A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICAN SOCIOLINGUISTICS
1949-1989

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There comes a time in the development of any discipline when partici-pants in that field begin to ask the question "where did we come from?". This is a very human question, one that is asked by small children of their parents. And it is one that deserves an answer. Recently, several scholars of sociolinguistics have, for the first time, become aware of the lack of pub-lished information about how sociolinguistics came to be. Most universities now offer courses in this subject. Papers on sociolinguistics are given at academic meetings with great regularity. In fact, entire conferences on sociolinguistics have been held for over two decades now. Journals specializing in various aspects of sociolinguistics exist and flourish. Specialists in sociolinguistics are receiving advanced degrees. Job descrip-tions specify sociolinguistic expertise and knowledge.

In a recent article, "Toward a History of Modern Sociolinguistics", Koerner laments the fact that linguists lack a historical perspective on their own field of study (Koerner 1988). He searched, as I had (Shuy 1988), for some mention of the history of sociolinguistic study in various textbooks, collections of articles and research publications of this field. Few such books even mention the antecedents of the field and those that even men-tion the development of sociolinguistics are very brief (Wolfram & Fasold 1972:26-32). I believe that Koerner is right when he observes that a scien-tific field reaches some level of maturity when it begins to be aware of its history. McCauley (1988) provides a useful summary of sociolinguistic vari-ables that have been studied but laments that the broad descriptive goals of this field have proven too vast and time consuming.

1. Linguistic Ancestry

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

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

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

Labov, as one might expect, does *not* overlook the thinking of those who preceded modern times, devoting several pages to the topic, "Some Earlier Studies of Language in Its Social Context" (Labov 1966). He cites the lecture notes of Antoine Meillet in 1905 in which Meillet expressed unwillingness to accept the historical laws discovered in the 19th century and observed that there must be variables as yet undiscovered, continual, even rapid, variation:

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

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

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

2. Anthropological Ancestry

There are some who say that sociolinguistics is actually a modern version of what used to be called anthropological linguistics. There is something to be said in favor of such a position since, in a broad sense at least, sociolinguists extend the description and analysis of language to include aspects of the culture in which it is used. In that sense, sociolinguistics constitutes something of a return to anthropology, in which many believe it had

its origins. The classic four-pronged definition of anthropology — cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, archeology and linguistics — however, focuses on the larger analysis of human behavior, its patterns and principles while modern sociolinguistics examines in depth more minute aspects of language in social context.

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

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

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

> One wanted an introduction to linguistic description that recognized the need to specify social position and context for the data; and that recognized in phonetics the manifestation of a plurality of functions (identificational, expressive, directive, metalinguistic), as well as the processes of change. In fact to consider descriptive linguistics from a social point of

view is to reconsider it, and to begin to envisage a somewhat distinctive content and mode of presentation. (Hymes 1966)

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

Other glimmerings of the development of sociolinguistic sensitivity from within the tradition of anthropology could also be seen at other universities in the sixties, such as Cornell, Indiana, Michigan, Tulane, and Berkeley, to name only a few. At the same time, anthropologists and sociologists began to mention the obverse problem, that of making linguists acquainted with sociological methodology.

3. Sociological Ancestry

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

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

Most of the early courses in sociolinguistics taught by sociologists were called 'Sociology of Language'. Joshua Fishman first taught a course by that name in 1956, at the University of Pennsylvania. Subsequently he continued to teach that course at Yeshiva, primarily to psychology majors. Fishman's approach reflected his own special interests in this area: language maintenance, language displacement and the social context of language planning.

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

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

Hertzler's own evaluation of the state of affairs with respect to the contributions of the sociological literature to that point was that they were "superficial, unsystematic, or confined only to certain limited or special aspects of language in society". He noted further that work to date had "merely skirted the edges of a sociology of language" (p.5). Hertzler then went on to map the areas of future work in this area, including language as a social phenomenon, a social institution, a sociocultural index, social control, a differentiator and as an indicator of change. Hertzler also sounded a warning, one that turned out to be a common lament of sociologists, anthropologists and linguists alike; that it is difficult for one field to know enough about the other disciplines to avoid criticism when venturing into new territory:

> It might be considered poor business for a sociologist to seem to be poaching upon linguistic territory. The writer is not, and makes no pretense of being, an accomplished student of formal linguistics. (Hertzler, p.5)

Other sociologists interested in language were also pursuing their own special research concerns in the sixties. Although there was no course called the sociology of language at UCLA at that time, Harold Garfinkel reported that this subject entered into all of his teaching. In the same department, Harvey Sacks was teaching the analysis of conversation to sociology and anthropology majors. It appears that individual sociologists pursued their own language topics in sociology departments but without labels that might identify them as linguistic. Erving Goffman's research interest, for example, in the sixties, was in lying in public and on small social behaviors in public order. He saw linguistics as essential to the description of the structure and organization of small pieces of behavior. Most linguistically oriented sociologists, however, were at odds with the larger departmental requirements. If a sociology major were to invest the time and effort to become well enough grounded in linguistics to replicate the work of a Goffman, a Garfinkel or a Sacks, they ran the serious risk of sacrificing other aspects of sociological knowledge required by that field. Naturally, the same thing could be said of anthropologists and, conversely, of linguists.

4.   The Cross-Disciplinary Dilemma

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

At the same time, there seems to have been considerably less concern on the part of linguists concerning the need for their students to be trained in anthropology and sociology. By 1966 Ferguson had taught a course called Sociolinguistics at two LSA Institutes and at Georgetown University. His students had a background in linguistics but not in sociology. Likewise

Edgar Polomé reports that by then he had taught a course called sociolinguistics at the University of Texas, but almost exclusively to linguists. Labov argued that the sheer amount of linguistic training needed to bring about a change in the character of basic linguistic research and theory was so great that he preferred to train only those committed to linguistics. This thought was supported by Gumperz who also argued for a serious commitment to sociolinguistic analysis, not just an interest in it. Thus the mid sixties revealed great ferment and coming together of social scientists to try to determine how to cooperate across traditional disciplinary lines. There was both agreement and disagreement.

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

In American society, it was the time of increased problems with racial segregation, poverty education and social structures. The problems were clear enough and these three disciplines had some of the tools needed to address them, but not apart from each other. But these fields faced the traditional problems that academics always face. Social scientists did not want to give up anything to get linguistics. Nor did linguists want to give up anything to get social science. Each wanted to keep its own field, goals and theory-building foremost while enjoying the most minimal fruits of the other.

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

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

5. Linguistic Geography

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

From Wenker's study, dialectologists learned at least one very important principle — that the postal questionnaire method permits a vast quantity of language data to be gathered in a relatively short period of time. At issue, however, was, and continues to be, the degree of accuracy achievable, especially in matters of pronunciation, from the written impressions of non-linguists. In 1896, the linguistic survey of France addressed this problem directly. A French Atlas was devised and directed by Jules Guilliéron, who determined that it would be possible to achieve more consistent and accurate representations of the actual speech of informants if a single field worker with good phonetics skills would interview subjects and transcribe their speech phonetically. So he sent Edmond Edmont out on his bicycle to various French communities. In a period of four years, Edmont completed the 200-item questionnaire with 700 informants and the *Atlas Linguistique de la France* was published between 1902 and 1910.

Since the French atlas, linguistic geography projects were conducted in many parts of Europe, in Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Holland and Denmark, in particular. Such work also has been carried out in Australia, South America, Africa and Asia. Of particular interest is the work in the United States and in England. Harold Orton and colleagues carried out a field survey of English dialects between 1950 and 1961 in 313 communities, using

some 1300 questions or topics such as housekeeping, farming, animals, and social activities. In 1977 the Linguistic Atlas of England was published. Likewise in Wales, Alan Thomas directed a postal survey with 500 ques- tions. Like the Wenker study, spellings were intended to reflect regional pronunciations. *The Linguistic Geography of Wales* was published in 1973.

The American atlas project, under the initial direction of Hans Kurath, began in 1931. The original idea was to produce a dialect dictionary. Con- cerned scholars, including George Kittredge and James Russell Lowell, gathered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1889 and formed the American Dialect Society. After thirty years, although the society had not come close to publishing a dialect dictionary, it had collected over 26,000 interesting dialect words and phrases in its publication, *Dialect Notes*.[1] By 1929 the interests of many American dialectologists had turned away from a dialect dictionary to that of a linguistic atlas. With the assistance of the American Council of Learned Societies, a plan for such an atlas was published and Kurath was appointed its director. The plan was to produce a set of 'work sheets' containing over seven hundred items arranged roughly according to topics. This unique approach formulated the informants' answers but did not specify the questions, leaving that to the ingenuity of the fieldworker.

The single most active student of language variation in this country was Raven I. McDavid, Jr., whose monumental efforts both as a fieldworker and analyst are widely recognized. Almost singlehandedly McDavid kept language variation alive after the Linguistic Atlas of New England was pub- lished. At that point in time, the major concerns of most linguists, even those who had participated previously in the Atlas project, turned to the dominant theme of the time, structuralism. The necessary ingredient for any long term project such as a linguistic atlas is that of producing students who will continue the work. But students trained to be linguistic geogra- phers began to find other areas of concern. McDavid produced a few fol- lowers who continued the work, such as Lee A. Pederson, who is now com- pleting the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States, but others who were trained in this area, such as Gumperz, Labov, and Shuy, turned to sociolinguistics.

Linguistic Atlas research in the United States continues on a somewhat regular but slow pace today, aided by computerization of data and by the hard work of a few talented scholars. Many scholars question the value of

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1) The title of this journal was later changed to *Publications of the American Dialect Society* and remains the same today.

the methods by which the data were elicited, the accuracy of pre-tape- recorded phonetic transcriptions, the biases of sampling, the focus only on lexicon and pronunciation, the omission of analytical procedures such as discourse analysis and pragmatic meaning, that developed after the atlas procedure was unchangeably determined. One serious danger of any long- range project such as this is, of course, that the field of knowledge will develop after the methods and procedures are set. Consistency and com- patibility were critical features of the U.S. atlas approach. Later changes were difficult, if not impossible. Whatever criticisms one may wish to make of the era of linguistic geography, however, one has to admit that this period kept variability studies alive, even in the midst of more dominating concerns of the field. It also produced a rich data base of language use which, whatever value judgments one may place on it, provided later schol- ars with evidence to be considered. We benefit greatly from our predeces- sors in linguistics, however much more we may think we have learned since they produced us.

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

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

exciting programs in the history of the field. One reason that the Institute was so well attended has already been mentioned — the arm-to-arm combat for theoretical leadership in the field. But there were other reasons as well.

In May of 1964, a month or so before the LSA Institute, the UCLA Center for Research in Language and Linguistics sponsored a conference on 'Sociolinguistics' at Lake Arrowhead, California. The edited papers of this conference appeared under the title, *Sociolinguistics* (Bright 1966). To give an idea of the recency of the term 'sociolinguistics', it should be noted that the 1961 Third Edition of Webster's New International Dictionary does not list this word at all, although the term had appeared as early as 1952 in an article by Haver C. Currie in the *Southern Speech Journal*. At the time of the Lake Arrowhead conference, a number of scholars had been investigating the relationship between language and society, including Henry M. Hoenigswald, John Gumperz, Einar Haugen, Raven I. McDavid, Jr., Dell Hymes, John Fischer, William Samarin, Paul Friedrich, and Charles Ferguson. One bright new star on the horizon, a student of Uriel Weinreich at Columbia, named William Labov, was also invited to Lake Arrowhead to describe his dissertation research on New York City speech. This cadre of participants represented a number of quite different research traditions — linguistic geography, language contact, historical changes, ethnography, and language planning. Out of this conference-induced blending of traditions it was only natural to find terms into which each research tradition might fit. 'Language and Society' and 'Sociolinguistics' were the most logical choices and it was determined that two courses by these names should be offered at the 1964 LSA Institute.

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

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

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

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

With the Lake Arrowhead meeting, with the LSA Institute, with Gum-

perz' and Ferguson's courses in sociolinguistics and with the conference on Social Dialects, the Summer of 1964 was very important for the establishment of the field of sociolinguistics. What happened afterward proves this. Many of the participants in these meetings began teaching courses called sociolinguistics at their home universities.

To most regional dialectologists, an urban study would simply use the same questionnaire and methodology in the selected city that had been used for decades in the rural Atlas research. In fact Lee Pederson had done this in his study of Chicago speech. But Labov had brought an exciting new dimension to this work — continuous discourse, frequency of occurrence of features rather than categorical presence or absence, minority informants and a unique guide to questioning that let the informants talk as long as they wanted on a given topic of their own choice. Some decided to use this new approach.

After Labov completed his New York dissertation, he continued his sociolinguistic studies in New York with a cadre of excellent graduate students. Meanwhile I carried out my Detroit sociolinguistic study, with the help of a few of my students at Michigan State but perhaps more importantly, also involving Walt Wolfram and Ralph Fasold. At the same time, the Ford Foundation had funded the Center For Applied Linguistics, then under the directorship of Charles Ferguson and with the fertile ideas of William Stewart, to study urban dialects in Washington, D.C. Two years later, Wolfram, Fasold and I moved to Washington and merged the Detroit and Washington research into a single project and formed the Sociolinguistics Program at CAL. With helpful communication with Labov and his Columbia University Associates, the three urban studies were able to make useful comparisons of urban Black speech phenomena and establish the study of Vernacular Black English studies more firmly. These studies had many useful consequences for the field but also one unfortunate by-product. Sociolinguistics, as an area of study, was certainly a great deal larger than Vernacular Black English, and we were, justifiably, accused of a certain myopia. Our work had certainly identified some of the language diversity and change upon which the Lake Arrowhead conference had been based, but most certainly it had not dealt with all of the issues suggested, for example, by Hymes in his approach to the ethnography of communication.

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

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

6. Changes from the Ancestral Heritage

It should be clear that modern linguistics was in severe labor pains in the mid-sixties, ready and apparently eager to deliver its offspring, sociolinguistics. One might expect this child to bear certain resemblances to both its parents, linguistics and social science. One would even like to believe that the new child would bring these two parents closer together. In the period described in some detail earlier, from 1964 to 1966, the problems in doing this were well recognized. What to name this new child was discussed by the leaders in this field (Hymes 1966). How to rear this child was discussed at virtually every meeting of such scholars (training at universities). Once this child was born it would need professional conferences, journals, meetings, institutes, texts, and training centers to help it grow to maturity.

Now, one quarter of a century after those mid-sixties, planning meet-

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

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

7. *Methodology*

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

Sociolinguists also argue for parting company with the methods of determining socio-economic status that are common in sociology, while acknowledging that they benefited greatly from sociological procedures, particularly in the early days of sociolinguistic research. The first large sociolinguistic research projects (Labov 1965; Shuy, Wolfram & Riley 1968) essentially used language data to correlate with socio-economic status (SES) as defined by the Warner scale (1949). As knowledge and theory

grew, however, sociolinguists began to ask themselves: "Why should language be selected as the variable to correlate with SES? Why not let language *be* the SES?". If sociolinguists were true to their belief that language is the best available window to social structure and cognition, why use it to correlate with other, less adequate windows?

With the development of sociolinguistic quantitative analysis came more sophisticated statistical analyses. It has been said that there are two types of linguistic analysts: those who search for universals (what languages have in common), and those who search for variability (how languages differ).

It became apparent that the search for language universals required less quantitative measures than the search for variability. To be sure, research in universals can use statistical analysis and it is also true that our long tradition of dialectology research had essentially avoided statistics. But as tightly focused research projects made use of multiple occurrences of language samples in different contexts, it became evident that a very important feature of language was that of frequency of occurrence, not just categorical presence or absence. For example, if a dialectologist were to interview me today and ask me the traditional Linguistic Atlas question, "What do you fry eggs in?", I could easily answer, *frying pan*. Such an answer would then reside forever in the Atlas files as the lexical item used by this resident of Washington, D.C. If I were the only informant in Washington, D.C., the Atlas could claim that my utterance constitutes the norm for this item in Washington, D.C. speech.[3] Such data masks many things, the most important of which is that even in my own speech, *frying pan* is not the variant that I use predominantly. If the Atlas fieldworker were to follow me around for a day or two, hearing only every instance of my reference to this kitchen utensil, he or she would more likely hear 80% production of *skillet* and about 20% production of *frying pan*. This fictitious Atlas interview, then, would have presented misleading information, having caught me in my *frying pan* mode, for whatever reason. Those of us who grew up in dialect transition areas (in my case, Akron, Ohio) may well have frequency of occurrence distinction from the onset of our language learning. Some may develop a semantic differentiation, real or imagined, when two such

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2) The same essential truthfulness or validity has been noted for morphological and syntactic features as well.

3) To be sure, Atlas research would have more than one representative in a large urban area such as DC. This example is, therefore, only illustrative of a point.

terms are in active production (as I discovered during my own Atlas research in Illinois in the early 1960s when I found that Northern dialect informants who used *pail* also used *bucket*, but reserved the latter for the older, dented or beat-up variety of pail. Not surprisingly, Midland dialect informants had the same distinctions, only reversed).

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

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

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

continue to do linguistics as he defined it. Not every linguist, however, was so contextually comfortable. At Georgetown University, just the opposite was the case. Partly because the National Science Foundation had made funding available for new thrusts in various academic fields, Georgetown found it politically and economically useful to use this newly emerging research area as a reference point and as a label for a newly created curriculum. Thus the Sociolinguistics Program joined three other graduate linguistics programs at that university. Although other American universities have not, on the whole, gone so far as to label whole doctoral programs Sociolinguistics, at many universities one can effectively accomplish much the same thing through a linguistics major.

8. Names

In November of 1966, when Hymes submitted his report on Training in Sociolinguistics, no name for the field had been agreed upon. He reports that sociolinguistic subject matter was then being taught under the headings of 'linguistics', 'language and culture', 'sociology of language' and 'language behavior' as well as 'sociolinguistics'. Over twenty years later, the same labels appear, although, among linguists at least, 'sociolinguistics' has come to be the common term. Annual meetings of the Linguistic Society of America have had sessions labeled 'sociolinguistics' for over 15 years. In fact a recent brochure describing the entire field of linguistics, distributed by the LSA, describes sociolinguistics as one of the major components of our discipline. Today sociolinguistics may be defined differently by different scholars but there is general agreement that it includes topics such as language planning, language variability (social and regional dialects), registers, and pidgins and creoles. There is mixed agreement about whether sociolinguistics includes language change or whether the study of language change includes a subcategory of study which is sociolinguistic. Likewise, the more recent developments of discourse analysis, pragmatics and speech acts are by some scholars considered to be a part of sociolinguistics proper and by others to be separate areas of study in themselves. David Crystal, in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, defines 'sociolinguistics' as "The study of the interaction between language and the structures and functioning of society" (p. 412). Absent from the above topics are fields of study such as 'the ethnography of communication' and 'language and culture', which are still generally believed to be the province of anthropology, and 'the sociology of language' and 'ethnomethodology', which are still

generally believed to be the province of sociology. Few, if any, departments of linguistics offer all of the above-mentioned topics as specializations in which students can receive training.

9. *Outlets for Publication and Research*

The creation of a new sub-discipline is always accompanied by the problem of where to publish theory and research. The major linguistics journals available to linguists in the mid-sixties were, of course, receptive to sociolinguistic work, largely because the leaders in this nascent field were well-accepted linguists. The major journal of linguistics, *Language*, was, and continues to be, open to sociolinguistic articles. *Word* was experiencing publication difficulties in the sixties but would have been receptive otherwise. *Foundations of Language* was available, as long as the submissions had a bearing on linguistic theory. Among the contemporary anthropological journals, *Anthropological Linguistics*, *The American Anthropologist*, and the *Southwest Journal of Anthropology* were open to articles on language and culture, broadly defined.

Eventually, Hymes started a new journal, *Language in Society*, which continues to be available to a broad range of topics in sociolinguistics. Fishman started *The International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, in which issues related to language planning, bilingualism, language attitudes and other more sociological aspects of sociolinguistics find a home. *American Speech*, after a few years of dormancy, was resumed first under the leadership of John Algeo and, more recently, of Ronald Butters, and continues to be a source of publication on variation in American English. *Language Planning and Language Policy* specializes in the topics of its title and serves more anthropological and sociological concerns. *Discourse Processes* was founded by Roy Freedle and is quite cross-disciplinary in its offerings, but welcomes contributions of a linguistic bent. Even more recently Labov and Anthony Kroch have started a new journal, *Language Variation and Language Change*, dedicated to more linguistic aspects of variation and change. Likewise, the new interest in pragmatics has spawned the International Pragmatics Research Association, headed by Jef Verschueren, which publishes articles in that area. *Publications of the American Dialect Society* continues, as it has for a century now, to publish articles on regional and social dialectology.

In summary, the dearth of publication outlets lamented by sociolinguistics leaders in the sixties has been somewhat satisfied today and this development gives solid evidence of the emergence of sociolinguistics on the American scene.

10. *University Specializations in Sociolinguistics*

The definitions of any field are often slippery. The term 'sociolinguistics' conjures up different things to different people. The reason for this is quite simple. It *is* many different things to many different people. For this reason, it will be futile to try to define it completely here. A survey of the understandings of linguists about what sociolinguistics means might yield curious results. One university administrator, a long-time friend, 'assured' me recently that he would like to see sociolinguistics 'remain' a vital part of Georgetown's Applied Linguistics initiative. The sociolinguistics faculty would be puzzled to hear such a statement, since they do not necessarily consider themselves applied linguists.

Through peculiar local developments, newer developments in any field seem to need to find a place on the department's shelf, for orderly housekeeping purposes. During the 1970s interest in both pragmatics and discourse analysis developed rapidly. At some universities, these fields were considered theory developments. At other universities, they were attached to language learning and teaching. Georgetown's Sociolinguistics Program saw them as extensions of the search for patterns in language variation and, therefore, embraced them as sociolinguistics. How odd it must sound, however, to a scholar who does not know the peculiar infrastructure of Georgetown, to learn that pragmatics, speech acts, inferencing, text analysis, or conversation analysis dissertations are considered well within the territory of sociolinguistics. But such are the fruits of academic departmental growth.

All academic departments are the products of the scholars who inhabit them. Sociolinguistics specialties today vary from university to university. The University of Pennsylvania excels at variation analysis, pidgins and creoles and other areas. Georgetown excels at discourse analysis, applied sociolinguistics and other areas. SUNY at Buffalo excels at language surveys, language attitudes and cross cultural communication. Berkeley excels at discourse analysis, cross-cultural communication, and other areas. The University of Montreal excels at variable rule analysis and other areas. Perhaps one recurring key here is 'and other areas'. Many other universities have one or more sociolinguists and one or more specializations. No university offers everything that might fall under the label 'sociolinguistics'.

11. *Housing*

The fondly hoped-for coming together of linguistics, sociology and anthropology, a desire which dominated much of the discussion of the leaders in the mid-sixties, can today hardly be seen to have occurred. As nearly as can be determined, linguistics currently dominates this field. Virtually every graduate department of linguistics has at least one course called 'sociolinguistics'. The same cannot be said for the fields of sociology or anthropology.

A more serious question is the one asked many years ago: how to get linguists adequately knowledgeable about sociological methodology. It is difficult enough for a scholar to acquire the knowledge, background, theories and methods of one discipline, much less two. For this reason, it appears that some of the sociolinguistics research done by linguists will continue to be criticized by sociologists, and vice-versa.

Where is sociolinguistics today? One definition of sociolinguistics, one which includes the language rule-governed behavior of speakers, is found almost entirely in linguistics departments. Labov foreshadowed this development some 25 years ago when he argued that the sheer amount of linguistic training needed to change basic linguistic research and theory was so great that linguists should probably focus on their own areas of expertise. Dialectology, both regional and social, is also found primarily in linguistics departments today, with the exception of courses in specific language dialectology located in a few foreign language departments. Historical language change continues to flourish primarily in linguistics departments. Pidginization and creolization study is also done almost entirely by linguists. The newer areas of variation study, called 'pragmatics' and 'discourse analysis', also flourish primarily in linguistics departments, although some versions of these topics can also be found in sociology, psychology, and communication departments.

Sociology departments continue to be the primary centers of work on social context, with language as one indicator, but the topics of language planning and language contact are shared now with many linguistics departments. Anthropology departments continue to be the major hubs of research on the ethnography of speaking and cultural aspects of language. In general, social scientists continue to be more concerned with the functions of language than with its forms.

What major changes, then, can be seen in the past quarter century? It is apparent that today the same general laments that were voiced in the six-

ties continue to be with us. Sociologists lament that linguists do not learn enough sociological theory and methodology. Anthropologists lament that linguists are too concerned with language forms to appreciate language functions in cultural contexts. Linguists still lament the lack of linguistic sophistication on the part of social scientists as they use language to analyze language situations. In short, the fields still operate with minimal knowledge of each other.

On the other hand, it is more common today for linguists to be concerned about ethnographic and sociological theory and methods than for social scientists to be concerned about language forms. That movement toward the rapprochement so dearly desired by those combinations of linguists, anthropologists, and sociologists who met some 25 years ago can be seen more clearly in linguistics departments, where the topics of social control, power, language planning, the ethnography of speaking, and functionalism are becoming more and more evident in the sociolinguistics curricula.

Then why is it that linguistics departments seem to have come to house sociolinguistics more comfortably than have departments of sociology or anthropology? Perhaps it is merely an early lead and, at some point in time, the other departments will develop their own versions of sociolinguistics as well. The lesson learned from other disciplines which create hyphenated fields may be instructive. In the forties, for example, chemistry and biology recognized the potential of cross-disciplinary overlap and created an entity called bio-chemistry. For some 25 years, biochemists were housed in either biology or chemistry departments and did somewhat similar and mutually comprehensible work. For the past twenty years or so, however, the chemistry department style of bio-chemistry and the biology department style of bio-chemistry have grown farther and farther apart, often leading to the renaming of departments and research disciplines.

It appears that the high hopes that academics have for cross-disciplinary intermingling is somewhat overly optimistic. All fields are too full of their own topics to admit enough topics from foreign fields to justify true duality. Hyphenation is a short-lived phenomenon which introduces pieces of new insights from other fields, but seldom complete ones. Once the field is infected with this new information and insights, however, it tends to make use of only some pieces of foreign fields, especially those which further the on-going goals of the home discipline.

One might predict that sociolinguistics will develop further in sociology

and anthropology, but that these developments will be quite unlike the way sociolinguistics has developed in the field of linguistics. In fact, to the extent that these three field have developed to date, this is somewhat the case. There are few if any departments of linguistics today that would hire either a sociolinguist trained by anthropologists in the ethnography of speaking or a sociolinguist trained by sociologists in language planning or social control and power. It is equally rare that anthropology or sociology departments would hire a sociolinguist trained by linguists in variation analysis of language forms, in pragmatics or in discourse variability.

Over time, academic disciplines tend to be attracted to each other, coming together briefly, grazing off each other for a few moments, then returning to their own major concerns. Under the best of circumstances, they affect each other deeply, change their approaches and affect their knowledge. But their major concerns continue, in the long run, to dominate. We can expect sociolinguistics to be used in different ways by its forebearer disciplines: linguistics, anthropology and sociology. And that is probably how things ought to be.

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SUMMARY

American sociolinguistics was created by a set of ideas, social influences and fortunate comings-together of like-minded scholars in a fortuitous rather than carefully orchestrated manner. Very little attention has been given to the birthing of sociolinguistics and this paper recounts some of these ideas, social conditions and comings-together so that contemporary scholars can have some insights into how this field developed. It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the growth of sociolinguistics from the influences of the theoretical paradigms prevalent at any given period of its growth. Several disciplines influenced its creation and development and the summer months of 1964 brought things into focus to the extent that virtually all subsequent advances in the field can be seen to have dependence on that very crucial period. This paper treats not only where American sociolinguistics came from but also how it has changed, its methodologies, its cross-disciplinary struggles, its current status, and prospects for its future growth.

RÉSUMÉ

La sociolinguistique américaine a été créée à la suite d'une conjoncture d'un ensemble d'idées, des circonstances sociales et d'un rencontre d'esprits semblables, d'une façon plutôt fortuite qu'orchestrée. Peu d'attention a été donnée jusqu'à présent à la naissance de 'sociolinguistique'. Le présent article offre un vue d'ensemble de cette conjoncture afin que l'érudit actuel puisse obtenir une idée de la façon de laquelle la sociolinguistique s'est développée. Il reste difficile, même impossible, à séparer la croissance de la sociolinguistique des influences des paradigmes théoriques qui ont prédominé pendant les différents stages de son développement. Plusieurs disciplines ont parrainé sa création et son organisation et les mois d'été de 1964 ont mis au centre d'attention les ingrédients qui depuis cette époque ont caractérisé les développements et le progrès subséquents. Le présent article ne traite pas seulement de l'origine de la socio-linguistique américaine mais également de la façon dont elle a changé depuis dans sa méthode, de ses débats, de son statut actuel, et de ses chances pour sa croissance à l'avenir.