A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY ON SOCIAL DIALECTS.
BY- SHUY, ROGER W.
CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS, WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BIBLIOGRAPHY IS "TO ACQUAINT LINGUISTS, SOCIOLOGISTS, AND EDUCATORS WITH A REPRESENTATIVE SELECTION OF LINGUISTICALLY ORIENTED READINGS ON THE AVAILABLE THEORY, DESIGN, RESEARCH, AND PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL DIALECTS." THE 46 REFERENCES ARE DIVIDED INTO THREE CATEGORIES--(1) THEORETICAL AND PROGRAMMATIC ASPECTS (WORKS WHICH DEVELOP THEORY IN SEVERAL DISCIPLINES OR RELATE IT TO THE STUDY OF SOCIAL DIALECTS), (2) RESEARCH REPORTS (ARTICLES AND BOOKS IN A REPORT FORMAT, MANY OF WHICH MAY CONTAIN THEORETICAL OR PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS), AND (3) PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM. EACH REFERENCE IS ANNOTATED BY SEVERAL SENTENCES DESCRIBING BRIEFLY ITS CONTENTS AND SCOPE. THIS BIBLIOGRAPHY WAS PUBLISHED IN THE JUNE, 1968 ISSUE OF "THE LINGUISTIC REPORTER" BY THE CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS, (1717 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036) WHERE THE AUTHOR IS DIRECTOR OF THE SOCIOLINGUISTICS PROGRAM. (JD)
A Selective Bibliography on Social Dialects

by Roger W. Shuy

[Roger W. Shuy is Director of the Sociolinguistics Program of the Center for Applied Linguistics.]

The aim of this report is to acquaint linguists, sociologists, and educators with a representative selection of linguistically oriented writings on the available theory, design, research, and pedagogical applications in the area of social dialects. This subject, which has received much attention recently, is generally considered part of the disciplinary territory of the field of sociolinguistics. It must be clearly stated here, however, that this is not a bibliography of sociolinguistics, even though it may form an important part of such a bibliography. It is likewise inevitable that theoretical considerations dealing broadly with sociolinguistics will also be relevant to social dialect study. In an even larger sense, some of the items can be said to form an important part of the general theories of linguistics, anthropology, sociology, or education. It is not our intention to minimize broad relevance at the expense of specific concern, for it would be unfair to describe the writings of these scholars only in the narrowest sense of their research interests.

The bibliography is divided into three categories: theoretical and programmatic aspects, research reports, and pedagogical applications.

The section of theoretical and programmatic aspects includes works which develop theory in several disciplines or relate it to the general concerns of the study of social dialects. Of major concern are matters of social stratification, acculturation, research design, ethnography, frequency studies, sampling procedure, language function, language values and attitudes, language settings, creolization, language maintenance, standardization, language planning, and language change.

The works in the second section, research reports, are frequently difficult to separate from the above. The articles and books cited in this section have, as their format, a focus on the presentation of an overall research report which may, of course, contain theoretical and/or pedagogical implications.

The focus of works in the last section, pedagogical applications, have, as a clear emphasis, the classroom situation.

Theoretical and Programmatic Aspects


Bright laments the paucity of research on linguistic correlates of social stratification at the time of his writing. He notes that most published data relate to differences in phonological shape between semantically equivalent utterances and suggests that caste dialects may also differ in ways in which the grammar and vocabulary derive from different semantic structures. He cites examples from published data on Southeast Asian social dialects.


A discussion of the interaction of language and society from a number of different viewpoints, including linguistic acculturation, kinship language, class languages, and national language problems. Of particular interest are Chapter 5 (The Process of Linguistic Acculturation) and Chapter 7 (Language and Social Groupings).


An excellent outline of some of the characteristics of sociolinguistic research. Elabo...
rating on the aspects noted by Hymes (see item 9), Ervin-Tripp summarizes some of the major research to that time in each category. She concludes that there are four general types of methods in sociolinguistics: (1) studies of the speech of social groups, (2) ethnographic studies (how speech is used according to occasion, setting, and participants), (3) experimental studies (allowing artificial constraints on normal covariance revealing such things as the power relation of participants), and (4) the distribution of grammatical or phonological forms.


This work describes the broad field of sociolinguistics, with sections on sociolinguistic rules, speech variables, linguistic diversity, and switching. The author carefully plots the territory of the discipline and summarizes the important research relating to each topic. An excellent bibliography is included.


The author examines the shift between a local spoken dialect and a superposed standard variety of the same language, e.g. the shift between classical and colloquial Arabic in the classroom from lecture to discussion. Linguistically, the grammar of the superposed variety (referred to as "high" dialect) is generally more inflected than the local spoken variety (referred to as "low" dialect), although they may share most of the same lexis. It is not possible to generalize about comparative phonologies. One important feature of diglossia is the specialized function of the high and low dialects (very little overlapping). Ferguson concludes with a tentative prognosis for diglossic language situations over the next two centuries (Swiss German, Arabic, Haitian Creole, and Greek).


Gumperz studies the effect of topic (verbal repertoire) on certain forms in rural Norwegian and standard North Norwegian. The type of alternation depends heavily on the social characteristics of the persons being addressed. An important study in the search for the structure of verbal repertoires.


The author describes intra-community processes of change through the use of different methods of interviewing, participant observation, and controlled experimentation. Gumperz investigates code-switching between a local dialect and a high prestige dialect. Friendship networks are chosen for investigation since linguistic similarity is most closely reflected through friendship ties. Such a "network" approach allows Gumperz to dispense with difficult concepts such as class, prestige, etc. The author describes the choice of dialect based on setting (transactional vs. personal), open vs. closed network, local vs. non-local topic, and many other features.


A description of linguistic normalization and the potential role of the linguist in codifying norms and giving them the sanction of authority. Haugen analyzes language planning, its implementation, and the role of the language planner.


A programmatic discussion of the subject matter of sociolinguistics: an examination of verbal behavior in terms of the relations between the setting, the participants, the topic, the functions of the interaction, the form, and the values held by the participants. This article contains an excellent bibliography of previous accomplishments in this field.


An old but important and readable treatise on the backgrounds of the distinction between "la parole" and "la langue," common language and class language, standards of correctness, and language stratification. Jespersen critically summarizes the major theories of language variation at the time the work was written, usually with insightful comments.


Suggests that in the study of the social stratification of language, we need not be confined to the evidence of objective differentiation of behavior. The author describes his methods used to measure unconscious subjective reactions to individual values of the phonological variables under investigation. He cites the fluctuation in stylistic variation shown by the lower middle class, their hypersensitivity to stigmatized features which they use themselves, and their inaccurate perception of their own speech as evidence of the linguistic insecurity of that social group. Labov then examines the role of hypercorrection in effecting linguistic change.


The author adds to his previous research on linguistic variables by considering the dimension of social mobility. He observes that upwardly mobile persons usually adopt the norms of the next higher group with which they are in contact. A group which has a history of social stability tends to be governed more by its own norms. Labov concludes that in an urban society, linguistic stratification is the direct reflection of underlying sets of social values, rather than sets of habits which result from close contact and are set off from each other by discontinuities in the communications system.


An important early suggestion of the importance of the relationship of linguistics and other kinds of social science problems. The author discusses tendencies toward uniformity and standardization arising from increased ease in transportation and communication, radio, movies, and ever extending public education. Opportunities to study the rising middle class, trade, cultural isolation, topography, family structure, and communication networks are seen to exist in linguistic research.


A summary of the history of dialect study in America, how it differs from the European situation, and how the emphasis is changing to a consideration of bi-dialectism, urban areas, racial contrasts, and the pedagogical applications of such knowledge. McDavid feels that the existence of important structural differences between white and Negro speech does not mean that we must necessarily postulate a generalized "Aframerican" pidgin in the past.


A survey of the current literature on language problems of the disadvantaged, both the useful and the naive, which is addressed especially to concepts of verbal destitution, full but non-standard development and unconceptualized experience and underdeveloped language. Pederson concludes by urging a thorough analysis of the intellectual, social,
and psychological characteristics of all the persons involved in the learning situation, a careful examination of the range of the inquiry (ethic, social, regional variables in relationship to oral and written language), a consideration of various methods of observation, and establishing a set of criteria for evaluation of the disadvantaged child's language.


A critical appraisal of the research design and results of traditional linguistic geography. Noting that dialect studies contain both errors of validity and of reliability since the language samples are not representative of the speech of the total population, the author presents some of the postulates of the social sciences which are relevant to these problems and urges linguists to study the group affiliation rather than the community, examine contradictory responses as evidence of individual or group conflict and mobility, define social class more adequately, and study urban areas, not just rural communities.


A detailed account of the history of Negro speech in America from the time of the slaves to the present. Stewart: traces the development of pidgin English which, when learned by a second generation of native speakers, became creolized English. The author cites example of dialect maintenance in Negro communities throughout the U.S. as a result of the earlier creolization process.


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Stewart documents the use of Creole English by native-born American Negroes during the colonial and ante-bellum periods, largely from literary sources of these times. For these data, Stewart traces the earlier stages of Negro dialect, noting that the assimilation of Negro Americans to the speech patterns of American whites was not as complete as some scholars have supposed.


In a companion article to item 19, Stewart continues to trace the development of Negro dialect since the Civil War. He notes the "de-creolization" of vocabulary, the preservation of recessive dialect forms by children, and the excessive problems faced by Negro children as they enter school speaking a non-standard dialect. Stewart observes that the linguistic similarities between a non-standard dialect and standard English can camouflage functional differences between the two linguistic systems. The author concludes that at least some of the syntactic features of American Negro dialects are structural vestiges of an earlier plantation creole, and ultimately of an original slave-trade pidgin English which gave rise to it.

Research Reports


Displays the systematic differences between British middle-class and working-class adolescent conversation groups. Middle-class groups are seen to put greater values on providing information and on interpretation than working-class groups. They used fewer personal pronouns, a larger variety of adjectives and subordinate conjunctions, more varied syntax, and more frequent pauses than their working-class peers.


An investigation of the evolution of upper and lower class dialects in Kanarese, Tamil, and Tulu. The authors find that there is evidence for independent developments from both conscious and unconscious sources.


An examination of the use of tu and vous in French address, and the corresponding pronouns in German and Italian. After noting that the choice was formed by the interaction of sender to receiver, the authors contrast the historical aspect (power) with the contemporary characteristic (intimacy) of these pronouns. A further contrast was noted between kin-intimacy of the German pronouns to the camaraderie of the French and Italian.


Fischer studies the use of /in/ and /ig/ forms of the suffix -ing by New England children, used to form participles and verbal nouns, as in farming and playing. He found that the choice between the /in/ and /ig/ variants appears to be related to sex, class, personality (aggressive/cooperative), and mood (tense/relaxed) of the speaker, to the formality of the conversation and to the specific verb form. While this might be described as free variation in a standard type of description, Fischer would like to account for more than the grammatical facts and denotative meaning involved and refers to these distributions as "socially conditioned variants" or "socio-symbolic variants."


Studying ten phonological variables in an Indian village with thirty-one social castes, Gumperz finds that six caste groups are set off by these linguistic markers.

See Social Dialects, 4, Col. 1
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One of the most significant studies of the frequency distribution of linguistic variables as they correlate with sociological data. Labov investigates five phonological variables in New York City speech, the (r) of park and car, the (h) of bad and ask, the (th) of thing and three, the (dh) of the and them, and the (oh) of chocolate and off. Of special interest is Labov's treatment of oftentimes, his use of preceding socio-linguistic research, his quantification of the frequency distribution of the variables, and the implications of this research for the serious study of linguistic change.


Probably no single piece of research has so directly affected the fields of linguistics and sociology as much as this monumental work. Labov's aim is to account for linguistic variation in a systematic way. He attacks, among other things, the claims of linguists that synchronic systems and diachronic development must be studied in isolation, and that sound change cannot be directly observed, that feelings about language are inaccessible, and that the linguist should not use non-linguistic data to explain linguistic change. This work is significant in its description of the author's approach to the correlation of linguistic features to social stratification, the isolation of contextual styles, interviewing techniques, and subjective evaluation of the variables, among other things.


The authors discovered that the rates at which r was pronounced are bimodal rather than distributed about a central value. This bimodality is greater among higher status residents of the community. Younger and newer residents pronounce the r, while older and tenured residents do not. The authors conclude that if this feature is indicative of a general direction of linguistic change, the community's march toward the national norm will be led by women, young people, short-term residents of the community and by those who are near, but who have not yet arrived at, the white-collar class.


Loban presents findings of a longitudinal study of language development. The subjects of the study are Oakland children who were followed for a ten-year period, from kindergarten through ninth grade. The author describes the language difficulties of children whose speech is influenced by a social class dialect as well as the speech of children not so handicapped. He includes many charts noting omissions, unnecessary repetitions, non-standard modifications, etc., measured on a scale of number of deviations per 1000 words of spoken volume.


Fourteen conversations are transcribed in a modified standard orthography which notes consonant reduction, substitution, and assimilation and other selected segmental characteristics along with an impressionistic judgment of stress, pitch, and juncture. These conversations, originally intended to accompany a prosodic analysis, are presented as a semi-analyzed data collection. Tape recordings of these conversations are also available.


A description of the variation which exists in South Carolinian pronunciation of postvocalic -r. McDavid notes three variables that operate toward decreasing -r production: (1) the more education, the less constriction, (2) within the same cultural level, younger informants have less constriction than older ones, (3) urbanites have less constriction than rural people. McDavid traces the spread inland of the minority speech pattern, involving several types of social adjustment. An important early article citing the need for correlating linguistic phenomena with other cultural phenomena.


A description of the pronunciation of Chicagans based on Linguistic Atlas-type interviews of 55 primary and 81 subsidiary informants, most of which were done in the early sixties. Pederson summarizes regional and social differences within the single phonemic system established for this area. Certain contrasts are noted between the speech of urban and extra-urban informants, Negroes and Caucasians and different age, education and social groups.


This study focuses on the speech of Negro speakers in Pederson's Chicago research (see item 32), contrasting twenty-year (or more) residents of Chicago with recent arrivals. Data on seven phonological features are displayed along with certain verb forms and lexical items. From these displays it is possible to compare the responses of different education, groups, sexes, and "sociolinguistic" types.


A study of the relationship of social status and linguistic features of the speech of a group of 74 adult Negroes of low social status in Washington, D.C. The authors used essentially the analytical methods of linguistic geography, generalizing about the segmental and suprasegmental phonemes of the group. Very little attention was devoted to grammar. Of most interest, perhaps, is the authors' use of judges' ratings from a tape stimulus, making possible a contrast of objective and subjective (or perceived) status.


A description of the fieldwork, analysis, and pedagogical implications of the research done in 1966 in Detroit. Over 700 Detroit residents, randomly selected from ten stratified areas of the city, were interviewed for free discourse, citation forms, and reading style. The report includes a detailed analysis of multiple negation, pronominal apposition, nasal consonants and certain aspects of syntax, along with a section on the implications of this research for the classroom.

Pedagogical Applications


The authors summarize some of the important contrasts between standard and Negro non-standard English as it is spoken in Washington, D.C., then describe the lessons being constructed along standard foreign-language-teaching lines. Particular attention is given the initial fears of the teachers and how these fears were allayed. Also noted are problems of teacher training, the concept of appropriateness, and the important differences between teaching standard English as a second dialect and teaching English as a foreign language.


The author discusses the influence of English-based Creoles on contemporary Ne-
gro non-standard English, particularly in syntactic properties. Dillard cites such language learning problems as the Negro child's lack of awareness of his dialect differences from standard, problems of group loyalty, age-grading, and the construction of special drills for Negro children.


A discussion of the stages in the acquisition of standard English, growing out of the author's extensive research into New York City speech. These are: (1) the mastery of the main body of grammatical rules and lexicon of spoken English, sufficient for a child to communicate his needs. (2) Acquisition of local dialect consistent with that of his friends and associates. (3) Acquisition of social perception in early adolescence. (4) Development of ability to modify his speech in the direction of prestige standard, in formal situations, and to some extent in casual speech. (5) Ability to maintain standard styles and switch appropriately (acquired primarily by the middle class). (6) Development of complete consistency appropriate to a wide range of occasions.


After contrasting some of the salient differences between Negro non-standard and standard English, Labov outlines several basic principles for reading problems which can be derived from his research. Teachers should learn to distinguish between differences in pronunciation and mistakes in reading. In beginning reading instruction it may be necessary to spend more time on the function of certain grammatical inflections which have no function in non-standard. The author sees no reason why a child cannot learn to read standard English texts in a non-standard pronunciation.


A discussion of the intersection of the non-standard vernacular of the urban ghetto and standard English especially as it relates to reading problems. The authors reject the notion that Negro speech is the product of dialect mixture of two originally uniform grammars, suggesting instead that the differences between Negro non-standard and standard English are surface structure manifestations of relatively low-level rules. His research shows that native non-standard speakers can perceive, abstract, and reproduce the meaning of many standard forms which they do not produce.


In his discussion of the relationship of non-standard Negro English to standard English, Loflin observes that in many respects they are similar but that the contrasts are sufficiently different to require a special pedagogical effort that may well be modeled after foreign language teaching techniques. In urging that non-standard speech be recognized as rule-governed, Loflin analyzes two non-standard sentences which may be a source of structural interference for a student trying to learn the standard language.


In order to call the teacher's attention to the aspects of non-standard English which occur frequently, the author cites twenty-six features (six pronunciations and twenty grammatical forms) most likely to be encountered in the classroom. Most of these, he maintains, may be traced back to the folk speech of England.

43. Shuy, Roger W. "Detroit Speech: Careless, Awkward and Inconsistent or Systematic, Graceful and Regular?" Elementary English (May 1968).

A description of the research of the Detroit Dialect Study, with suggestions about its potential usefulness to the classroom. The author stresses the fact that the so-called "omissions" of non-standard are not merely careless, that supposed "awkwardness" is an unsupported value judgment, and that the presumed "inconsistencies" of non-standard are myths. He stresses the student's need to preserve non-standard for appropriate social situations and the desirability of teaching children to switch dialects according to the proper social circumstances.


The author urges the application of English as a Second Language techniques (repetition, substitution, completion and transformation drills). Slager suggests certain example drills for effecting phonological and grammatical change.


A discussion of the need for and benefits from studying Negro non-standard speech. The author suggests that such speakers are faced with a "quasi-foreign language" situation. Certain structural correspondences between the two systems (standard and non-standard) warrant at least some foreign language teaching procedure. Of particular interest is that the quasi-foreign language situation is seldom recognized for what it is by the persons most directly concerned, including teachers. Stewart also urges strongly that pedagogical materials be developed out of rigorous basic research in linguistics and cultural analysis.


In describing some of the historical aspects of Washington, D.C., Negro speech, Stewart suggests the concepts acrolet to represent the topmost dialect of the local linguistic hierarchy and basilect for the opposite extreme. Noting that there are differences between acrolet and basilect in virtually all areas of their linguistic structures, Stewart stresses that it is the grammatical differences which are most striking and most crucial for pedagogy. He observes, further, that basilect patterns are restricted to younger children and, as such, suggest a fertile field for research in such matters as dialect interference in beginning reading.

Recent CAL Publications


"Due to the general inaccessibility of [doctoral dissertations], few people, even those most vitally interested in the field, know what exists; consequently, much of this original research lies dormant and is doomed to be repeated. This bibliography serves as an attempt to acquaint scholars with what investigations have already been completed and where they might be obtained" (p. iii).

Contains over 1700 entries. Each entry gives the author's name, the dissertation title, the university which granted the degree, and the year the degree was granted. A topical index appears at the end. This volume supercedes the Center's earlier publication, Dissertations in Linguistics: 1957-64, published in 1965.