but other languages have them at the beginning. Although it is rare in the world's languages, some even insert them into the middle of words.

Some languages, such as Russian, which require a great many grammatical affixes, have very few words that can stand alone. Such languages have roots to which affixes are added according to the way the word is being used in the sentence. For instance, in the Russian sentence, "Mal'chik videl Marshu," which means 'the boy sees Marsha,' the *-chik* morpheme indicates the one who does the seeing, the *-l* indicates that a third person singular subject did the seeing (as in English *sees*), and the *-u* indicates that Marsha is the one seen.

1.4 *Languages operate by rules*

Each language uses only some of the hundreds of possible sounds that human beings can utter. Then, each language has its own rules for combining these sounds into syllables. Even if two languages use the same sounds, they may not allow them to be combined in the same ways. For instance, both English and Swahili use the sounds [ŋ], [g], [w], and [e]. Swahili allows those three consonants to occur at the start of words, as in ŋgwe ('strings'), but English does not.

There are also rules for combining morphemes into words, so that, for instance, in English, the *re-* meaning 'again' in *renewed* must always come at the start of a word, and the *-ed* meaning 'past' must always come at the end.

Words themselves combine by rules of syntax into sentences. Sentences, in turn, combine into discourse. Although we usually think of sentences as having rules of grammar, we shall see that discourse also has rules. These determine the order in which sentences may be arranged, as well as what can be left out of a sentence and what must be included. Even the forms sentences take are often determined by the rules of discourse.

Human language seems to be the only communication system that combines meaningless elements into meaningful structures. For most speakers, but not all, the meaningless elements are sounds. Languages of the deaf, such as Ameslan (American Sign Language), substitute elements of gesture that are combined into larger units (Bellugi and Fischer 1972).

1.5 *Animal communication systems*

So far as we know, other animal communication systems are not multilayered and use only meaningful elements. That is, every sound, gesture or posture used in a nonhuman communication system means something, in and of itself. Furthermore, the order in which the sounds and movements of nonhuman communication appear does not affect their meaning. If a monkey emits a call for 'food' and one for 'follow me', it will mean 'follow me food' no matter which call comes first. In nonhuman communication systems, the sum of the message always equals its parts.

In contrast, in human language the message does not necessarily equal its parts. *A Venetian blind* is not the same as *a blind Venetian*. Meaning in language can be more than the sum of its parts, as in *Gwen ordered pizza; Fred, chop suey; and Alex, a hot dog*. We know that Fred ordered chop suey and that Alex ordered a hot dog, even though the verb *ordered* is not repeated.

Meaning may as easily be less than the sum of its parts, as in *Max is a good kid*. There is no referential meaning to *is*. Many languages, such as Russian and Swahili, leave the *is* out, saying the equivalent to 'Max a good kid.' Even to an English speaker, 'Max a good kid' has the same meaning as the sentence with an *is*. Indeed, there are some dialects of English that leave out the *is* in this kind of sentence, saying, for instance, "He bad!" Those that require the insertion of *is* do so because of their rules of syntax, not because of its meaning. That is, *is* and its counterparts *am* and *are* do not refer to an actual action or emotion, as do verbs like *run* and *hate*. One cannot define *is* as one can such other verbs. In

chapter 2

FIELD METHODS

The techniques used to investigate behavior are called *field methods*. Field methods in the sociology of language differ from those in linguistics proper. Theoretical linguists are primarily concerned with investigating the structure of a language, whereas sociolinguists are concerned with interactions between members of a society. However, in both sociolinguistics and linguistics proper, field methods include laboratory experiments as well as observations recorded in the field, in the natural surroundings of the people whose speech is being studied. Even the student who has no intention of being a researcher can benefit from considering what constitutes reliable field methods. Since each year a tremendous amount of tax money is spent for the teaching of language skills and bilingual education in public schools, every taxpayer should understand why the money is allocated as it is. This can be done only by knowing how to evaluate the soundness of the field methods used to arrive at conclusions about language policies.

2.1 *Pitfalls*

The biggest problem with field methods is devising a test or experiment that tells you what you want to know. Often, despite the most careful planning, once a study is completed, the results can be interpreted quite differently from what was originally intended. Experimental subjects may not have reacted as expected; they may have reacted to the wrong cue, or been influenced by a speech feature other than the one being studied.

Having subjects evaluate tape recordings of other speakers is a common methodology used for many purposes. If it is important to know how Americans feel about the pronunciation "uh" [ə] instead of /r/ in words like *other* and *teacher*, a tape of someone who uses the "uh" a great deal would be played and then a tape of a strong /r/ pronouncer. Subjects would be asked to rank each speaker on personal qualities such as intelligence, confidence, sincerity, educational level, and any other traits pertinent to the particular investigation. The investigator could not use just any two speakers, as special care would have to be taken to ensure that the only difference between the two speakers was the use of "uh" instead of /r/. If one speaker pronounced the *th* in *other* as /d/ and a second pronounced it as /ð/, the difference between those sounds, not the /r/, might determine the evaluations. Or, if one used an "aw" [ɔ] in *talk* and the other used an "ah" [a] those might be the crucial sounds in the evaluations.

Even if the investigator controls carefully for pronunciation, there is still another problem. If one of the taped speakers has a raspy voice and the other a smooth one, or if one is nasal and the other is not, or if there is any other

difference in voice quality, then the reaction might be to that difference, not to any particular feature of speech. Even differences in loudness or tempo, one speaking more rapidly than the other, may cause differences in reaction. In other words, there are so many possible qualities of speech to which subjects can react that it might prove difficult to prove exactly what influences ratings. This does not mean that voice evaluations are not good. They are exceedingly valuable sources of information if they are set up correctly (Chapter 8). This is true of most methodology. The importance of good field methods cannot be overstressed, for what is found depends on how it was sought. The results that get analyzed depend wholly on the field methods used to collect them.

In the social sciences, there is always a temptation to rely on haphazard personal observations. Some scholars do this a great deal, citing their intuitions about various matters. Others criticize insights offered from intuition. Actually everyone uses hunches. It is a hunch that makes one want to investigate some aspect of behavior. Scholars like Shuy (1967), Trudgill (1972) and Labov (1966) who use elaborate field methods still intuitively divine what to test for in each community they investigate. Analysis of data, no matter how those data are garnered, depends to a great extent on a scholar's intuition and insight. Especially when examining broad aspects of human behavior, it is rare that data inexorably lead just to one conclusion. Interpretation is not only important, but, without it, much data are just a random collection of facts. For example, in a brilliant study of Black street gangs in Harlem, a research team headed by Labov (Labov, Robins, Lewis, and Cohen 1968) found that the boys within a gang all spoke somewhat differently. While that was true, it certainly was not interesting in itself. Fortunately the team had first charted the friendship network of their subjects on graphs called "sociograms." When the speech features of the boys were correlated with the sociograms, the variation in speech among the gang appeared to mirror social position within the group. It must have been a hunch that led them to use sociograms in the first place, a hunch based on earlier correlations of speech with social facts. Some of the most interesting and valuable works about human behavior have had their impetus from intuition. The works of scholars like Erving Goffman and Harvey Sacks come immediately to mind. There is nothing wrong with hunches or intuition, so long as a careful attempt is made to verify them.

Because of the richness of language data, triviality in testing is always a problem. It is easy to devise careful experiments that elicit speech because speech can be elicited in so many ways, but still end up with trivial or fragmented data with little, if any, relation to normal functioning. For instance, one can ask subjects to memorize lists of words and recite them backwards. Undoubtedly, people will differ in their ability to perform the task, but the relation of this task to natural speech and memory is obscure. Word association tests, for another example, may tell us a lot about people's associations to given words, but they do not tell us how people select words in a sentence. Normal discourse is not produced by uttering words that are associated with each other. It is produced by [illegible] words that fit the intended meaning.

Unfortunately it is not always immediately apparent that a given procedure is going to yield trivial results. The best that can be done is to ask questions like the following:

- What aspect of behavior am I testing for?
- Does this task tap the skills needed for that behavior?
- What could my subjects be responding to besides what I want them to?
- What factors could be influencing my results besides those I intended?

If an experiment does not work out as hoped or an investigation yields nothing of interest, that, too, is part of the process of discovery. It happens to everyone or just about everyone at one time or another.

2.2 *Matched guise testing*

Wallace Lambert (e.g., in Lambert, Giles, and Picard 1975) avoided the pitfalls of reactions to taped voices by using the matched guise technique. He found people who could command two languages or two dialects equally well, and had them read passages in each guise. Subjects, not realizing that they were evaluating the same person, rated each. The reaction, then, could be safely taken to be to the given language or dialect, not to other aspects of voice quality. Matched guise testing has proven fruitful in a variety of experimental procedures. For instance, in Great Britain, Bourhis (Giles and Powesland 1975, p. 104) had an announcement made over the loudspeaker in a theater asking patrons to fill out a survey questionnaire. On alternate nights, the same person used a nonstandard dialect and *received pronunciation* (RP), which is the British standard dialect of English learned in school. On the nights that RP was used, more people filled out the forms, and they wrote longer answers. It had already been established that people will write at greater length at the request of someone whose accent they admire (Giles, Baker, and Fielding 1975).

It is not always possible to find a bilingual or bidialectal speaker equally proficient in both varieties under consideration. Actors and actresses can be used, but with extreme caution. Although they fancy that they are giving accurate renditions of dialects or accents, usually they are using stylized stage dialects that do not conform to the genuine. This was recently illustrated for me by a highly experienced professional actor, a member of an internationally known repertory theater, a director of his own company, who also does a good deal of announcing and commercials. He was mocking the eastern New England pronunciation of word final *er* as "uh." When it was pointed out that the upper crust British dialect he professed to admire pronounces that *er* the same way, he protested that they did not. "How do you think they pronounce it?" he was asked. He gave the *ir* [ɜ] sound, as heard in southeastern New England in words like *girl* and *heard*. When his interrogater, to whom that sound is native, responded with "Nevir!" ([nɛvɜ]), he backtracked and said, "Well, the British

say 'nevuh' and Rhode Islanders say 'nevuh.' Don't you hear the difference?" The difference was that he had changed his voice quality, but the final vowels he used were identical. When asked to give an extended imitation of British *received pronunciation*, he gave a perfect stage version, which differed in several respects from that of, say, Sir Alistair Cooke. It should be noted that this actor is primarily a character actor, often called upon to do "dialect" roles.

This incident illustrates the danger of using actors in studies designed to find reactions to dialects. It also shows how difficult it is to isolate precisely the factor to which a subject has reacted. The actor thought he was reacting to the "uh" pronunciation for *er*, but he was actually reacting to other features of voice quality. This example also shows how arbitrary our judgments are of what is or is not proper. British RP is desirable to this actor; a Rhode Island accent, to him, is not. Despite the fact that the same pronunciation occurs in both and in the same words, he heard them differently and evaluated them differently.

2.3 *Scrambled speakers*

Labov (1966, p. 408) pioneered another way of mitigating the effects of extraneous factors in evaluations of dialects. He taped several speakers reading various passages, each focusing on a different feature of pronunciation (see Chapter 8). Then, when testing subjects' reactions to those features, he selected one taped sentence from each of the passages as read by five different speakers. He played the selected sentences from each passage, mixing up the order of the speakers. When he played back the composite passage to test subjects' reactions to particular features, it was virtually impossible for the subjects to know how they had rated each speaker on previous sentences in such a procedure. Labov's five speakers each pronounced a given feature a different way. A variant of this technique would be to play the voices of at least two who pronounce something the same way. If it is voice quality that is determining a judgment, subjects will react differently to each speaker. If it is the feature itself, then both speakers will receive the same evaluation.

2.4 *An adequate sample*

In order to come to valid conclusions, there must be an adequately representative sampling of the population under consideration. For sociolinguistics, adequacy depends upon distribution as well as numbers. As a rule it is not sufficient simply to have a large enough percentage of a total population. It is also necessary to have representatives of each social group in a given community. Usually, the investigator first groups the population by age, sex, ethnic origin, race, and social class. Investigation may show that some of the factors are not significant, but speakers, today called *consultants*, still have to be

chapter 3

STYLE OF SPEECH

We do not always speak in exactly the same way. Speech, like dress, varies with the situation, different situations calling for different styles. Style also controls social interactions. Most interestingly, style gives its own messages, messages that are not supposed to be given via the linguistic system proper. The reasons for this can be understood only in the context of a sociology of language.

3.1 *Style*

Style refers to the selection of linguistic forms to convey social or artistic effects. Style also acts as a set of instructions. The messages it conveys are not normally conveyed in words. Indeed, the idiom "didn't get the message" may refer to a listener's not picking up a speaker's stylistic cues, even though he or she understood just fine the actual words used. We manipulate others with style, even as we are manipulated ourselves, usually unconsciously.

Style forms a communication system in its own right, one that determines how a social interaction will proceed, or if it will proceed at all. If it is to continue, style tells how, whether formally or informally. Style may also tell listeners how to take what is being said: seriously, ironically, humorously, dubiously, or in some other way.

Often when the style of an utterance contradicts the meaning of the words and grammar, the style is believed. Since style tells us how to interpret a message, this is not surprising. For example, if "John is nice" is said sarcastically, the style instructs, 'take these words to mean the opposite of what they actually say'. Thus "John is nice" can mean 'John is not nice'. Similarly, a timid "I'm not afraid" still conveys 'I am afraid'. And, highly formal "I do hope we shall be friends, Miss Tippett" is not likely to yield close confidences. Style forms a mini-communication system that works along with language itself, yet is apart from it.

Many stylistic messages are countered only with other stylistic messages, as illustrated in sentences 9–13, below. Style uses all the resources of language: tone of voice, different ways of pronouncing sounds, even choice of words and grammar themselves. The number of possible variations of style is far more limited, however, than the possible choices of words and their combinations in sentences.

Style overlaps with ritualistic use of language, as in greetings and forms of address. Each language or dialect usually has several of these, each marked for a different style. Considering the function of style as the controller of the

interaction, so to speak, this is hardly surprising. Greetings and address start interactions. One expects heavy style-marking on them because they set the tone for what is to follow.

3.2 *Co-occurrence restrictions*

John Gumperz (1971) once said that one's choice of linguistic alternants "reflects the positions actors [parties in an interaction] wish to assume relative to each other." Linguistic alternants in sociolinguistics means sets of words and phrases that share meaning but differ in that one or more members of the set carries a social connotation. This connotation gives information about the speaker's social status and about how he or she wishes to be treated. It also often gives information about what is being talked about.

Gumperz (1964) gives the example of *dine* versus *eat*. Both denote consumption of food, but *dine* connotes more formal surroundings calling for formal manners. It also implies certain kinds of food: *coq au vin* as opposed to fried chicken. Choice of the verb *dine* also carries implications about those who are doing it. Gumperz (1964, p. 139) says, "Not everyone can 'dine'. Certainly not two laborers during a dinner break no matter how well prepared the food . . . and how good their table manners." Few in American society today could seriously say "Dine with me tonight." As much as we hate to admit it in a supposedly egalitarian society, *dine* belongs to upper class speech, and, pretty much, to older people. The refined and aristocratic dine. Everyone else eats.

One way to verify our intuitions about *dine* is to note its co-occurrence restrictions. These are restrictions on what words can go together. For instance, in English both people and animals can be *killed*, but only people can be *murdered* or *assassinated*. The latter two verbs imply the victim was a human being. Similar restrictions determine which style goes with certain words. Words that differ in the degree of formality do not usually co-occur, to use the linguist's term, nor do words that give conflicting information about social status. Note, for example:

1. Let's dine on fried chicken.
2. Hey, baby, wanna dine tonight?
3. Me and Bob are dinin' out.
4. Wouldja dine with me t'night?
5. Would you dine with me tonight?
6. Mrs. Whitmore wishes you to dine with her.

The first four sentences are humorous. The joke for each lies in the violation of co-occurrence restrictions. No food that is eaten with fingers is an appropriate object of *dine*. "Hey, baby" implies that the speaker is a young male, trying to put forth a macho image. Since, in our society, being macho is not associated with refinement, such speech forms clash with the formal *dine*. In the

third, the grammatical variant "me and Bob" is a marker of nonstandard speech. People who use "me and Bob" as the subjects of a sentence are not likely to speak of dining no matter how well they eat. The pronunciation *dinin'* is humorous because the *-in'* replacement for *-ing* is reserved for informal speech, but *dine* is formal. Similarly, *wouldja* is a more casual pronunciation than *would you*. The last two sentences are not humorous because they are entirely formal, hence appropriate for *dine* (although they too could be used facetiously by, say, a person adopting the formal tone for comic effect).

3.3 *The style is the message*

Speakers give a great deal of information about themselves just by the words, grammar, and pronunciation they choose both unconsciously and consciously. This information reveals to the hearer such things as the speaker's social or educational background, and regional affiliation. The style markers of a particular social group or region may be deliberately used for other purposes. For instance, the man who approaches a woman with "Hey, baby—love those threads. How about doin' the town tonight?" may not be a Black street kid. He may be the wealthy scion of as aristocratic a family as America produces. Although his own usual dialect does not normally greet with "Hey, baby—", or use *threads* to mean 'clothes', he still may choose that terminology as a way of asserting his masculinity. But he tempers the assertiveness with a teasing humor conveyed by the slangy speech form and his obvious borrowing of it. "Hey, baby—" lets the woman know that he does not want their encounter to be formal. It is an invitation to intimacy. Of course, she may not be in accord. If she is not, she responds in a style appropriate both to her status and the degree of intimacy she prefers, as in:

7. "I'm busy tonight thank you, Mr. ______"
8. "Were you talking to me, sir?"

She does not need to comment overtly on his style. Rather, by her responding with a formal style, she instructs him to keep his distance. Her style says, "Back off Jack," although her words do not. The message is also conveyed by intonation or inflection. Response 8 uttered with a rising inflection might be interpreted as a coquettish response!

In fact, it would be downright odd if she said something explicit like "I do not want you to be so familiar with me. I do not consider myself a sexually available woman, nor do I wish to be intimate with you." Such messages are given by style. Actual words are used only on the rare occasions that the offending party is too obtuse to "get the message." It must be emphasized that the social message conveyed by style is not coded directly onto actual words that mean what the intended social message is.

This is seen even more in usual greetings. Have you ever answered someone's "Hi! How are you?" with a brisk "Lousy" (or its equivalent), only to get a cheerful response of "That's good" as the greeter traveled on? Conversely, have you ever answered "Fine," but in a glum voice, only to have the greeter stop and ask, "Oh, what's the matter?" In both cases, clearly, the words were ignored, but the style was not (Chaika 1973).

How something is said does take precedence over *what* is said. Yet something more is going on in such situations. In responding to a greeting, it is inappropriate to state one's real feelings in words unless the response is 'fine'. Witness the criticism, "He's the kind of person who, if you ask how he is, tells you." That is, he is a socially inept individual.

Ritual greetings are supposed to convey information about someone's well being, but not in words. Nor are words usual for the messages of status and intimacy. There seem to be three reasons for this: phatic communication, control of interactions, and protection of the ego.

3.4 *Phatic communication*

Greetings have two functions. One is to initiate interaction; the other, which will concern us first, is what cultural anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1923) called phatic communication, speech not to convey thoughts, but to create "ties of union ... by mere exchange of words." Phatic communication is speech for the sake of social contact, speech used much the way we pat dogs on the head as a way of letting them know we care.

Greeting, even in passing, is essential to let members of society know that they count. If an acquaintance fails to say "Hi" when we know he or she saw us, we feel hurt. Such a trivial omission, yet we give it a name, a *snub*. We are obliged to greet even when we cannot or do not want to get into a conversation. For this reason, perhaps, the person greeted is supposed just to acknowledge the greeting phatically, not launch into a recital of what's actually "happ'nin'," or the [illegible] day. The response "Fine" can properly end the greeting sequence. [illegible] or not the person is truly fine is immaterial. Phatic communication has [illegible] completed with its utterance. If the greeter wants to know more, of course, [illegible] why "Fine" was uttered glumly, he or she can stop and ask for more information. At this juncture it is proper to go into details. Greeting, then, fulfills [illegible] functions: first, the requirements of phatic communication, and second, if [illegible] opening further interaction.

3.5 *Control*

It is amazing how much we can be controlled by the style of a greeting, [illegible] if it is appropriate to the person who uses it. The person with higher

If a casual, informal style, normal between persons who are acquainted, is used as a summons to a stranger, the recipient is under no obligation to answer. "Hi, there. Know the time?" can sound fresh and rude. If a male says that to a female and she answers, he may well assume that she is willing to give more than the time. If a female uses a casual, informal style to summon a male, he is likely to assume that it is a sexual invitation. Even if a same sex stranger asks it, the other party need not answer. Not allowing the casual style at the outset of interactions with strangers protects our privacy. It ensures that we need not spend our emotions and time with every stranger who comes down the pike. At the same time it ensures that strangers can get necessary information such as time or directions. This is another example of how crucial style is to social interaction. It also illustrates the rigid conventions that govern even trivial interactions, as well as the social reasons for those conventions.

EXERCISES

1. Find two examples of stylistic variants in any social situation(s) of your choice. Write each down, along with the context that elicited it, the status of both speaker and listeners, and the message conveyed. Explain why you think these are stylistic variants, not part of the linguistic system itself.

2. Jot down the address forms that you give and receive in any locale of your choice: work, school, home, party, or the like. Do not work from memory. From these forms can you make any judgments about the social structure of the community or locale you observed?

3. If you know someone who seems to speak more loudly or softly than others, observe that person closely. Is your sense of loudness or softness caused by an actual difference in amplitude or by differences in the number of times the person interrupts or the rapidity with which the person responds to slight pauses in another's speech?

4. Try to violate co-occurrence restrictions in greetings and address with people you know well. How do they respond? Do they attempt repairs, and, if so, how?

5. Find one example of the use of a particular register in your speech. Correlate it with the social situations that require its use.

chapter 4

KINESICS

Facial expressions, posture, and gesture, all part of body motion, more formally known as *kinesics*, form yet another component to the human communication system. Style and kinesics together are called *paralanguage*. Some kinesic messages seem to be much the same for all human beings. Others vary from culture to culture. Along with style, kinesics, which includes the way we space ourselves or direct our eyes, controls social interactions. Moreover, how we are perceived by others is strongly influenced by the way we handle our paralinguistic system.

4.1 *The silent messages*

Communication is not by voice alone. It is by posture, gesture, and facial expression, even how we space ourselves relative to others. As with the vocal cues such as pitch and timbre that give purely social and emotional information, body movement is difficult to describe and analyze because we respond to it subconsciously. We are often not even aware of what we are responding to (Hall 1959). Frequently, if we are miscued or feel something is wrong, we simply feel uncomfortable without quite knowing why. As with style, this can be a basis for discomfort when interacting with people from cultures different from our own. It may also cause us, in all innocence, to ascribe the wrong characteristics to those whose "silent language," to use Hall's term, differs from ours.

Kinesics refers to matters of body movement, posture, gesture, facial expression, eye gaze and physical placement between parties in an interaction. Along with those elements of style like pitch, timbre, and loudness, it constitutes the paralinguistic system that operates with the linguistic system proper (*linguistic* referring to phonemes, morphemes, words, and syntax, as discussed in Chapter 1).

4.2 *Nature or nurture*

Like language itself, kinesics seems to be both inborn and culturally determined. There seem to be certain facial expressions, gestures, and body movements that generally mean the same thing in all cultures. There are other kinesic messages, perhaps most, that have specific meanings to particular cultures. Even if they are seen in more than one culture, they will mean different things in each.

Charles Darwin (1965) felt that human expressive movements are the vestige of biologically useful movements that later became innately linked to emotional experience. A pushing away movement of the hand accompanying a negative response, for example, may be viewed as the vestige of actually pushing away a danger.

Darwin and later ethologists like Lorenz and Goodall noted the similarities of expression between man and other animals. One example is the brief raising of the eyebrows to indicate recognition. This has been observed in wolves and apes as well as man. In many human cultures, this has extended its meaning to indicate sexual desire or invitation. Old movie buffs will recall that male and female movie stars in the 1920s and 1930s had the entire area from eyebrow to eyelid painted to emphasize looks of sexual invitation. Groucho Marx's exaggerated eyebrow lifts were a parody of this sexual message. With or without paint, raising of the eyebrows is used for flirting in many cultures. It also commonly occurs to indicate surprise or agreement with ideas. The Polynesians carry it one step further, using an eyebrow lift alone to mean 'yes' (Eibl-Eiblesfeldt 1972). Universally, all eyebrow liftings mean 'yes' to social contact, sexual or not.

Raised eyebrows signal to another person that he or she is being looked at. In our own culture, the idiom "looking at him/her/them with raised eyebrows" means that someone disapproves of a particular behavior. *Raised eyebrows*, in this instance, refers to staring, as the idiom implies that the eyebrows remain raised for more than the split second necessary to signal recognition or invitation. Like so many other idioms, this one reflects our virtually subconscious knowledge of what is going on in ordinary interactions. Although raised eyebrows universally signal that someone is being looked at, still the degree of raising, the duration of raising, whether it is with or without eye widening may all be manipulated to give different messages within cultures and cross culturally.

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4.3 *Two cases in point*

Ekman and Frisen (1976), comparing the Fore tribesmen in New Guinea with American college students, found great similarity in signaling specific emotions by facial expression. Their result argues that nature more than nurture governs facial expressions.

The Fore selected for the study had had virtually no contact with Europeans or Americans. The experimental protocol was simple yet ingenious. The Fore were told simple narratives, such as "His/her friends have come, and he/she is happy." The subjects had to point to a photograph of a face that illustrated this emotion. Experimenters were careful to avert their faces from the subjects' view so that they would not inadvertently influence the results by making the appropriate face themselves. Later, the investigators showed pictures of the Fore tribesmen to American college students, and asked them to identify the

facial expressions as happy, sad, disgusted, surprised or fearful. The two groups, the Fore and the Americans, agreed in their judgments. Because people could identify emotions on the faces of people from other cultures, Ekman and Frisen concluded that specific facial expressions are associated with particular emotions for all human beings.

Eibl-Eiblesfeldt (1972) offers even more conclusive evidence for the same position. He noted that three deaf and blind children with no hands smiled, sulked, laughed, and showed surprise and anger with expressions like those of children who can see. He also observed blind children with hands, but critics were quick to point out that such children could have learned normal facial expressions by touching faces making different expressions.

4.4 *There are smiles, and then there are smiles*

Although the basic human repertoire for facial expression may be the same, there is plenty of evidence showing that each culture modifies that repertoire. Smiles provide us with a good example. All human beings smile, but there are many kinds of smiles. Each culture smiles in somewhat different ways for somewhat different purposes. Even within a culture, there are many smiles. In the United States, for instance, there are friendly smiles, wide grins, sly smiles, skeptical smiles, derisive, threatening, and sick ones. Some cultures demand a wide smile, teeth showing, upon greeting. Others find this too forward, greeting people with close-mouthed or only narrowly open-lipped smiles. Others greet each other deadpan. Some smile when scolded or asking a favor. Others do not.

The situations that call for smiles and for each type of smile seem to be culturally determined. In a multicultural society this can cause misunderstanding. Persons who do not smile enough for one group are pegged as cold and unfeeling. Frequent smilers, or those whose smiles are broader than other groups, strike nonsmilers as being phony or stupid. One of the most often quoted examples of cultural misunderstanding because of differences in smiling habits is that of Japanese–American children. In Japanese culture, children smile when they are being scolded as a sign of respect to their elders. If their teachers are not aware of this, they assume that the children are being rude. LaBarre (1947) mentions the Japanese custom of smiling even at the death of a beloved. This is not because of any hardheartedness. Rather, the bereaved smiles so as not to inflict his or her sorrow upon others.

Birdwhistell (1970) counted the frequency of smiling in different regions of the United States. He found that people in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois smiled more often than those in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine. Western New Yorkers smiled less than New Englanders. People smiled the most in Atlanta, Georgia, and both Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee. Those from the Appalachian areas of those states smiled much less.

chapter 5

DISCOURSE ROUTINES

We control others and they control us by shared discourse routines. By saying certain thin[illegible] the other party in a dialogue forces certain responses in us. Questions demand answers, [illegible] compliments elicit thanks, for instance. In order to understand these routines, one m[illegible] understand the society in which they occur. Simply knowing the language is not sufficient[illegible] the true meaning often lies not in the actual words uttered but in a complex of [illegible] knowledge. Examining such routines can help us understand the unspoken assumptions [illegible] which a society is based.

5.1 *A paradox*

Language makes us free as individuals but chains us socially. It [illegible] already been demonstrated that we are not mere creatures of conditioning w[illegible] it comes to language. We can say things we never heard before, as well [illegible] understand what we have not previously heard.

When we consider discourse rules, however, we find a strange paradox. T[illegible] social rules of language often force us into responding in certain ways. We [illegible] far from free in forming sentences in actual social situations. Frequently [illegible] must respond whether we want to or not. Furthermore, we must respond [illegible] certain ways (see Givon 1979; Schenkein 1979; Labov and Fanshel 19[illegible]

5.2 *Meaning and the social situation*

The actual meaning of an utterance depends partially on the [illegible] context in which it occurs.

Rommetveit (1971) gives a classic example of this. He tells a story a[illegible] man running for political office who is scheduled to give a talk in a [illegible] auditorium. When he arrives, he sees that there are not enough chairs. He [illegible] his wife at home. Then he goes to see the janitor. To each, the candidate [illegible] "There aren't enough chairs." To the wife, this means 'Wow! am I popula[illegible] to the janitor it means 'Go get some more chairs.' The full meaning evo[illegible] the statement "There aren't enough chairs" is largely a product of the co[illegible] which it is said, including the relative social statuses, privileges and d[illegible] the speaker and listener. The remainder of this chapter is concerned w[illegible] obligations society places upon us in discourse, as well as the real mea[illegible] utterances in a social context.

5.3 *Speech events, genres, and performances*

A speech event is the situation calling forth particular ways of speaking (Gordon and Lakoff 1975). Genre refers to the form of speaking. Usually, it has a label, such as *joke, narrative, promise, riddle, prayer,* even *greeting* or *farewell.*

Members of a speech community recognize genres as having beginnings, middles, and ends, and as being patterned. "Did you hear the one about . . .", for instance, is a recognized opener for the genre *joke* in our society. "Once upon a time . . ." is a recognized opener for the genre *child's story,* and the ending is "They lived happily ever after." The end of *joke* is the *punch line,* often a pun, an unusual or unexpected response to a situation or utterance, or a stupid response by one of the characters in the joke. Typically the stupid response to a situation is one that reveals that the character is lacking in some basic social knowledge or one in which the social meaning of an utterance is ignored and its literal meaning is taken instead. For instance, an old Beetle Bailey cartoon [illegible] Sarge saying to Zero "The wastebasket is full." Instead of emptying the basket, Zero responds "Even I can see that." The joke is that Zero took the words at their face value rather than interpreting them as a command, which was [illegible] actual social force.

Sometimes the genre is the entire speech event but not always. Church services are speech events, for instance. *Sermons* are a genre belonging to [illegible], but sermons do not cover the entire speech event. Prayers, responsive [illegible], hymn singing, and announcements also constitute the speech events of [illegible] services.

[illegible] way that participants carry out the demands of a genre is their performance. In some communities, this is more important than others. Also, performance is more important in some speech events than others. A professor's performance, for instance, is far more important than that of the students in the [illegible]. The exception would be those classes in which students have been [illegible] special speaking tasks.

[illegible] *important* is not quite the right word. The professor's performance [illegible] judged more overtly than a student's and judged according to different [illegible]. These are the criteria judged in public performance, such as clarity of [illegible] voice quality, logic of lecture, and coherence. Correct performance in [illegible] speech events is just as important, but in those judgment is often [illegible] how appropriate the speech was to the situation. Everyday discourse [illegible] as much performances as are preaching, joke-telling, and lecturing. [illegible] often use the word performance in a more general sense than here. [illegible] to refer to one's actual speech, which may contain errors, such as [illegible] tongue. Since people often realize that they have made speech [illegible] linguists say that there is a difference between competence and [illegible]. In this chapter, performance will refer specifically to one's ability [illegible] the requirements of a speech event in a given social situation. This, [illegible] differs from one's competence in that one can be aware of errors in one's

example, that a prepared lecture is boring a class to sleep, or a partygoer may be unable to think of any of the small talk or repartee called for at a party.

Performances in discourse routines are strongly controlled by turn-taking rules that determine who speaks when. Co-occurrence restrictions (Chapter 3) operate stringently on genres. Often the speech event itself determines them. The genre of sermons occurs in the speech event of church services. Therefore, only features that go with formal style are usually used in sermons. Jokes, in contrast, occur in informal, play situations or as a means of helping someone relax and become more informal. Therefore, formal style features are inappropriate in jokes, so that they are included usually only in the reported conversation of a character in the joke.

wife - fat

5.4 *Intention*

manipulate the speaker

In all interaction, the parties assume that each person means what he or she says and is speaking with a purpose. Esther Goody (1978) points out that people impute intentions to others. In fact, she notes, they "positively seek out intentions in what others say and do." What people assume is another's intention colors the meaning they get from messages. How often has someone suspiciously said to a perfectly innocent comment of yours, "Now what did you mean by that?" The question is not asking for literal meaning but for your intention in saying what you did. Presequences rely heavily on our perceiving a speaker's intentions or thinking we do. The child who hears an adult's "Who spilled this milk?" may rightly perceive the question as the precursor to a command "Wipe it up!"

Often, intentions are not perceived correctly, causing misunderstandings as harmless as hearing an honest question as a command or as serious as hearing an innocent comment as an insult. To illustrate the last, consider a man who, in front of his slightly plump wife, looks admiringly at a model, "Wow! what a body on that one!" The wife immediately bridles (or dissolves in tears, depending on her personal style) with a "I know I'm too fat. You don't have to rub it in."

The only time that we are freed from the obligation to carry out the socially prescribed roles in speech events is when the other party is incapable of acting with a purpose, as when drunk, stoned, or insane (Frake 1964). Perhaps one of the reasons that we get so angry when someone does not act or speak appropriately for the situation is that we can not figure out his or her goals. Without knowing someone's goals, we do not know how to act ourselves when dealing with another person.

5.5 *Speech acts*

People usually think of speech as a way of stating propositions and conveying information. Austin (1962) also stressed the functions of speech as a way of "doing things with words." Sociolinguists and anthropologists have [illegible]

[illegible] concerned with how people use language to manage social interactions. Threatening, complimenting ("buttering someone up"), commanding, even questioning can all be manipulative. Another person's behavior may be affected quite differently from what one might expect from the actual words used. "See that belt?" may be sufficient to restrain a child from wrongdoing. The words themselves are an action. The child, of course, imputes intention to the words. They are heard as a threat of a spanking with the belt.

[illegible] *A case in point: the telephone*

The ritual nature of conversation as well as the role of social convention in determining meaning is easily seen in rules for the telephone (Schegloff [illegible]). The telephone has been common in American homes only for the past [illegible] or so years. Yet very definite rules surround its usage. Exactly how such [illegible] arose and became widespread throughout society is not precisely known, [illegible] than we know exactly how a new dialect feature suddenly spreads [illegible] a population. All we know is that whenever a social need arises, [illegible] forms evolve to meet the need.

The first rule of telephone conversation in the United States is that the [illegible] speaks first. It does not have to be so. The rule could as easily be that [illegible] caller speaks first. That makes perfectly good sense, as it means that the one [illegible] is identified at once. Of course, the American way makes equally good [illegible] in that callers are ensured that the receiver is at someone's ear before they [illegible] speak. There are often several equally logical possibilities in conversa[illegible], but any one group may adopt just one of the possible alternatives. In [illegible] words, if we come across ways different from our own, we should not [illegible] that "theirs" are any better or worse than "ours."

[illegible] event, in the United States, the convention is that the answerer speaks [illegible] the call could conceivably be for the answerer because he or she is [illegible] the phone in his or her home, the usual first utterance is "Hello." [illegible] of business or in a doctor's or lawyer's office, wherever secretaries [illegible] answer the phone, "Hello" is not proper. Rather, the name of the [illegible] or office is given, as in "E. B. Marshall Company," "Smith and [illegible]," "Dr. Sloan's office" or "George West Junior High." Giving the [illegible] itself means 'This is a business, institution, or professional office.' At [illegible] it was appropriate for servants in a household or even neighbors or [illegible] happened to pick up the phone to answer "Jones' residence" rather [illegible] "Hello," unless the call might conceivably be for the answerer. Increas[illegible], however, it appears that people answer "Hello" to a residential phone [illegible] call might not be for them. This situation can lead to complications, [illegible] the callers still seem to assume that whoever answers "Hello" [illegible] that phone.

[illegible] custom of answering with one's name, as "Carl Jones here" [illegible] a very efficient solution. Many American callers get thrown off by

chapter 6

VERBAL SKILL, THE SOCIAL UNIVERSAL

Some people with formal education imagine that their education confers special men[illegible] powers. Unbiased examination of the discourse of people with little schooling, howev[illegible] reveals that they too reason logically, argue cogently, and manipulate language intellige[illegible] and effectively. The everyday speech activities of a social group reveal underlying attitudes a[illegible] some of the conditions under which they are living. Finally, discourse activities play [illegible] important role in ego-boosting.

6.1 *Discourse activities*

Almost every social group grants high status to members with [illegible] verbal skills, but different social groups value different skills. In middle [illegible] American culture, the skills most respected are those associated with for[illegible] schooling: reading books designated as texts and reproducing part or all of [illegible] contents on paper. This is known as passing tests. A good deal of adult [illegible] depends upon the skill with which this was done in childhood and how long [illegible] adulthood test passing was carried on. But there are more kinds of verbal ac[illegible] than book learning. So much do we forget this fact that when we come [illegible] contact with people to whom book learning is not important, we assum[illegible] they are nonverbal.

6.2 *The training of the man of words in talking sweet*

Roger Abrahams (1972) shows how fallacious such middl[illegible] attitudes are. He studied Afro-Americans on St. Vincent's Island, a p[illegible] that traditionally has had little opportunity for formal education. As is [illegible] in the Caribbean, daily interaction is carried out in an English–African [illegible] Creole means that two languages have melded together into one new [illegible] Afro-Americans call this Creole "talking bad" or "talking broken," [illegible] call Standard English "talking sweet" or "talking sensible." There is [illegible] intrinsically broken or bad about Creole, but people everywhere [illegible] evaluate their own speech in the way the most prestigious members [illegible] do. As Labov (1966) showed, all members of a community have pretty [illegible] same norms, no matter how they actually speak (Chapter 8).

It is the duty of the head of each household in St. Vincent's to ensure that the children learn to talk sweet. They send children to learn from members of the community known for speech-making ability. Talking sweet is displayed at occasions calling for speeches. A gifted speech-maker is known as "a man of words." Everyone is expected to make a speech at weddings, baptisms, and send-offs, but only the best speak at big fetes like Christmas. Then, during serenading, songs alternate with orations of praise.

Although the custom was already dying out by the time of his writing, Abrahams explained that, traditionally, speech skills are sharpened at a "tea meeting." Here, an orator or oratress has to get up and speak while "pit boys" in the audience bang sticks. This is called "rapping." The pit boys "rag" the speaker, usually by shouting mocking rhymes. The orator not only has to keep cool and finish the speech but, by use of facts and by being sensible, confuse the mockers. All this must be done while adhering to a speech that was memorized.

The man who teaches such consummate oral skill is called a "professor." The pupil is a "scholar," and the speech the scholar learns is called a "lesson." The professor not only writes the speeches and teaches elocution but stresses mental and verbal agility: being quick on the uptake, being original, and clever. The entire contest is a battle of wits as well as a demonstration of the ability to talk sweet. One must remember that these are the poor, the unlettered, those relegated to menial labor. Yet they engage in activities worthy of those with Ph.D.s. In fact most Ph.D.'s would be hard put to compete orally with the quick cleverness of the St. Vincent's scholar and his or her professor. Just because people do not engage in formal booklearning, it does not mean they do not have verbal skills comparable to those who do.

6.3 *Logic and nonstandard speakers*

Labov, Cohen, Robins, and Lewis (1968) give a very good example of logical argumentation in a nonstandard speaker. At the time of their investigation, the Harlem street gangs were heavily involved in the Muslim religion. The same boys who were virtually illiterate in regular school were studying history, science, and reading in the Muslim schools. They often took oral tests, which was called "being put on the square" or displaying "heavy knowledge", although that terminology may not have been used in other Black communities.

That the tests were oral is significant. Unlike the dominant middle-class culture, ghetto Blacks have an oral culture. It is speaking skill that gives one prestige, not writing. The ability to win arguments by quickness, facts, and logic is at a premium.

Labov et al. often took gang members on trips. Since one tenet of the Muslim religion is vegetarianism, this posed a problem in providing lunches. Once, unthinkingly, Labov and his team prepared tomato sandwiches with mayonnaise. Since mayonnaise has eggs in it several boys objected, saying, in effect,

eggs are from chickens, chickens are meat, so eggs are meat. To this, one bo[y]
Quahab, responded, using the dramatic intonation of Black preaching styl[e]

> 1. No, bro', we din't eat no meat. You might as well say we drunk
> because it was in a liquid fo-orm.
>
> (Labov et al. 1968, p. 1[...]

The preaching style includes a chanting, as well as an elongating of the fi[...]
word of a sentence, often one crucial to the argument. Quahab continued

> 2. Dig it, it ain't even in existence yet, dig that. It ain't even in existe[...]
> yet. It didn't come to be a chicken yet. You can detect it wi[...]
> physical eye, you can detect that.
>
> (p. 1[...]

Both the logic of the argument against eating mayonnaise and Quah[...]
hairsplitting are worthy of theologians and the argumentation is not hamp[...]
by the nonstandard speech forms like *ain't*.

It often comes as a surprise to the college educated that the uneducated w[...]
speak what is considered incorrect English are capable of sophistic[...]
intellectual argumentation. Deep discussions about human nature, theol[...]
and politics are far from rare in the bars, on the streetcorners, and in the c[...]
where non-middle-class men and boys gather. This is not to say that wome[...]
not also indulge in such considerations. It is just that we do not know. So [...]
working and lower class women, Black or White, have rarely been investig[...]
and most studies of Black speech have been of the speech of males.

In what has come to be called the ghetto, the discussions of the males o[...]
take on a competitive aura, much like that of scholars. Each participant see[...]
gain supremacy by his brilliant argumentation. Quahab's glib rea[...]
suggests a skill born of practice. This is not only because of his preoccup[...]
with the Muslim religion. Larry, a fifteen-year-old nonbeliever, was asked [...]
knew what happens to people after death. His response is the heart of W[...]
Labov's *The Logic of Nonstandard English* (1969). Larry argued that i[...]
true that one goes to heaven if one is good, and hell if one is not. He note[...]
everybody has a different idea of god:

> 3. I have seen black gods, pink gods, white gods, all color go[...]

therefore, nobody knows if there is a god, and

> 4. Your spirit goin' to hell anyway, good or bad . . . You ain't goi[...]
> heaven 'cause it ain't no heaven for you to go to.

When he was asked how there can be a hell if there is no heaven, [...]
recovered quickly, saying that hell is right here on earth. Later he argue[...]

there is a god, He is White. His reasoning was impeccable, although his facts arguable. Larry said that the "average Whitey" has everything, and Blacks have nothing. In his own words, in order for that to happen there couldn't be a Black god. Larry handled cause and effect very well. Beside his liberal sprinkling of obscenities and grammar forms horrible to the middle-class ear, such as double negatives and *ain't*, were the words marking logical connection. He used *if*, *'cause*, and *in order to* the same way his educated counterparts would. This must be emphasized considering the view of Bereiter and Engelmann (1966), Deutsch (1967), and Bernstein (1971) that the uneducated have restricted codes that limit their ability to think, especially their ability to make use of the very logical connectors that Larry used.

Abrahams (1972, 1974) and Labov (1969), among others, have shown that logical argumentation is part of everyday verbal gaming in Harlem and other Black ghettoes. Throughout his works, Labov supposes that such gaming is unique to Blacks. Indeed, he implies that lower class Whites are verbally dull compared to Blacks (Labov et al. 1968, p. 90). But this is not so, for lower class Whites as well as Blacks engage in verbal competition of all sorts. The specific forms some of the activities take may be somewhat different, but the activity itself is essentially the same, demanding the same abilities.

Both Whites and Blacks with little formal education argue about weighty matters like politics, religion, and life in general, as well as engage in verbal play. Different ethnic groups may play somewhat differently, but verbal jousting exists for them in one form or another. Verbal play may consist of any or all of the following:

- Being quick on the uptake;
- Verbal thrusting such as joking insults;
- Making a joke out of something another has just said;
- Conning others by telling outrageous lies with a straight face;
- Dueling verbally in boasting contests, riddles (Dundes, Leach, and Ozkok 1972), song writing, telling jokes, or making up rhymes of various kinds.

Certainly educated Blacks and Whites do the same things, but among them such activities appear to be more a matter of individual taste than of social obligation. Perhaps people lacking formal education and formal high status use such oral displays as a way of gaining status. Wit, repartee, and drollness are all admired by the formally educated, but for them a person's ultimate status is determined less by oral performance than by bookish or business skills.

Much of the literature on Blacks reads as if only Blacks indulge in feats of oral skill. Very little research has been done on such skills among Whites, and the work that has been done (e.g., Schatzman and Strauss 1972) has compared lower and working class Whites to the middle class. Since such research has measured middle class skills in middle class settings, Whites with little formal education have fared poorly. In contrast, Black oral activities have been studied

HW: 5-6

EXERCISES

1. If you participate in a sport or hobby, collect at least five words and phrases that are used only in that activity and have special meaning in the activity. You may collect such items during an actual game or discussion between afficionados or while reading an article on the subject of the game or hobby. Make a glossary as was done for the jargons presented in this chapter.

2. Can you find any other linguistic features of the jargon listed as exercise 1? Can you find a causal relation between the activity for which the jargon was created and the kinds of words that have developed for it?

3. If you do not engage in sports or hobbies that have associated jargons, make up a word for some everyday activity that you do in the company of at least one other person. Use the word as often as you can to see whether the other person will ask you what it means or even start to use it.

4. Instead of the preceding exercises, you may prefer to scan the sports page, theater column, or other special section of the newspaper to see how many jargon words you can find. List the words and note why you consider them jargon. If you are unfamiliar with the topic, give the meaning that you assume to be true just by the context. Then, by consulting a dictionary or someone conversant with the activity, determine whether you decoded them correctly.

5. What insults can you throw at your siblings or your friends without getting them really angry at you? What would be taken as a real insult? Test your conclusions by actually insulting either siblings or friends. What kinds of responses do you get?

6. Does the pattern of insults in exercise 5 tell you anything about the values held by your social group?

Choose one of exercise to show your teacher.

chapter 7

EVERYBODY SPEAKS A DIALECT

It's hard to realize that our individual accents sound as different to others as theirs do to us. What seems only natural to our own ears may strike another as cute or harsh or suave or high class or brash or affected or something else. Words and grammar differ from dialect to dialect, as do sounds. Even in these days of mass communication, dialect differences are not necessarily disappearing. Dialect differences are important to social interaction itself. The tremendous concern of the middle classes with "correct" speech is explicable when the social functions of dialect are considered.

7.1 *Dialect and accent*

Dialect is the technical name for what Americans usually think of as an accent. Strictly speaking, accent refers only to differences in pronunciation between one variety of a language and another. Dialect refers to all the differences between varieties of a language, those in pronunciation, word usage, and syntax. Often, as indicated in Chapter 4, there are paralinguistic differences between dialects: timbre, tempo, and the like, as well as kinesic differences. These are usually ignored in traditional dialect studies, but that does not mean they are unimportant. To the contrary, they are often vital in rendering a dialect and in perceiving it. However, only the linguistic differences—the phonology, lexicon, and syntax—will be considered in this chapter. In themselves they are complex, and analyzing them serves to illustrate the important points about dialects and how and why they are used in social groups.

7.2 *Language versus dialect*

No sharp demarcation exists between language and dialect. As a rule of thumb, if two varieties of speech are mutually intelligible, they are considered dialects. If they are not, they are considered separate languages. In actual practice the situation is far more complicated. Today, partially because so many languages have become far flung all over the world, often one of the dialects of a given language is likely to be understood by all speakers of that language. Some of the other dialects, however, may be understood by relatively few speakers, or at least not by all. For example, in Barbados, the dialect of English associated with Blacks, like that used in the verbal contests of St. Vincent's described in Chapter 6, is called "talking bad." American and British visitors cannot

understand it, although they have no problem with standard Barbados English, which is spoken by many Blacks and by White natives. Those Barbadans who speak the standard form of Barbados English report that "bad talk" is just another kind of English to them. In fact, several expressed surprise to me that English speakers from other places have any problems with it at all.

Some readers may think this Barbadan speech is not a fair example, because many scholars maintain that all Afro-English is a Creole, a mix of Africanisms with English. Perhaps a better example is Yorkshire English or the English of rural Ireland. A few of these dialects are either completely or partially incomprehensible to some Americans although apparently, not to the British or the Irish. There are probably American dialects that the British or Irish have problems understanding. Frequently the person whose dialect is incompre hensible to another can understand that other person. One of the worst nights of my life was spent in a charming pub in Cornwall, England. A Yorkshire man engaged me in conversation, apparently having no difficulty with my American ese. Unfortunately I could not understand a word he said. I was not even sure when he was asking questions, as his intonation was completely different from any I had encountered. All I could do for hours on end was listen and say "Uh huh" politely, hoping I was not consenting to anything.

It is not only English that has such problems. In Italy, for instance, althoug bordering dialects are mutually comprehensible, those farther apart ofte become increasingly incomprehensible to each other. Speakers of rural dialec from the south of Italy often cannot be understood by speakers from the north

One reason for the emergence in modern times of standard dialects, dialec that do not belong to any particular region, is the need for a speech variety th all people ruled by one national government can understand. As this need h grown in modern technological societies, the more widespread has been th development of national standards.

Political boundaries, in themselves, often determine whether two spe varieties will be considered different languages or not. For instance, so varieties of Swedish and Norwegian are mutually comprehensible, but they a considered different languages because they are separated by national bord Conversely the so-called dialects of Chinese are as different as French fr Italian, but being spoken in one country they are not considered sepa languages. Sometimes ethnic and social factors determine whether or speech is considered a separate language. Most of the Yiddish dialects sp by Jews of Eastern Europe are mutually comprehensible with many varieti modern German. Both Germans and Jews regard Yiddish and Germa separate languages, however. This is a direct reflection of the separate reli and cultural affinities of Yiddish and German speakers. There are Jews speak both, however, although they consider themselves to be speaking separate languages.

Social factors can even determine whether or not speech is comprehensib all. In Africa, the Kalabari are a powerful and important people, but the N

who speak a closely related language are not. There seems to be no linguistic reason for the two speech varieties not to be mutually comprehensible. Yet the Kalabari claim that they do not understand the Nembe, and all communication between the two must be in Kalabari or Pidgin English.

A similar situation occurs in the United States. In public schools standard-speaking teachers confronted with nonstandard-speaking youngsters often claim difficulty in understanding them. The teachers complain that the students' speech is deficient or broken. As we shall see later in this chapter, however, nonstandard dialects are as systematically rule-governed as standard dialects. Standard speakers do not perceive this because of their attitudes to the nonstandard speakers.

7.3 *Standard dialect*

In modern countries the standard dialect can be understood by just about all speakers. Because it is also based upon the speech of the educated, which in most countries coincides with the written language, people often assume that the standard is the "true" language not realizing it is actually a dialect. Many people think that dialects are substandard, even defective. In fact, any variety of a language is technically a dialect, even the educated standard. Everyone speaks a dialect. Everyone has an "accent," except perhaps in those languages with so few speakers that there are no varieties at all. The dialect that becomes standard is an accident of history. It has nothing to do with intrinsic worth of the standard. All dialects are inherently equal, just as all languages are.

Socially however dialects are not all equal. A Briton might deliver a scientific paper in British RP, received pronunciation of English spoken by the educated British, but not in Cockney, the street dialect of London. However, Cockney might be better in a brawl. A Brooklyn accent does not seem appropriate for lecturing college classes, but it is very convincing for arguing the merits of a baseball team or even politics. Television commercials often gear the speech variety to the product being sold: *Shake and Bake* and a Southern accent; *Poland Springs* mineral water and a stage Maine accent; four-wheel drives and Texas accents. The accent suitable for a given purpose is related to the generally held image of people who speak that way.

Frequently, because we associate certain kinds of speech with certain kinds of activities, a dialect will take on a vocabulary especially efficient for those activities. Hence, educated dialects have developed a tremendous number of scientific and other learned words. These differ from jargon words only in that they are used by more diverse groups in broader social situations. Other dialects could as easily include the same words, but they do not because they are not used for the purposes that demand the particular expression.

Much of the ensuing discussion will be devoted to showing that nonstandard speech is as intelligent and complete as standard. This is essential to understand

itself affect your feelings about or judgment of the character? In each instance determine whether the character's role in the show is emphasized by the accent or if the accent just seems to be an accident of casting.

3. Are you aware of any word(s) in your dialect that differ from words for the same thing(s) in other dialects of your language?

4. Do the TV announcers in your area speak with the local accent? If it is the case that some do and some do not, is there a difference in what is announced by those who do speak with the local accent?

chapter 8

SOCIOLINGUISTIC INVESTIGATIONS

Traditional dialect investigations were concerned with regional differences, especially with making maps showing the distribution of dialect features. These still provide some social and historical information about people of different regions. With the discovery that the dialect a person uses correlates with his or her feelings of identity, dialect investigations within a community have been developed that give important sociological insights. Insight is also garnered by examining how people feel about the speech of others and how they think they themselves speak. People are often quite unaware of how they actually speak, thinking they sound like those they profess to admire. Discovering both present social stratification and changing conditions can be done via dialect investigations. The implications of such studies for education are followed by a discussion of how dialects arise within a society and whether some dialects can be more restricted than others.

8.1 *Traditional dialect studies*

Traditional dialect studies concentrate on fine points of pronunciation and lexical differences in different regions. If syntax is noticed at all, it will be with respect to those items that are most closely related to word choice, such as *you-all* or the selection of *dived, div* or *dove* as one of dialectal variants for the past tense of *dive*. Such studies do not treat the topics discussed in Chapter 7: entire verb tense systems or interrelated rules of pronunciation, like the /r/ rules. This is probably because traditional dialect investigations were best at eliciting single words from consultants, not entire sentences, much less discourses. They were concerned with linguistic geography, the regional distribution of differences in speech (McIntosh 1952; Bloomfield 1965). Since the earlier investigators were scholars thoroughly trained in the history of language, they were also very interested in the spread of words and sounds from one region to another because of cultural influence or migration. Their aim was to prepare linguistic atlases of the speech of various countries. Such maps have been partly made for nearly all the European countries, including Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, and the Slavic countries.

Linguists in North America began the painstaking work for such an atlas in 1931. Raven McDavid, Jr. as principal field worker for this project, entitled *The Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada*, explains its purpose as follows in 1958: "Thus, the American Atlas seeks to record data illustrating the social differences, the dimension of time, and the process of language and dialect mixture that has been going on everywhere since the New World was settled."

8.2 *The methods of the Linguistic Atlas*

As with the European studies upon which it was based, the American linguistic atlas was concerned with the differences in speech between educated and uneducated speakers. To this end, field workers trained to transcribe speech selected at least two speakers from each area: an older, uneducated speaker and a younger (middle aged) speaker who usually had at least a high school education. The field workers asked for information from questionnaires prepared for the atlas survey, such as the names of certain activities or items, noting the word choice itself as well as the pronunciation used. The three examples below are typical atlas questions, still pertinent today. The words in parentheses are some of the answers one might expect:

1a. [What do you call] The place to which children run in a tag game. (goal, guwl, base, home den)

b. Someone who won't change his mind is _____? (bullheaded, contrary, sôt)

c. A large, open metal container for scrub water is a _____? (pail, bucket)

(Shuy 1967)

The questionnaires listed 520 to 850 items. All responses had to be transcribed carefully in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Competent field workers were always in short supply. In the days before sensitive tape recorders, workers had to be able to discriminate fine phonetic differences on the spot.

After the painstaking work of collecting the data, they had to be sorted and classified. Maps showing both pronunciation and word choice had to be prepared. Thus it took years to complete the investigation of each area and even longer for the publication of results. The New England Atlas, known as LANE (Linguistic Atlas of New England), was begun in 1931 but was not completed until 1943. In rapidly changing countries as large as the United States and Canada the first part of such an investigation is likely to be outdated long before the last is completed. Very little of the United States and Canada was ever covered by the atlas at all. The field work was completed for New England, the Middle and South Atlantic states to the northeast tip of Florida, the North Central States, and the upper Midwest. The field work has been completed and the linguistic atlases have been published for the first three of these regions (O'Cain 1979). This does not mean that there are no linguistic geographies of the rest of North America. There have been studies in selected areas throughout, but a complete atlas is far from a reality. The original plan was logical enough: start with the areas of first settlement and move westward as migration did. In 1931 the East Coast seemed entrenched as the cultural and educational centers of the country. It was hard to foresee that influence would start flowing West.

East, with important consequences for linguistic geography. The fact that /r/ pronouncing in words like *park* is becoming the American standard is a prime example of this shift.

Although the concerns of dialect geography and sociolinguistics intersect, a complete discussion of the former is really outside the province of this book. Here, we are mainly concerned with the two facets of dialectology considered the province of sociolinguistics, although, admittedly, it is sometimes difficult to draw a hard line between the fields:

- The ways that speech shows the social groupings within a community;
- The social markers for which people listen, no matter how subconsciously, in their social dealings in a community.

8.3 *Problems with the atlas investigations*

More recent investigations have uncovered some problems with the kind of traditional study represented by the atlas efforts. The first is that people in interview situations use their most careful speech, what they think is correct, not what they ordinarily use. McDavid (1979) objects that some of the field workers did manage to get casual style from consultants. However, there was no regular attempt to get more than one style from them. Formal style is as necessary to a sociolinguistic investigation as casual style is. Comparing both styles for any given speaker reveals crucial sociological information. Such comparisons are missing from earlier studies.

Furthermore, for the most part, all the atlases give us is a record of single words. There is virtually no information about sentence structure or the forms of discourse, much less the purposes for which they are used. To be fair, linguistics itself as a social science had not yet begun a serious interest in such matters at the time of the atlas studies. One example will suffice to show the limitations and yet the need for atlas studies. Linguistic geography shows that the working class in Eastern New England and New York City share the same /r/ rules as speakers of southern British dialects. That tells us a great deal about the history of the dialects and their range, but it does not tell us anything about the social growth of the /r/ rules in the different countries and the social purposes for which they are used.

An atlas can provide a framework for future study. It shows us what we might be looking for and gives a historical framework for interpretations of linguistic differences. That is the function of traditional dialect studies, and it is not fair to criticize them for not being what they were never intended to be. Hence these comments should not be taken as a criticism of the tremendously careful, detailed work of dialect geographers.

The biggest problem with the atlas—one that renders it of dubious value even as a framework—is the paucity of speakers interviewed in each region. The

chapter 9

VOCABULARY AS A MIRROR OF SOCIAL REALITIES

All languages can say the same things, although many people imagine that their language can say things that others cannot. In order to compare vocabularies of different languages, it is important to consider semantic features of words. The vocabulary of a language reveals underlying attitudes of the society that produced it, as in euphemisms, taboo words and propaganda. The relationship between specific languages and thought must be considered in the light of what we know about vocabularies.

9.1 *All languages can say the same things*

So far as linguists know, all languages are mutually translatable. What can be said in one language can be said in any other—somehow. All languages are so constructed that new thoughts can be expressed in them. To be sure, it is easier to express some ideas in one language rather than another. This is because the vocabulary of each language develops partly according to the priorities of its culture. The objects, relationships, activities, and ideas important to the culture get coded into single words which are often highly specialized to express subtle nuances. Everyone's favorite example is the Eskimos, to whom snow is a central feature of life. For this reason, they have anywhere from eight to twelve distinct words for it: such as, one for the kind to make igloos with, and one for snow good for snowshoeing. European languages, having to deal with snow, but not so extensively as the Eskimos, typically have at least one word for it as opposed to rain. African languages, spoken where there is no snow, do not have a word for it. Still, they could describe it, as, for example, white, cold flowers from the sky that turn to water when they are touched.

People make their language say what they want it to, as we saw with jargons. If it were possible to say certain things in one language but not another, then we would have the problem that people who speak one language could know things that those in another could not. Bilinguals might have the problem of being able to know something in one language but not another. In fact, although it may be difficult to express a given idea in one language rather than another, there has never been any proof that it is impossible.

9.2 *Semantic features*

Words do not have holistic meaning. Rather, they are composed of features of meaning. For instance, *boy* is composed of features like [+human, +male, −power]. Features of one word can be transferred onto another, which is one important way we get meaning. Uriel Weinreich (1966) gave an apt example. *Pretty* has a feature of [+female]. If *pretty* is used with *boy*, the [+female] gets transferred so that *pretty boy* implies a feminine young male. In American culture, this often also implies a tinge of homosexuality. In the Eagles song "Hotel California," it is sufficient to say that a woman is surrounded by "pretty, pretty boys" to indicate their sexual persuasion. *Handsome*, which has the feature [+male], when used with *woman* implies an older woman, not a 'sex kitten' or 'sexpot.' Interestingly, this does not imply homosexuality.

Differences in meaning between two dialects or languages are often differences in the way features are attached to words. For example, in England, the features [+car, +top, +front] are attached to *bonnet*, but in America to *hood*. In the American South, the verb *favor* includes [+look like], but it does not in most of the North.

9.3 *Euphemism*

Words take on the semantic features [+good] or [+bad] according to how a particular culture feels about the item designated. If a word marked [+bad] denotes something that must be mentioned in the course of daily routine, other words are substituted. The substitutes, called euphemisms, are close in meaning, but do not quite mean the "bad" thing. Instead of having the feature [+bad], they are neutral or even pleasant.

One example is the attribute *fat*. The feature [+bad] is firmly attached to *fat* in America nowadays. It is no longer desirable on meat, much less on people. This poses a problem for clothing stores that wish to sell specially cut garments for the obese. These certainly cannot be called what they are: clothes for fat people. Rather, there are for girls: *chubbette, pretty plus*; for boys, *husky, husky plus*; for men, *portly, big*; and for women, *women's sizes* (as opposed to *misses* or *junior*), *full sizes, half-sizes*, and *hard-to-fit*. *Stout* used to be a euphemism, as in *stylish stouts*, but when it ceased being used in the general language in its original sense of 'healthy' and 'brave', it came too directly to mean 'fat'. One rarely sees the term in clothing departments any more. Similarly, the male *portly* is being replaced by *big* on labels.

Even in casual conversation, referring to a person's bulk, people skirt around the word *fat*. Instead, they say "Well, he certainly is big." or "It's hard for a big man to find clothes." *Plump*, an older, favorable term for 'fat' is today pretty much reserved for chickens or pillows. Students in my classes, when asked to list words for *fat*, typically consider *plump* archaic and humorous. The only

word associated with obesity that can be positively evaluated is *jolly*. Even so, this is restricted to Santa Claus and babies, who are still allowed to be fat in our society.

Cultures that do not find fat repugnant treat it differently in their word stock. In both Italian and Yiddish, for instance, the same word can be used for both *fat* and *healthy*. Occasionally, in English, *fat* and *healthy* can be used synonymously, as in *fat profit* and *healthy profit*. The choice of one over the other depends on our feeling about the profit in question: *fat* if we disapprove of or are gloating over the profit, *healthy* if we approve.

Some of the euphemisms for *fat* used to be words meaning 'strong' and 'tough', such as *stout* and *husky*. *Portly* used to mean 'imposing, dignified'. The euphemistic character of *pretty plus* is obvious, as is reference to *half-sizes* instead of the true 'size and a half'.

Euphemisms usually occur in sets of several words, none meaning exactly the thing referred to. When one euphemism becomes too directly associated with the disvalued meaning, it is replaced by other euphemisms.

This is clearly seen in euphemisms for the places where Americans urinate and defecate. Even with the supposed lifting of taboos in modern times, American prudishness about voiding remains in full force. Taboos about swearing, sex, and nudity have all weakened, but the bathroom functions still disgust us. One consequence of this is the dearth of public restrooms in America. In England, as one enters a town, there is usually a welcome sign proclaiming *Toilets*, with an arrow pointing the way. When Sigmund Freud visited the United States, he was appalled at the lack of facilities. Anyone who has ever traveled across country with small children still is.

The discomfort Americans have in mentioning elimination is well illustrated in the preceding paragraph. Except for the erudite Latinate *defecate* and *urinate*, there is not one direct polite term for the process under discussion. Nor is there even one direct term for the room where the body functions are performed. *Bathroom* actually means 'the place where one takes a bath'. In England, it still means that, since, unlike Americans, the British do not keep the tub and the "hopper" in the same room. *Toilet* originally meant 'getting dressed' as in the archaic, *She made her toilet*, or the survival *toilet water*. It must have been assumed that part of the process of getting dressed was '*going*'. Of course *restrooms*, another designation of the place to *go* are not for resting. Since we all know that the only place to rest when away from home is a hotel room, we hear *restroom* as a euphemism for the place in which we rest (stop) briefly for unmentionable purposes.

How unmentionable these purposes are is seen by general terms like *facilities* for the place and *going* for the acts. In many languages use of very general virtually empty terms, indicates a taboo. In English the word *facilities* usually has to be followed by *for X*, as in *the facilities for cooking*. When it occurs alone as in *I have to use the facilities*, it usually means the "loo," to use a British slang word for it. Similarly, *going* is normally followed by an adverb of place or

manner, as in *going to New York* or *going by plane*. By itself, it means one is voiding. Compare this with the general *doing it* used without reference to a previously stated act, which means 'fornicating'.

The sheer number of euphemisms for voiding indicates the degree of discomfort Americans have about bodily waste: *powder room, comfort station, head, lavatory, basement, John, little girls' room, little boys' room, lavette, commode, half-bath, loo*. In a restaurant, one often has to guess if the right room has been found, especially if only a coy picture is used on the door. Usually, there are two signs indicating male and female gender: *buoys, gulls; knights, damsels; his, hers; signor, signorina*.

In contrast, there is only one word in English for the place where food is prepared: the kitchen. Clearly, that is not taboo which, when you think of it, is odd in a society that disvalues fat.

9.4 *Propaganda*

Propaganda depends upon euphemism, on calling unpleasantness by another name. As in use of stylistic variation, everyone knows what is being referred to, but the meaning is backgrounded, thus softened. Propaganda cannot use common euphemisms, for these would be too direct. A case in point is death, another phenomenon with which our culture is uneasy.

Again, we can tell that English speakers are uncomfortable with death by the number of euphemisms for it. People do not die, they *pass away, pass on, go to sleep, go to the other side, meet their maker, go to rest, go to their final reward, croak, kick the bucket, buy the farm, buy it,* and become *traffic fatalities*, or we *lose them* (as in *I recently lost my favorite aunt*). Our pets are *put to sleep, put away*, or *put down*, not killed (except by a cruel outside party). Gangsters *deep-six* or *waste* rather than murder.

Our uneasiness about mentioning death conflicts with the military's need to talk about it. The military is in an exceptionally difficult position, for if we cannot talk directly of natural death, how can we talk of unnatural death? Yet soldiers must deal both with killing and being killed. Death must be mentioned in their training, but if it were mentioned too directly, soldiers would be too often reminded of their mortality and of the true awfulness of what they are supposed to do.

Robert Sellman, a ROTC student, examined military euphemisms for death in a field manual *The Combat Training of the Individual Soldier and Patrolling*. He showed that the manual is written in a highly impersonal, distant style, which is "designed to negate the psychological impact of killing and destroying." One way this is done throughout is to use the modal auxiliary *may*. It is "A nuclear explosion *may* cause heavy casualties among your leaders" and "*may* even completely destroy your unit's chain of command." Nuclear explosions will, not may. By using *may*, the field manual makes it much less

chapter 10

BILINGUALISM: LANGUAGES IN CONTACT

Bilingualism is the study of those who speak two or more languages, when and where they speak each, and the effect of one language on the other. We can tell a good deal about cultural attitudes and relative social status of two neighboring cultures by observing word borrowings and which language is used for which purposes. In order to teach speakers of other languages effectively, one must know where their languages differ from that of the teacher and in what ways. It is also important to know the conditions under which a language will be retained and those under which it will not.

10.1 *Languages in contact*

Pidgins, with their eventual transformation into Creoles, are not the only outcomes when two languages come into contact. More usually, if adult speakers have to learn another language, they learn it in its entirety (or try to at least). Very commonly a second language learned in adulthood is acquired as if through a filter, the filter being the first language. Some speakers retain strong accents, making grammar errors based on their first language, and misuse words in accordance with their first language even if they have spoken the second language for more years than the first. Moreover, they retain the accents even if they have spoken the second language more frequently than the first during those years. Immigrants who came to America in their twenties may still speak with an extremely thick accent when they are in their seventies. Others will learn the second language with no trace of an accent. The amount of formal education the speaker has received does not seem to be a determining factor in whether or not an accent is retained, although the amount of formal instruction in the new language may be (Krashen 1973). Some immigrants may never learn the language of their new country at all. Others learn just enough to get by at work.

Once a new language is learned, it becomes available as part of a speaker's stylistic repertoire. As with dialects and styles, whether a particular language is selected in a given situation depends upon the topic, the social scene, the relative status of speakers, their aspirations, and feelings of identity.

10.2 *The first language filter*

Many linguists believe that some time after the onset of puberty a person's ability to discriminate new sounds becomes impaired. *New* here is used in the sense 'different from those in any language(s) already learned by the speaker'. Whether this impairment is purely developmental or whether it is at least partially social is not certain. There is a bit of folk wisdom that claims that adults lose their ability to learn new languages without an accent. It may be, however, that adults do not have the same motivation as children do to learn a new language rapidly without an accent (Lambert and Gardner 1972; Lambert 1969). Perhaps, too, the adult retains an accent as a way of signaling that he or she identifies with the people of his or her original homeland. Certainly, individual differences exist in learning a new language with or without an accent.

One famous and important statesman in the 1970's, Henry Kissinger, could not manage accent-free English although he came to the United States at age fifteen, but many immigrants who arrived here in their teens speak with no trace of an accent. So far as linguists know today, retaining an accent or not has little if anything to do with intelligence or special aptitudes.

Second languages do not appear to be learned by mimicking any more than first languages are. People who have learned at least two languages in their childhood seem to learn third or fourth languages more easily than a monolingual adult can learn a second. Even so, most such bilinguals but not all still have an accent in the language learned as an adult. Perhaps once we know more about second language learning, especially by adults, we may find that many factors determine how accent-free the learner of a new language becomes.

10.3 *Interference: phonological*

Accents seem to be caused partially by an inability to perceive. The speaker actually does not hear the precise sounds used in the target language, the one being learned. The language learner seems to be in the same position as the young child who does not hear the difference between /f/ and /θ/. When confronted with a new language, at first a speaker converts strange sounds into the closest ones that are already in his or her language repertoire. This is not done consciously. We do not know all of the factors that may lead a given speaker to abandon or overcome these first errors. Many speakers, if not most, obviously never do, which is why they are said to have a foreign accent. Do not forget, however, that what is foreign depends upon who is speaking. English speakers are the foreign ones when they attempt Italian, German, Chinese, or whatever.

The process of converting sounds into those of one's native system was thought to be so regular that linguists believed that if they knew what a language learner's first language was they could predict what errors the speaker would make in the new, second language (Weinreich 1968). Recently some doubt has

been cast on this premise (Nickel 1971). It is true, nonetheless, that speakers of a language all tend to make much the same errors in learning certain sounds foreign to that language. For example, French speakers learning English usually hear /θ/ in *thing* as /s/ and /ð/ in *this* as /z/. Russian speakers seem to hear them as /t/ and /d/, respectively, as do Swedish speakers. However, these are only likely errors. It may not be wholly inevitable that all speakers of Language A always hear a sound in Language B in exactly the same way or for all time.

Some inroads into misperception can be made by good teaching, by focusing the learners' attention on certain sounds and how they should be made. The attitude of the learner may play a role as well. For instance, German speakers, like the French, seem to hear the English *th* sounds as /z/ and /s/. Many Germans who resettled in America during the 1930s and 1940s still say "zis" for *this* and "sing" for *thing*. However, younger Germans born since the end of the Second World War, who live and have always lived in Germany, often pronounce those sounds exactly as native born English speakers do, apparently because some teachers of English in Germany concentrate on the sounds. Also, many of these younger Germans are extremely proud of their accent-free English. Younger German scholars tell with pride of academic conferences held in Germany, by Germans, entirely in English, with the proceedings written and published in English. Such a desire to learn a second language without an accent may make the difference in breaking through perceptual barriers.

Anyone who has taken an introductory linguistics or phonetics course has probably had the experience of learning to discriminate new sounds. At first, one simply does not hear what the instructor says are different sounds. But since one's grade depends upon learning to discriminate between many closely related sounds, somehow one learns many brand new ones. Nowadays, many people take their first phonetics courses well after puberty, when they are in their thirties, forties, even fifties. Still, they learn to hear different sounds. Interestingly, many linguists find that their ability to discriminate new sounds actually improves with age, not diminishes. Since they are attuned to listening for new sounds, they are not so likely to convert them into their old systems. The fact that older people can learn to discriminate new sounds in phonetics classes argues against the proposition that human beings lose their ability to perceive new language forms after puberty. I believe that most of the apparent loss of language learning ability after puberty is caused by social factors as much as developmental ones.

10.4 *Interference: grammatical*

Grammatical interference may also arise from misperception, or, perhaps, failure to perceive at all. The kinds of grammatical errors that bilingual speakers make usually can be traced to the grammar of their native language (Burt and Kiparsky 1972; DiPietro 1971; Weinreich 1968). Apparently speakers often do not notice that the rules of the new language differ from those

in their old, or, if they have, they have not gotten the new rules down pat yet. They may not be wholly sure how and under what conditions all of the grammar rules of their new language apply. Alternatively, even if they do know, in the heat of encoding ideas in the new language, they fall back on the grammar they have most thoroughly internalized. Probably both factors are at work in grammatical error or, for that matter, in any kind of bilingual interference. Whereas children seem to be able to figure out grammars of new languages on their own, adults seem to need formal instruction to do so (Krashen 1973).

Speakers learning a new language do have to learn some of its grammar rules, but many never seem to grasp the finer points. As Uriel Weinreich pointed out in his landmark study *Languages in Contact*, the errors made usually can be explained on the basis of the facts of the first language. For instance, most Europeans and Arabs learning English do learn the progressive verb forms, as in *I am going to the store*, *He was fighting*, and *They will be doing that by now*. What they do not always learn is the exact conditions that call for the progressive. Thus, one hears bilingual errors like *I am studying in my room every night*, or *I was walking all the time in the old country*. Lest native speakers of English snicker, they might be reminded that unless they have studied Modern English grammar, they themselves might be hard put to explain exactly how and why the progressive is normally used. And, of course, they would make errors when speaking languages that they had not learned in childhood.

Often, the foreign speaker's error is a direct transfer of a rule in his or her native language. Take something as simple to speakers of English as *the* and *a*. Often, native speakers of Russian use them sporadically, if at all, as their language has no analogs to them. The celebrated ballet dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov, on a TV salute to Broadway with Liza Minelli, said to her that they could "go through mirror" (to Wonderland). When she asked, "Do you know who he is?", pointing to the character from *Cabaret*, he answered "Master of Ceremonies," rather than "The Master ..."

Many European speakers simply transfer their own rules for articles to English, saying things like "I broke the hand," because, in their languages the equivalent of *my* would not be used. My grandmother always washed her "hairs" rather than her "hair" because in her native language *hair* took a plural ending.

Germans whose English is otherwise impeccable may still say, "I appreciate to keep in touch." Because the rules of infinitives and gerunds (English *to*+verb and verb+*ing*) differ so from one European language to the next, this often is an area of bilingual error. Americans learning Portuguese, for instance, mistakenly say "Ele tem de *falando*" for 'He is afraid of speaking', rather than the correct "Ele tem de *falar*." The problem is that the form *falar* is roughly equivalent to the English 'to speak', and the form *falando* is roughly equivalent to the English 'speaking'. As it happens, Portuguese uses *falar* after *medo de* and English uses *speaking* after *afraid of*. Since *medo de* is the translation of English *afraid of*,