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(Received 16 March 1974)

A. SCHWEIZER, Problems in the sociology of language in contemporary American

The scope of this book is indeed as restricted as the title suggests. Only four topics
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are treated: linguistic relativism, social differentiation of languages (looking primarily at diglossia and bilingualism), language planning, and sociolinguistic typologies. No justification is given for this selection from what the author has elsewhere characterized as a 'vast and somewhat loosely defined field of studies' (Language in Society 1,303). Russian-speaking readers presumably are acquainted with the problems to which this book is addressed. The foreign reader infers that they are primarily practical ones.

Schweizer's bias is clearly in favor of macro-sociolinguistics, and it appears to be a principled one. If rejecting linguistic determinism, for example, he asserts the priority of society (32), supporting the position of V. N. Yartseva, Problema svyazi yazyka b obshechestva v sovremennom zarubezhnom yazykознании (in Yazyk i obshechestvo, Moscow 1968). He does not claim originality for the idea here, nor does he argue independently. Functional relativity, however, is accepted as being consonant with the Soviet position. He claims that Americans have tended to oversimplify society, and that the work of some scholars has even suggested an isomorphism (изоморфизм) between language and society. Specifically, he criticizes American sociolinguistics as being positivist and behaviorist (Goodenough [incorrectly rhymed with 'though' instead of 'enough'] and Pike are singled out here), as being based on symbolic interaction theory (the roots of American anthropology), and as seeing social behavior as communication. Hymes escapes criticism only to be guilty of the latter view.

The concepts of style and prestige are singled out for special criticism. They are not important variables in an explanation of speech differentiation because, he claims, they can be explained sociologically. They are, if anything, the effect of fundamental social factors. For example, after giving a fairly accurate summary of Samarin 1966, he rejects as unsatisfactory the principal thesis (and presumably other comments on prestige in the Bright volume) and then says:

the desire to attribute a primary role to factors of prestige often prevents American sociolinguists from analyzing more deeply the phenomena that underlie the social differentiation of languages. It appears that the causes for mistaken and heterogeneous identification of linguistic elements are to be sought in the first place in the absence of codified norms, in the absence of an educational system using the language in question, and in the illiteracy of the population (p. 66).

It is difficult to see how these considerations invalidate the function of prestige in the case under examination. But the quotation does illustrate Schweizer's preoccupation with 'standard literary languages'. (For a discussion in English see Guxman 1968.)

Americans are further criticized for not paying enough attention to the study of the technical aspects of the relation between standard languages and nation
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building. In the face of work by people like E. Haugen, J. A. Fishman, B. Jernudd, and J. Rubin on nation building and language planning this seems to be an ill-founded dissatisfaction. Since he does not share the view (attributed to Americans) that a standard is only one of many 'dialects', and since he does not like the expression 'language planning', one is left with the feeling that American foibles are trivial. Sociolinguists in the United States are not required either by national problems or academic pressures to address themselves to the development of national literary standards. The surprising thing is that they have investigated such problems as much as they have.

Contemporary American linguistics is working almost feverishly on the social aspects of language use and language form, especially on Nonstandard (or Vernacular) Black English and Spanish. The body of literature is already extensive, much too large to be summarized in a review as brief as this one. Much of this work confronts the implications of class differences—a fact that a Marxist might appreciate—for language (from a purely theoretical point of view) and for national well being. It is unfortunate, therefore, that only a little of this gets into collected volumes, a genre that seems to have been Schweizer's primary source of information.

Perhaps it is only where it is non-Marxist that American linguistics is imperfect, for

Only Marxist methodology provides the tools for solving the complex and multifaceted problem of the relationship between language and society. That relationship is not amenable to reduction in terms of either behaviorist 'stimulus-reaction' theory or neo-behaviorist theories of communicative behavior (30).

Non-Marxists will surely welcome every possible contribution to an explication and exemplification of Marxist methodology. In the meantime, this book, in so far as it accurately reviews the work of some American linguists, will be of some service to the Russian-reading public, for, says Schweizer,

Basing itself on a Marxist understanding of the relationship between language and society, Soviet sociolinguistics makes creative use of the achievements of foreign scholars who have studied the sociology of language (102).1

[1] For example, W. Bright (ed.), Sociolinguistics (1966); J. A. Fishman (ed.), Readings in the sociology of language (1968); J. A. Fishman et al., Language loyalty in the United States (1966); J. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds), The ethnography of communication (1964). S. Lieberson (ed.), Explorations in Sociolinguistics (1967). Writers cited for discussion or mere reference with papers published elsewhere are the following: H. C. Currie, C. A. Ferguson, E. Haugen, C. Kluckhohn, W. Labov, S. Lamb, L. A. Pedersen, K. Percival, K. L. Pike, E. Sapir, W. A. Stewart, and G. Williams. The original sources for the republished papers are not given, and there are frequent errors of one type or another in the bibliographical references. The book has no complete collated bibliography.
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OTHER


This significant and thoughtful book explores the interaction between social class, language form, and patterns of social relations in child rearing. Basil Bernstein’s theory of the relationship between language structure and social structure (cf. Bernstein 1972) is examined empirically in the study.

The author interviewed English mothers and children of different social class levels and audiotaped their responses to six questions each, describing a hypothetical incident in family life (usually involving a misdeed by the child). The respondent (mother or her child) was asked what the mother would say to and do with the child in that ‘context of situation’. The taped responses were then coded and reduced to data that could be summarized and analyzed statistically.

One among many valuable features of the book is its clear and detailed picture of a highly differentiated research strategy, in which diverse elements are well articulated. Cook-Gumperz describes this as a ‘self-correcting’ research design. I would agree, in that her wide variety of analytic procedures reveal not only the central tendencies predicted by the theoretical framework through which she is operating, but also retrieve interesting and unpredicted variation. Bernstein’s general theory gets reformulated to some extent in dialogue with the Cook-Gumperz data.

Methodologically the most valuable features of this research are the coding procedures devised to characterize the form of linguistic and social control strategies and the clear description of how coders were trained.

Language form was expected to vary along Bernstein’s dimension of elaboration restriction. Some of the indicators of language form used by Cook-Gumperz in coding tapes are based on standard distinctions made by Bernstein, such as those between sociocentric sequences ('you know', 'you see') and egocentric sequences ('I think'), indicating elaboration and restriction respectively. These distinctions seem too arbitrary. Much more interesting were another set of indicators developed by the author herself. These indicators were based on