ABSTRACT
          One of the more interesting facets of the philosophy
of science today is the stress placed on the sociology of knowledge.
People have slowly come to realize that knowledge is to a great
extent conditioned by the ambience, the social milieu in which it
exists. In the present paper, an attempt is made to draw a miniature
socio-profile of the field in terms of the following parameters: (1)
meta-language, (2) dissemination of knowledge, (3) reward system, (4)
school building, (5) reluctance to entropism, and (6) energizing
(outside influence). The parameter most discussed is school building,
certainly the least attractive feature of modern American
linguistics. A set of rules are evolved to aid in combatting
collectivism in our discipline. (Author)

Towards a Sociology of Linguistics

When I spoke to this same conference on this subject some eight years ago, my remarks were greeted with polite disinterest. This time I am assured of interest, whatever my presentation may turn out to be like, for I have already received a dozen letters based merely on the publication of the title. What has brought about this change of heart is already a facet of the sociology of linguistics which is worth discussing. While linguists have been discussing the "revolutions" in their own subject, a revolution in the philosophy of science has been taking place. Many scientists have come to realize that their theories and findings are not God's truth, but are sociologically conditioned:

> The sociological character of all knowledge, of all forms of thought, intuition and cognition is unquestionable. Although the content and even less the objective validity of all knowledge is not determined by the controlling perspectives of social interests, nevertheless this is the case with the selection of the objects of knowledge. Moreover, the "forms" of the mental process by means of which knowledge is acquired are always and necessarily codetermined sociologically, i.e. by the social structure." (Scheler, quoted by Merton 1973, 23)

I cannot resist adding here a famous quote by Thoreau, who saw clearly the nature of "scientific" truth: "All men lead lives of quiet desperation, and what passes for truth is only compromise."

Here, I must pause and point out what is meant by sociological; ecological might be a better term. The society or culture in which we live is only one aspect, one part of what is meant by sociology in the term

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<u>sociology of knowledge</u>. The ambience in which ideas exist conditions them totally. 1. This means that the meta-language operates upon the scientist as Whorf conjectured that the Hopi language did upon the Hopi: We find it extremely difficult to think thoughts not given by the meta-language, so that he who controls it will control the field. 2. This means that the channels of the dissemination of knowledge contaminate it. Conferences such as this one, by their very organization (20 minutes, discussion, etc.), location, etc. mold linguistic thought. 3. This means that the structure and the reward system of the university taught in, the classes taught, etc. influence the linguist as a college teacher, as does also the fact that most linguists are in universities. 4. This means that the interconnections of linguistics and other disciplines form a part of its vicinage, ergo its world view. I could continue, but the point is that we linguists are not the free thinkers we wish to be and frequently present ourselves as. Our thought is "socially" conditioned.

In discussing the sociology of linguistics, we run into our first cultural trait: the resistance to entropism. Linguists have traditionally refused to look upon themselves as socially conditioned entities, at least on the formal level. On the informal level, we do not hesitate to label one another if not ourselves as belonging to a group: One is a Mitnick, a Pikette, a Firthian, a Weisgerberian, has neo-grammarian or, <u>horresco refe-</u> <u>rens</u>, neo-Bloomfieldian leanings, etc. On the formal level, however, it is difficult to get people to listen, no matter how objective one tries to be, for if the speaker is a linguist, he is lumped with some direction of linguistics and is therefore <u>parti pris</u>. In addition, there seems to be some academic resistance against entropism or washing one's linen, be it clean or dirty, in public. Sometimes, the discussion runs into taboos. When a scholar pointed out in 1966 the large number of Jews in the officer cadre

of anthropology, he was immediately accused of racism. Likewise, a scholar who pointed out the domination of the publishing profession by the east coast establishment was immediately accused, by that establishment, one supposes, of being a follower of Spiro T. Agnew.

In spite of all these things, linguists are beginning to realize that their field is an eco-space and to try to manipulate it. Raimo Anttila has complained bitterly that transformationalist/generative linguistics dominates American linguistics and excludes many others (Anttila, forthcoming). I am sure that all of you are familiar with the attacks on the journal Language and its editorial policies, and many of you will have received Ernst Pulgram's strongly worded letter on the manner in which LSA meetings are conducted. A number of other scholars, Maher, Makkai, Gray (cf. the bibliography in Anttila, forthcoming) have voiced similar complaints and have pointed to the school dominated nature of our field. In sociology, George C. Homans has been leading a fight against the same sort of thing, under the labels of individualism - collectivism (Homans 1972). What I should like to do today is to discuss only some of the parameters which go into the make-up of the socio-profile of linguistics, for it seems to me that it behooves us as linguists to believe that the unexamined theory is not worth holding and to follow the dictum of the Academy: γνῶθι σεαυτὸν 'know yourself'.

First, let me praise Caesar. The most important social fact about a person or a field is vicinage, the lines of communication. As Diana Crane has pointed out, journals are really the gatekeepers of science (Crane, in Curtis and Petras 1970), for it is to a great extent they who determine what is communicated. In fields such as History, Philosophy and Language and Literature Studies, where the rejection rate approaches 90 % (Merton 1973), these gatekeepers exercise a great deal of influence, and innovation

is at a minimum. In linguistics, where one has only a 20 % chance of being rejected, innovation is kept at a high level and new ideas are not so easily rejected by the establishment. On the other hand, the strong tendency to publish informally leads to ingroups and the ease of publication leads to fly-by-night journals and a lot of junk being published, but that is, it seems to me, a small price to pay.

The school syndrome. The second important social trait of field is the number of sub-communities, e.g. the groups inside which intensive message exchange takes place. This is, of course, the least desirable feature of American linguistics, shared of course by other fields such as sociology, where the East Coast Phenomenologist does not speak to the West Coast Phenomenologist, or mathematics, where analysts such as Kline used to stand up at meetings and shout: "Set theory is going to bury us all!" Ever since I have been in the business of linguistics, jockeying for position among various schools and collectives has been strong: one remembers the capture of the 1929 phonetics by the Prague school, the domination of American linguistics in the 40's and 50's by structuralism, the Yale school, the Smith and Trager "school", etc. etc. Antilla and Maher have already outlined some of the common tactics of school building, but let me point to a few others:

1. The self-praise syndrome or the name-drop syndrome. This is too common to need much confirmation. On the informal level it consists of naming someone who has obtained marvelous results and scoring points if the vis-à-vis does not know him, etc., leading to a feeling of belonging or not belonging. On the formal level, it consists of labeling this or that person, conference or publication as of primary importance, e.g. "the Bloomington 'refounding fathers' of sociolinguistics" (Fishman 1972). 2. Recommendations. It is commonplace to recommend all members of a group, whether the recommender knows them or not. One writes, "I have derived a great deal of enjoyment

and education from x's papers," whether one has read x's papers or, indeed, whether x has even written papers. 3. _Conference seizing._ I have already mentioned the seizing of the 1928 Congrès international des Linguistes (cf. _TCLP_ 4.289 ff.), and one might note the seizing of a journal by Brugmann (Pedersen 1931, 293), and the jockeying for position which preceeded the Ninth International Congress of Linguists. 4. _Send-arounds._ One of the surest ways to build a school is to insure that communications are more intense within the school that outside the school. In recent linguistics, it has become common to publish new ideas by send-arounds, with the consequence that those who are not on the list are not "in the know." 5. _Le dernier cri._ This leads to a kind of name-dropping, to references to "forthcoming, 1960," to jokes as to findings which are only available in the locked upper right-hand drawer of someone's desk, etc.

No matter how carefully one screens articles (anonymous submission and the like), one cannot help manipulating the field, since most articles are readily labeled to school and the referees belong to schools. Each school is thus forced into the game, so that pressure groups are formed trying to get their particular point of view published, etc. The only remedy for this situation would be for journals to refuse to give personal credit for school oriented articles, so that a generative/tranformational restatement of a structural result could only be published under the name of the school and not the individual, but now I am getting idealistic.

There are a number of things which hold for individuals which also hold for schools: 1. _The palimpsesting syndrome_ (Merton 1965, 218), or the tendency to ascribe the invention of a notion to the last important person one heard it from, is very common in schools. Here, one ascribes the notion to the school or another member of it, even when it is an open restatement, e.g. "distinctive features." 2. _The quod licet syndrome._ The

old Roman proverb says: <u>quod licet Jove non licet bove</u> 'what is permitted to Jove is not permitted to a cow'. Things perpetrated by one's own school are immediately forgiven, though such things are strongly criticized in another school (Antilla, forthcoming). 3. <u>The Matthew effect</u> (Merton 1973, 439 ff.) holds also for schools: "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him who hath not ..." "The world ... tends to give credit to already famous people." 4. <u>The Itch effect</u>. When a scholar's or a school's works are automatically published, he develops an ICS (<u>insanabile cacoethes scribendi</u> 'an insatiable itch to write'), and has a tendency to write in areas where he lacks expertise. Also known as the <u>football player syndrome</u>, from the fact that football players often endorse products and things they have no knowledge of.

<u>Reward Structure</u>. The next most important feature of a socio-profile is the reward structure. Here linguistics is again in a posture favorable to continual revolution and innovation, for the mean age of attainment of tenure is low, the publication rate is high, and jobs are <u>relatively</u> easy to obtain. Speaking, however, from the historical standpoint, it seems likely that we will experience some retrenchment in rewards and thus in ideas -- the so-called <u>41st seat syndrome</u> which now affects most of the fields in the humanities, where expansion is at best unlikely, and it can be extremely unhealthy, as the example of German linguistics will show, to have too many people knocking at the gate.

<u>Outside influence</u>. Another interesting parameter is what we may call the energizing of a field. In linguistics, for example, the ASTP movement of the wartime years was very instrumental in bringing about the hegemony of structuralism in the United States. The NDEA act of 1958, with its specific reference to linguistics (the only discipline referred to directly) gave the "applied linguistics movement" a shot in the arm, and the machine

translation movement, with its funding through, e.g. the Rome Air Command
(Chomsky's early backers), aided in bringing transformational/generative
linguistics into its present hegemony, etc.

Some rules. In a field such as linguistics, the unwritten rules are the
most important ones, and they are constantly changing. Mores and folkways
are always stronger than laws, the de more always stronger than the de jure.
Linguistics would in general be much bettered if the following rules were
adopted:

Rule I: If a derogatory term is used of one group, use one for all groups.
if one refers to the dirty shirt school of presentation of papers, in which
one dresses irreputably, sits on the edge of the table, uses notes or no
prompts whatsoever, etc., one should also use the term stuffed shirt of the
group which reads papers in tie, coat, etc., stands firmly behind a lectern,
etc. One should apply evaluative criteria equitably.

Rule II: Never reject something you do not understand. Never say: "I cannot
read those structuralists (substitute xists) because of their weird termin-
ology and their notation." You must understand an argument in.order to re-
fute it.

Rule III: Never reject an argument because it is proposed by a person, school,
time, place you do not like or understand. The argumentum ad scholam is
no more palatable than the argumentum ad hominem, and both topoi, the olim
florebat and the coaevorum virtus are equally odious.

Rule III, corollary (with apologies to the Voegelins). Eschew the eclipsing
stance; never say, think, intimate or believe that everything before 1933,
1957 (pick a date) is unimportant or but preamble to the present. The only
stance possible for the scholar is that of OTSOG (on the shoulders of giants),
though even this may be overdone, leading to otsogery (Merton 1965), a con-
dition in which one only amasses knowledge and footnotes without doing any-
thing with it.

<u>Rule IV</u>: Never publish an article which is a translation into your own framework.

What I have tried to show here is the nature of the beast, to do a Mertonian socio-profile of linguistics, using the parameters of: 1. meta-language, 2. dissemination of knowledge, 3. reward system, 4. school building, 5. reluctance to entropism, 6. energizing (outside influence). I have also tried to suggest some types of etiquette which might be of benefit to the field at large. That linguistics is determined by sociological considerations one can scarcely deny. Whether this is good or bad, I leave you to decide. At any rate it is inevitable. Perhaps it is enough to see the nature of the problem in order to guard against excesses. At any rate, it seems that we need very badly a caveat against rejecting out of hand the ideas of otherwhen and otherwhere. And above all one must remember that the unexamined theory is not worth holding. <u>Se non è ben trovato, è vero.</u>

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