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ABSTRACT

An effort to lay the foundation for the preparation of reading programs which will match the social and linguistic background of lower-class children, in particular children of the nation's black ghettos, is made in this paper. The paper consists of five sections. The first section discusses the interconnection of social, geographic, and stylistic variations, and stresses that reading and writing are both secondary to spoken language. The second section discusses various theoretical problems, focusing on the status of Black English and Anglo English as dialects of American English. The third section considers the pedagogical relevance of sociolinguistic data and discusses deep structure and surface structure. The fourth section discusses field methods and analysis procedures to determine the linguistic competence of an individual or a group. The fifth section concludes that the teacher and the developer of reading instructional treatments share the difficult task of bridging the gap between normative culture-defined entry skills and attitudes and those of children from any of the American subcultures. (TS)

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL LABORATORY FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT



# SOCIAL DIALECTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION [1]

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An important facet of language is the social context in which it is used. Hence, learning to read is contingent upon both the child's speech skills and the social environment in which he uses them. When the child, the teacher, and the developer of instructional reading materials share a common social and linguistic background, the effectiveness of reading instruction need not suffer if many social and linguistic aspects of instruction are left tacit. However, when social and linguistic background varies from child to teacher to developer, then the instructional system must take into account the background characteristics of the child. Otherwise, ineffective reading instruction will result.

Reading instruction has been more effective for children of middle-class parents than for children of lower-class parents. It is apparent

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[1] The authors would like to express their appreciation to Joseph Follettie, Angela Blackwell, Sandra Garcia, and Richard Schutz for their many valuable comments on this paper during the writing.

that, along social and linguistic lines, the instructional system is increasingly mismatched with the child as socioeconomic status declines. This paper is an effort to lay the foundation for preparation of reading programs which will match the social and linguistic background of lower-class children, in particular children of the nation's black ghettos.

The paper consists of five sections: (a) The Social Nature of Language, (b) Theoretical Linguistic Problems, (c) The Pedagogical Relevance of Sociolinguistic Data, (d) Field Methods and Analysis, and (e) Concluding Remarks. The primary emphasis is on the linguistic characteristics of the black ghetto child. Social background is considered only as it is related to linguistic background.

Topics of great significance which are not treated include: (a) the pedagogical significance of the teacher and student possessing different value systems, and (b) the relative importance of linguistic diversity in the classroom as contrasted to other kinds of cultural diversity in the classroom.[2]

## THE SOCIAL NATURE OF LANGUAGE

Phonological, lexical, and syntactic variations among diverse styles and dialects comprise a significant part of the social context in which language and reading are embedded. As Martin Joos (1962) has pointed out, a person speaks differently when scolding his children than when giving directions to a stranger on the street or when presenting a talk. Similar stylistic variations have been amply documented by Labov (1966) with quantitative analyses of phonological variation. Labov contrasted his informants' casual speech patterns when talking with family members or friends to those patterns used in the more formal situation of speaking to an interviewer. Labov also contrasted each informant's conversational patterns with his varying styles when asked to read a short story, a word list, and a minimal pair list.

Besides stylistic variations such as these, there are the long-recognized phenomena of geographic dialects, and the practically unknown facts associated with social and class dialects. The same kinds of variation which occur in these areas also occur with stylistic variation, although the extent of this similarity remains open to investigation.

The interconnections of social, geographic and stylistic variations are by no means simple. Linguistic features associated with upper class

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[2] While the emphasis of this paper is upon teaching reading to the black ghetto child, much of the material should apply to teaching Mexican-American children.

casual speech in a rural town may well be associated with lower class or working class speech in a city.

Usages such as ain't or the double negative are typical of lower class, uneducated speech, yet may also occur in the casual or humorous speech of highly educated speakers. Furthermore, when specific linquistic traits become associated with a social group--whether defined economically or ethnically--the various myths and prejudices that are associated with that group become associated with the speech of its members as well. That is to say, if someone talks like a member of a recognizable group, members of the larger community will on first meeting--and probably for some time after--assign him the characteristics commonly associated with the members of that group. This phenomenon is a mechanism both for in-group recognition and for classifying the strangers we meet and predicting from our classifications their behavior and attitudes.

In general, a speaker's differing speech patterns indicate simply that he was reared in or considers himself a member of a subcommunity that has somewhat different speech conventions than those of the normative subcommunity. That someone speaks differently from the majority implies neither that he is sloppy in his usage, nor that he is mentally incompetent nor for that matter that he comes from a linguistically impoverished background.[3] The non-standard speech conventions of a non-dominant group are just as consistent and regular as the speech conventions of any dominant group. The historical events that promote one group and its language to a dominant status have with very few exceptions been independent of the dialects involved.

At present the myths associated with the social dialect system in the United States are part of a broader system of prejudices based on class, race, and ethnic group. The scope and depth of these biases as well as their effects on minority group members have been portrayed by Grier and Cobbs (1968) and by Kozol (1967).

Both teachers and students need to be made aware of certain pervasive and significant facts about language variation, so that they may free themselves from the myths associated with language diversity. Such an awareness may contribute to an expanded perspective of the nature of human beings and society. If the teacher is to evaluate his students realistically on their merits and communicate effectively with them, he

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[3] The concept of linguistically impoverished or restricted codes used by Bereiter (1966), Bereiter and Englemann (1966), Bernstein (1961), and Entwisle and Greenberger (1968) does not seem to be productive. Evidence for claims that minority group children are non-verbal or possess only restricted codes is equivocal. At most it supports the conclusion that their dialects differ from the majority dialect.

must be cognizant of the regular ways in which their non-normative dialects differ from his own.

The anecdotal evidence supports the general view that social pressures and reinforcements make learning to read a natural and obvious goal for most "advantaged" children, whereas the ghetto child frequently perceives reading as a teacher-set task having little relevance to his present or future needs and interests. The question before us, then, is how to make reading relevant to the black ghetto child.

Whether a person needs a speaking command of standard English in order to read and write standard English remains an open question. It cannot be denied, however, that there are economic and political advantages in American society for minority group members who can communicate in one of the normative dialects.

It should be emphasized at this point that reading and writing are both secondary to spoken language. Standard written English is a dialect native to no one. The same conventions are used by the Britisher, the Jamaican, the Indian, and the American when communicating in writing, even though their oral dialects differ from each other. Reading and writing should be considered as means of extending the range of the spoken word. Being able to read allows one to receive information when he is removed in both time and place from its source. A knowledge of writing allows one to extend his words beyond the limits otherwise imposed by time and space. The use of a writing system has the same relation to language as does the use of a tape recorder, but writing is more intimately connected to language than is any means of mechanical reproduction of the acoustic signal. One does not need to know anything about a language to record it or play it back on a tape recorder. One does need to know a great deal about a language to write or read it. For example, in writing one needs to know about the grammatical structure of a sentence if one is to punctuate it correctly; while in reading, one needs the same information if he is to provide the stress and pitch patterns not captured in the writing system (Chomsky and Halle, 1968).

The study of the bases of reading and writing is in actuality the study of language itself. An understanding of the ghetto child's problems in learning to read requires an understanding of both the nature of language and of language diversity, especially of synchronic linguistic diversity, discussed in the next section.

## THEORETICAL LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS

Linguists have in general ignored synchronic linguistic diversity--diversity occuring at a single point in time. By contrast, they have devoted an enormous amount of effort to the study of long-range language change--change occuring over a period of several generations. Although dialectologists have until recently been primarily oriented toward the documentation of language change, they comprise the one group

of linguists which has studied synchronic diversity, focusing on synchronic geographical variation. Thus we have many historical and geographic studies that are of great interest in their own right and have important implications for the study of social dialects. Unfortunately, relatively little work has been or is being conducted which adequately acknowledges the relatedness of historical change, geographic dialects, social dialects, stylistic variation, and age-grading.[4]

A heuristic way of viewing the relations between all the apparently diverse phenomena of language variation is to consider each person's idiolect as in a constant state of incipient change, held in check by social sanctions and the need to communicate. More precisely, social norms only limit linguistic deviation.[5] When a person's group allegiance changes, or the power the group holds over him diminishes, the individual's grammar[6]

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[4] In recent years Labov's pioneering work, some of which is discussed later, has begun to change this state of affairs. The phenomenon of age-grading is discussed later in this paper.

[5] Under this view it would be perfectly possible for a person to belong to several overlapping or interlocking groups simultaneously.

[6] Throughout this paper the term "grammar" is used in a systematically ambiguous fashion. On the one hand it refers to what an individual or a community possesses in the way of linguistic knowledge (whether learned or innate, conscious or unconscious). On the other hand, it refers to the description of that knowledge which the linguist constructs. A similar systematic ambiguity occurs in all empirical sciences. When a geographer speaks of a "river" he may mean either a line on a piece of paper or the actual physical body of water found flowing across the earth's surface.

The particular theoretical framework used here is based on (though not identical to) that developed by Chomsky (1965) in Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. The main features of a grammar constructed in this framework are three: (1) a means for producing the underlying logical structure of individual sentences; (2) a lexicon from which meaningful units are inserted into the underlying logical structure of sentences (included in each lexical entry is all information which cannot be predicted about a form and must, therefore, be listed; this information includes the arbitrary portion of the phonetic representation of each entry, its meaning, and certain grammatical information about it); and (3) a set of transformational rules which relate the underlying logical structures (deep structures) to their phonemic (surface) representations. (The transformational component of a grammar is the one about which most is known and is the component which is of chief concern here. It consists of a partially ordered set of rules which can change the order of the constituents of a sentence, insert new elements into a sentence, and delete elements from a sentence. These operations are subject to certain empirically motivated constraints. The most important of these constraints is that transformational operations cannot change the meaning of a sentence.)

is prone to change. For example, the grammar of a socially mobile individual may change as he moves from one social stratum to another or from one geographical area to another. Conversely, when an individual makes a geographic move, his idiolect may remain relatively stable while his former community's grammar diverges from its earlier norm.

This conception of language change must be formalized, so that it can be tested empirically and reconciled with the remainder of linguistic theory. The beginnings of such a formalization can be gleaned from recent work on grammatical theory.[7]

Generative grammarians have observed in recent years that the set of ordered rules which best characterizes a language reflects, in many respects, the historical order in which the rules were adopted in the language. This observation has led to the hypothesis that language changes by adding new rules to the end of major sections of the ordered list of rules. Various counter-examples have shown such a simple and straightforward explanation of language change to be untenable. It now appears that rules can be added at other places in the grammar, although exactly where these places are is not yet fully known. Other mechanisms in linguistic changes also appear to operate in natural language. Lexical entries that undergo transformational rules can be wholly or partially restructured. A transformational rule can undergo modification so that it operates on different sets of strings than it formerly did. It is also the case that transformational rules can also be reordered with respect to each other (Kiparsky, 1968), and rules can be borrowed from other dialects of the same language and possibly from neighboring languages as well (Harms, 1967). The most significant such borrowing ever studied is the adoption in English of the Romance stress rule under the influence of the large number of French words brought into the language following the Norman invasion.[8]

As Bach (1966) has pointed out, historical change can be used to motivate the forms of grammatical rules and the kinds of elements which can be used to make up these rules. For example, if two successive stages of a language differ by the deletion or addition of only one linguistic entity, there is strong motivation for positing the existence of that entity among the stock of (universal) grammatical entities

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[7] See in particular, Kiparsky, (1968), Becker (1967), Harms (1967). All the data which bear on this issue deal with Indo-European languages; and most of these data are drawn from Germanic languages. DeCamp (1968a, b) and Labov, Cohen, Robins, and Lewis (1968 a,b) have taken steps toward developing a theory of language variation.

[8] The Romance stress rule is that rule of English phonology which assigns proper stress to such words as covet, relish, develop, stolid, and common (Chomsky and Halle, 1968:29).

available in human speech systems. Since precisely the same kinds of linguistic data are compared whether the dialects considered are "temporal," geographic, stylistic, or social, it should be possible to bring all four kinds of dialect information to bear on theoretical problems. Conversely, grammatical theory should be able to guide us in interpreting these kinds of dialect variation.

It might well be asked what relevance language change has for the teaching of reading. The connection is indirect but important. An understanding of historical change and language variation can do more than merely aid in overcoming specific difficulties of analysis. Such an understanding can tell us what kinds of differences and similarities can exist between two languages or between two dialects. With this knowledge it should be possible to formulate general teaching strategies to communicate whatever information is relevant to a specific teaching situation.[9]

The exact mechanisms and constraints on changes in a linguistic system are not known, but it seems clear that these are greatly affected by social as well as linguistic factors. Impressive evidence to support this view has been provided by Labov (1963, 1966) in his studies of Martha's Vineyard and New York City. He has convincingly shown that linguistic allegiance is based not simply on a most prestigious dialect, but rather on complex factors such as (in the case of the Martha's Vineyard study) the speaker's allegiance to the island of Martha's Vineyard as opposed to the Massachusetts mainland, or (as in the case of lower class informants and working class informants on the Lower East Side of New York) the speaker's feelings of group identity and acceptance of that group's social values. In matters of style, the speaker's feelings toward his subject matter and toward the people with whom he is talking have a decisive effect on his usage.[10] It is complex factors such as these that are involved in a treatment of either language variation or language change. Data on linguistic variation are used here in a discussion of language change, and vice versa, because variation and change are but two sides of the same coin. Without language change there would be no non-stylistic linguistic variation and without variation there would be no change.

If descriptions of the differences between English dialects are to rise above ad hoc summaries of the data, then the descriptions must be

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[9] For discussion of the importance of a knowledge of linguistic data, see the section entitled The Pedagogical Relevance of Sociolinguistic Data. In that section some of the recent sociolinguistic work is summarized.

[10] This is overtly reflected in Japanese where there are morphological and inflectional markings for these features.

made consonant with what is already known about the grammar of English and with what is known about the constraints on the formation of grammar. As one check against ad hoc formulations, the authors suggest the following constraint on grammatical descriptions.

The Minimum Difference Hypothesis

> The dialects of two groups contiguous on socio-economic and geographical continuums can be expected to differ minimally.

The Mimimum Difference Hypothesis is an application of Occam's razor relevant to the task at hand. It is a constraint on the description of a set of related grammars, designed to supplement rather than replace the generality criterion or simplicity metric that modern grammarians apply to individual grammars. The Minimum Difference Hypothesis states in effect that a description of two or more related competences will be satisfactory only if that description brings out the relationship between these competences[11] in the clearest and simplest way consistent with the facts.

To illustrate the import of the Minimum Difference Hypothesis, consider an analysis of English dialects which attempts to relate the grammar of two hypothetical dialects, A and B.[12] Dialects A and B are identical except that wherever B can contract a copula or auxiliary, A can delete that copula or auxiliary. Thus, where A would have "John going to the store," B would have "John's going to the store." If it is decided that A and B are contiguous on the appropriate social, economic, and geographical continuums, then the Minimum Difference Hypothesis will be invoked. The suppositions would be that A and B were both derived from a single earlier version, Dialect B'; that A and B underwent the same evolutionary changes from B' except that somewhere along the line A acquired a rule which deletes copulas and auxiliaries while B acquired a version of the rule which contracts those items. If a third dialect, C, were discovered which had all the sentences of A plus the sentence "John's going to the store," then the Minimum Difference Hypothesis would force the supposition that C had all the rules of B, plus a rule which optionally deleted contracted items. The analysis would be rejected according to which Dialect A developed from B' by generalizing a common contraction rule and then C developed from Dialect A by adding a new contraction rule identical to the one in B. With knowledge of A, B, and C, the Minimum Difference Hypothesis

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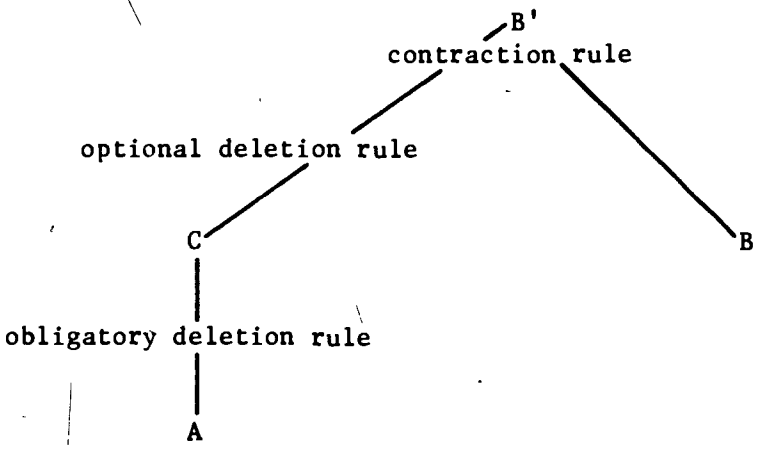
[11] "Competence" here refers to a set of individual or group norms.

[12] These hypothetical dialects are modeled after two dialects described briefly in this paper on page 27. Dialect B may be taken as any normative dialect of American English.

leads to an analysis in which B' developed a contraction rule, C diverged from B and B' by adding an optional deletion rule, and A developed from C by making the deletion rule obligatory. Schematically, the relations between these dialects would be as follows:




In all likelihood, even if Dialect C were not there to observe, it would be posited in order to formulate an analysis such as this.[13]

An important theoretical problem which remains unresolved is the status of Black English and Anglo English as dialects of American English. By definition both are subsets of American English. Whether or not they have the status of dialects of the same language, however, is still an open question. Before this matter is taken up, definitions are needed of "Black English" and "Anglo English." Black English (BE) refers to that variety or varieties of American English characteristically

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[13] Assuming the existence of a satisfactory simplicity metric (evaluation measure) of the kind discussed by Chomsky (1965), the Minimum Difference Hypothesis can be formulated in another and more precise way. Let a derivation from stage A to stage B of the grammar of a language be an ordered set of stages (intermediate grammars) which the language is presumed to have passed through between stage A and stage B, such that each intermediate grammar is consistent with the theory of grammar, and each change meets any naturalness constraint imposed by the theory of grammar. Then a minimum derivation from stage A to stage B may be defined as a derivation from stage A to stage B which necessitates the smallest total number of changes (as measured by the simplicity metric) made in each grammar (after A, up to and including B) to derive it from the preceding grammar. The Minimum Difference Hypothesis can now be taken as the statement that when alternate derivations between two stages of a language are possible, only a minimum derivation between those two stages will be accepted. Note, however, that as defined above, a minimum derivation between two stages of a language may not be unique.

spoken by the majority of American Negroes. Anglo English (AE) refers to regional standard dialects which are spoken by most educated Caucasoid Americans. Both of these major varieties of American English date from the beginning of the Seventeenth Century. Presumably the first distinctively American dialect features began to develop shortly after the settlement of Jamestown in 1607. The first women and the first slaves were brought to Jamestown in 1619. It is from this early date that we must reckon the age of BE.[14]

The relevant consideration here is not that BE and AE have essentially the same age, but that BE developed under circumstances formally identical to those which have produced every known pidgin and Creole: speakers of two or more non-dominant languages were placed in a position where they needed to converse with each other and to communicate with speakers of a dominant language. Under such circumstances, non-dominant speakers have frequently developed pidgins and, under the appropriate conditions, Creoles based on the dominant language.[15] Thus, a case can be made that BE bears the some historical relation to American English as Jamaican Creole dialects bear to Jamaican English. That is to say, BE may have the status of a language historically related to AE rather than the status of a dialectal variant of Southern AE. Since the actual status of BE is in dispute, the term "Black English" rather than "non-standard Negro" English will be used in this paper to avoid begging the issue. The term "non-standard" will be used to refer to variations from black language norms, rather than as part of a proper name. Further, there is an important sense in which BE is "standard" which should not be obfuscated by nomenclature. Whether or not BE is a language in its own right, it is a set of norms, a communal competence, for a large sub-population in the United States. It is the standard to which most black Americans adhere in just the same sense as AE is the standard to which most white Americans adhere.

But there is more than a terminological problem here. If BE is a dialect of AE, then imposing the Minimum Difference Hypothesis on an analysis may be justified. But suppose that BE is a Creole of AE. The Minimum Difference Hypothesis would still be applicable, but the length of the "derivation" from one grammar to the next would be so great as to render meaningless any measurement of the comparative complexity of

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[14] More precisely, the first native speakers of BE must have been the first generation of American-born slaves.

[15] A pidgin is generally taken to be "a contact vernacular, [which is] normally not the native language of any of its speakers" (DeCamp, 1968b:4). A Creole is a pidgin that has been adopted by some group as a native language.

For a discussion of the facts presented here see DeCamp (1968a, b) "The Field of Creole Language Studies" and "Toward a Generative Analysis of a Post-Creole Dialect Continuum."

alternative explanations for the possible line of development. In other words, given the current state of the linguistic art, although the Minimum Difference Hypothesis may be understood as a valid descriptive principle, it can presently be employed with confidence only to choose between alternative accounts of short-term changes.

## THE PEDAGOGICAL RELEVANCE OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC DATA

In the following discussion it will be necessary to make use of the terms "deep structure" and "surface structure." In lieu of a detailed explanation of these technical terms, an attempt shall be made to give an intuitively adequate, though over-simplified, account of these notions.

The notion of surface structure (SS) may be described with three approximations. The SS might be thought of as that set of acoustic events (sound waves) which impinges upon the ear of a listener when a sentence is spoken. However, the SS of a sentence is one step further removed from the physical reality of sound waves. As a second approximation the SS of a sentence can be considered a representation of a sentence (in the form of a string of symbols) which a linguist would write down in a fairly broad phonetic transcription upon hearing that sentence. This is somewhat nearer to the general usage of the term "SS," but it is necessary to make another abstraction and move a further step from the acoustic event: An SS is a string of phonetic symbols plus a labeled bracketing that identifies the parts of speech of the sentence. Further, this entity is an abstraction to which the linguist attributes some sort of psychological reality. That is, the linguist regards a SS as a representation which a speaker or hearer of a sentence relates to the acoustic event on the one hand, and which he relates to a particular meaning (semantic representation) on the other.

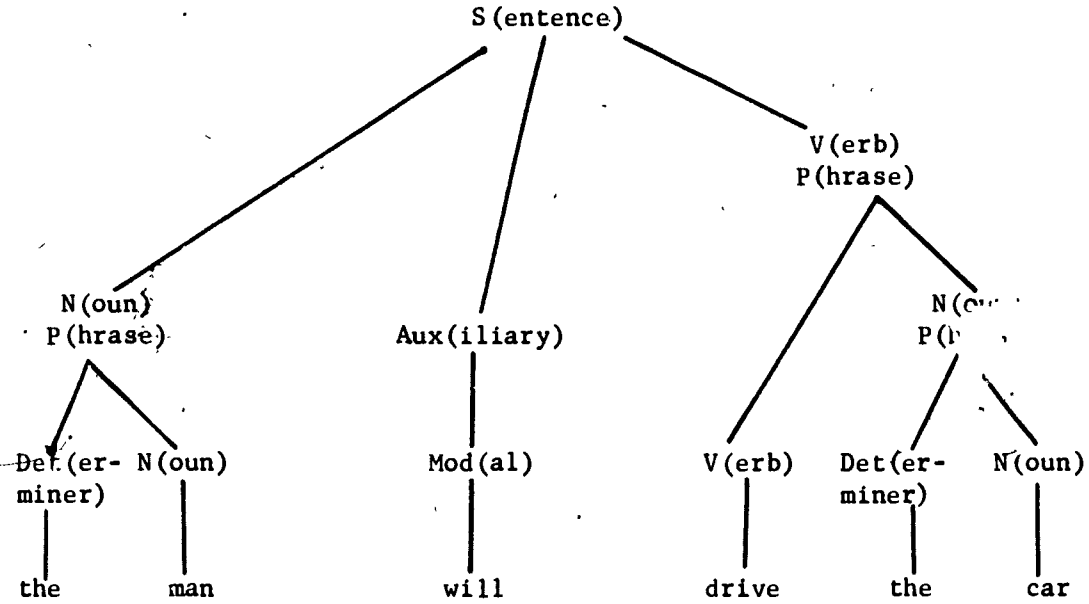
As an example of the abstraction consider the SS of the sentence "The man will drive the car."

(1) $[[[ðə]_{Det}[mæn]_{N}]_{NP}[[wɪl]_{Mod}]_{Aux}[[draɪv]_{Vb}$
$[[ðə]_{Det}[kar]_{N}]_{NP}]_{VP}]_{S}$ [16]

An SS may also be represented through use of a tree diagram or phrase-marker (P-marker). Thus, (1) may be represented as in (2):

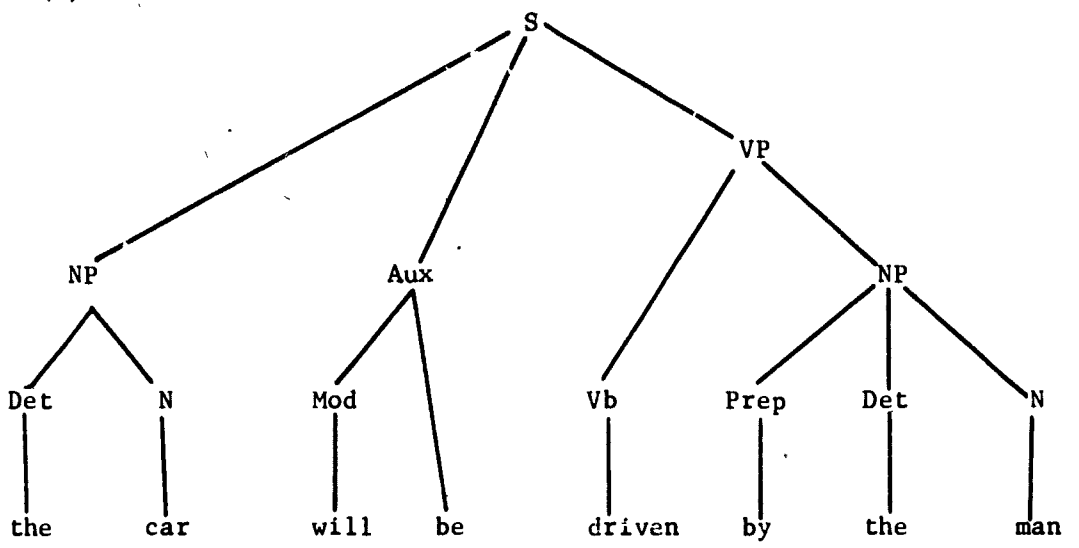
[16] Several oversimplifications are involved in calling this the SS of the sentence "The man will drive the car." In particular, several of the vowels in the actual SS of this sentence should be different. For an explanation of the abbreviations "Det," "NP," etc., see (2) below. In the following examples, the phonetic notation will be suppressed in favor of the standard orthography.

(2)




The deep structure of a sentence is more abstract than the surface structure. Consider the P-marker of the passivized form of sentence "The car will be driven by the man."

(3)




In both sentences (2) and (3), "the man" is understood to be the (future) driver of the car. Likewise, "the car" is understood to receive the action of the verb. More formally, we may say that "the man" is in the

logical (or deep) subject-verb relation to "drive" and that "the car" is in the logical (or deep) verb-object relation to "drive." Notice that these logical (deep) relations are not uniquely associated with the position of the elements in question ("the car," etc.) within P-markers (2) and (3). Any grammar which attempts to account for the native speaker's intuitions about his language must account for that speaker's ability to make these relations--just as any such grammar must explain why speakers of English feel that the sentences represented by (2) and (3) are somehow related.

How, then, does one account for these facts? It is necessary to postulate a more abstract structure underlying these two sentences--a structure in which the logical relations "subject-verb" and "object-verb" are uniquely defined. Thus, the existence of a deep structure (not shown), which is generated by the grammar, and which closely resembles (2), is postulated. P-marker (3), however, is not generated independently. Instead, it is derived by a mapping or transformational rule which converts P-marker (2")--where (2") is identical to (2') except that it contains a marker PASSIVE--into P-marker (3). P-marker (2') is the deep structure of P-marker (2), and P-marker (2") is the deep structure of (3).

So on the one hand the syntactic component of a grammar contains a set of rules which produces deep structures and upon which logical relations are defined. On the other hand, this component consists of transformational rules which map deep structures onto surface structures. The way in which a sentence is understood is determined by the material in its deep structure. Therefore, since transformational rules cannot change meaning (see footnote 6, page 5), different surface structures derived from the same deep structure must receive the same semantic interpretation (have the same "meaning") even though the surface subjects and objects may not be the same--as in (2) and (3).

Any attempt to implement a reading program for ghetto schools must rely heavily on sociolinguistic information of the type discussed earlier in this paper. To ignore this sociolinguistic data is to risk impairment of the effectiveness of such a program. To support this contention, several rules will be discussed which operate in certain dialects of BE to produce sets of homonyms which are different from the set of homonyms in AE. A teacher's ignorance of this aspect of BE will introduce serious problems in teaching Negro pupils to read.

Also discussed will be several problems which relate to differences in syntax between AE and BE. If a teacher is ignorant of these differences he may not even be able to tell when a child has correctly executed a reading assignment.

Throughout both these discussions, suggestions as to possible reading programs are presented. These suggestions were originally made by the investigators whose materials are summarized in this section.

In the Negro dialects studied by Labov (1967) he found that [r] was replaced by the mid-vowel [ə] (the vowel we hear in the first syllable of again and about) in the following environments:

1. Before a following consonant (as in guard).

2. Word finally (in words like car).

3. In intervocalic position (in words like Carol, Paris).

In the following pairs of words, the vowels in each are pronounced the same by speakers of this dialect. Thus, for these speakers, the following pairs of words will sound the same:

| | |
|---|---|
| guard = god | sore = saw |
| for = fought[17] | par = pa |
| court = caught | Carol = Cal |
| nor = gnaw | terrace = test |

A Negro child attempting to spell one of these words could be expected to have considerably more difficulty than a speaker of AE.

A similar problem exists for [l]. Labov found that [l] is often replaced by a back unrounded vowel [ɯ]. Thus, for the speaker of BE, the following words will be homonymous:

| | |
|---|---|
| toll = toe | all = awe |
| tool = too | Saul = saw |
| help = hep | fault = fought |

Furthermore, this loss of final [l] has an important effect on the phonetic realization of future forms. Note the following homonyms:

| | |
|---|---|
| you'll = you | he'll = he |
| they'll = they | she'll = she |

Thus in many cases the phonetic realization of the BE future is identical with that of the BE present.

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[17] Under certain conditions final consonants can be deleted.

This dialect of BE differs in another respect from AE. The grammar of BE has a rule which simplifies final consonant clusters by the deletion of the final consonant. In particular, the following clusters are affected: -st, -ft, -nt, -nd, -ld, -zd, -md, as in past, passed, lift, laughed, bent, bend, fined, hold, poled, old, called, raised, aimed. If the cluster is simplified it is always the last consonant which is dropped. We find the following homonyms:

| | |
|---|---|
| past = pass | mend = men |
| rift = riff | wind = wine |
| meant = men | hold = hole |

Labov cites some other possible results of final cluster simplification which may leave the child with insufficient clues as to the standard spelling of certain words:

| | |
|---|---|
| six = sick | Max = Mack |
| box = bock | mix = Mick |

In some cases, final consonants are deleted, resulting in examples like the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Boot = Boo | seat = see |
| road = row | poor = poke = pope |
| feed = feet | bit = bid = big |

Thus, feed and feet will rhyme with fee, and poor, poke, and pope will also rhyme since the final consonant in these words is lost. The same holds true for bit, bid and big.

As a final example of this type of phenomenon, Labov found that phonological processes reduce the occurrence of the -ed (past tense) suffix when it is realized phonetically as [t] or [d]. Thus:

| | |
|---|---|
| pass = past = passed | pick = picked |
| miss = mist = missed | loan = loaned |
| fine = find = fined | raise = raised |

There is also a rule which monopthongizes the diphthong [aj] (i.e., changes [aj] to [a]). This rule, combined with the rule which drops final consonant clusters, gives the following derivation for words like wild. Suppose that the deep structure representation for wild is /waild/. /waild/ becomes wald by the monophthongization rule. This

form in turn becomes wal by the rule which simplifies final consonant clusters. Finally, wal becomes [wa:w] by the rule which replaces [l] by the unrounded vowel [w]. Therefore, wild in BE will rhyme with AE wow. In this way, the combined effect of several rules will add to the total number of homonyms--with some unexpected results:

told = toll = toe

As Labov observes, these cases show that speakers of BE may have problems in distinguishing many words in their standard spelling. They may look up words under the wrong spelling in dictionaries, and they may be unable to distinguish words which are plainly different for the teacher. But if the teacher is aware of these sources of confusion, he will be in a better position to anticipate a great many of the pupil's difficulties. On the other hand, if neither teacher nor pupil is aware of the differences in their sets of homonyms, confusion is likely.

Grammatical differences can also create confusion. Stewart (1967) reports that for some BE speakers the sentence "Dey ain't like that" means the same thing as the AE sentence "They didn't like that." It does not mean "They aren't like that." Furthermore, the AE sentence "They aren't like that" would be rendered as either "Dey not like dat" or "Dey don't be like dat" in BE. It would be prudent in preparing beginning reading materials to avoid structures which are likely to be understood one way by the teacher and another way by the student.

In his investigation of the status of the -ed (past tense) suffix, Labov (1967) gave subjects certain sentences which they were to change to correct "school room" English. Some examples were:

I met three mens.

He pick me.

I've pass my test.

Last week I kick Donald in the mouth, so the teacher throwed me out the class.

Labov states that, in general, results of these correction tests showed that the subjects typically failed to detect the absence of -ed as a grammatical element to be corrected. Instead, they focused upon ain't, or man in He never play no more, man, but not upon -ed.

In a second test, the subjects read sentences containing the homograph read in order to indicate whether they could interpret the -ed suffix as a past tense signal. The relevant sentences from this test are:

(a) Last month I read five books.

(b) Tom read all the time.

(c) Now I read and write better than Alfred does.

(d) When I passed by, I read the posters.

(e) When I liked a story, I read every word.

(f) I looked for trouble when I read the news.

These sentences depend upon the homograph read to indicate whether the reader is interpreting the -ed suffix as a past tense marker. Sentences (a), (b), and (c) show whether the reader can utilize the time indicators last month, now, and the absence of -s to distinguish correctly between [ri:d] and [rɛd]. In the last three sentences, the reader encounters for the first time the -ed suffix, which he may or may not pronounce. If he interprets this visual signal as a past tense marker, he will pronounce read as [rɛd]; but if not, he is apt to say [ri:d].

Labov found that -ed was interpreted correctly less than half the time by his subjects. As a result, he concluded that the past tense suffix "cannot function as an effective marker of the past tense for many children."

The teacher must understand the child's phonological and grammatical system in order to distinguish reading difficulties from the systematic features of the child's dialect. For example, suppose a student is given a certain sentence to read, e.g., He passed by both of them. In the dialect studied by Labov, this might be rendered:

[hi pæs baɪ boʊf ə dɛm][18]

His teacher may wish to correct this "bad" reading by saying "No, it isn't [hi pæs baɪ boʊf ə dɛm], it's [hi pæst baɪ boʊθ əv ðɛm]."[19] One problem is that these two utterances may not be perceived differently by many of the pupils--both the reader and his listeners.[20] Other

[18] In standard orthography, this would be rendered as "He pass by bof a dem."

[19] Or, in standard orthography, "He passed by both of them."

[20] For anyone who has never suffered through a phonetics course, it is difficult to realize the extent to which the untrained ear plays tricks on the listener. Consider the following case. Speaker A consistently "drops" final [r] in words like car, bar, butter. Speaker B, who has a different dialect of AE, does not "drop his r's." Indeed, it is very likely that speaker B may, if pressed on the point, assert with great conviction that speaker A pronounces car, bar, butter, etc., exactly the same as he does. Likewise, most speakers of English will be unaware of the gross difference in the pronunciation of the p in spin and pin. A speaker of Hindi for example, will perceive these two p's as being distinct. For in Hindi, these two p's are as clearly distinguished from each other as the p in pin and the b in bin are in English.

children may hear the difference between [pæs] and [pæst], but not recognize the significance of the extra [t]. Likewise, they may hear the difference between [bɒf] and [bɒθ], [dɛm] and [ðɛm], but again have no idea of the significance of the difference between these forms. As Labov observes, the child who first read the sentence may have understood the significance of the -ed suffix, but merely failed to pronounce it (due to the rule in his grammar which simplifies final consonant clusters). In this case, he would have performed his reading task correctly, and the teacher's correction is completely beside the point.

Labov makes clear that there are two cases to consider. In the first, the reading deviation may be only a difference in pronunciation on the part of a child who has a different set of homonyms from the teacher. In this case, correction is unnecessary. In the second case, the pupil may have no concept of -ed as a past tense marker; he will consider -ed as a meaningless sequence of silent letters, analogous to the gh in bought. Obviously, the correct strategy is for the teacher to distinguish these two cases, and to treat them differently. Labov offers the following suggestions.

1. Clearly, the teacher must learn to make the basic distinction between differences in pronunciation and mistakes in reading. Information on the dialect patterns of his students is indispensable toward this end.

2. In the first stages of reading and spelling instruction, it may be necessary to spend a greater amount of time on the grammatical inflection of certain forms (such as -ed and the third person singular marker of the verb, which is frequently deleted) if it is known that these elements are not functional in the dialect of some of the children. Likewise, it may be necessary to treat the final elements in certain consonant clusters with the same attention usually given to silent letters such as the b in lamb.

3. Since speakers of BE may not hear differences which are perceived by speakers of AE, a certain amount of perception training in the early school years may be helpful in teaching children to cope with standard English distinctions (such as [pæs] and [pæst]). However, this training need not be complete to teach a speaker of BE to read. Most of the differences described by Labov may be taken as differences in the sets of homonyms which must be accepted in reading patterns. There is no obvious reason why a child cannot learn to read AE quite well in a nonnormative pronunciation. The important thing is for the teachers in the early grades to know the system of homonyms of nonnormative English, and to know the grammatical differences which separate his dialect from that of his pupils. The teacher must be prepared to accept (at least temporarily) the pupils' system of homonyms if this will advance the learning process, but not the grammatical differences. For example, the task of teaching the pupil to read -ed is that of getting him to identify the graphic symbols as a marker of the past tense--as contrasted to the task of getting him to say [pæst] for passed. Labov sums up the probable consequences of the teacher's ignorance of the child's grammar: If the teacher has no understanding of the child's grammar and set of homonyms,

he may be arguing with the child at cross purposes. Over and over again, the teacher may insist that cold and coal are different, without realizing that the child perceives this only as a difference in meaning, not in sound. The teacher will not be able to understand why the pupil makes so many odd mistakes in reading, and the pupil will experience only a vague confusion somehow connected with the ends of words. Eventually, he may stop trying to analyze the shapes of letters that follow the vowel, and guess wildly at each word after deciphering the first few letters. Or he may lose confidence in the phonetic approach, and try to recognize each word as a whole. This loss of confidence seems to occur frequently in the third and fourth grades, and it is characteristic of many children who are effectively nonreaders.

Among the problems which bear investigation is the question of how to write beginning reading materials for BE speakers. The major possibilities are: (1) use BE syntax and an orthography closely reflecting BE pronunciation patterns, (2) use BE syntax and standard English orthography, and (3) use AE exclusively.

Regarding the first possibility, Shuy (1968a) has noted that a careful description of the phonology of BE will be of more value to teachers than to designers of classroom materials. It may well be true that the arbitrariness of the symbolization process (plus the speaker's grammar) makes it unnecessary to rewrite primers into graphemic series which will, for example, delete the r in car, the l in help, the t in just, etc. Speakers of BE should not find it difficult to learn that [jəs] is realized in print as just, or [kaə] as car. The grapheme to phoneme rule which the Black child must internalize would be ⟨st⟩ → [s] (whereas for the white child, the rule would be ⟨st⟩ → [st]). The fact that the Negro child must internalize a rule which reflects the fact that two graphemes (st) are realized as a single sound ([s]) is by no means an unusual situation. Consider the rules ⟨th⟩ → θ as in thin or ⟨mb⟩ → [m] as in thumb. In other words, the decoding process of reading is already pervaded by such rules.

For these reasons it appears that in most cases it is unnecessary to modify the orthography of beginning readers to reflect the pronunciation of speakers of BE. As Chomsky (1964:3) has pointed out:

> It seems fairly well established that the level of lexical representation is highly resistant to change, and is highly persistent over time (and hence over a range of dialects). Correspondingly, one finds that conventional orthographies remain useful, with minor change, over long periods and for a wide range of dialects.

This holds because English orthography rather closely resembles the optimal spelling for lexical entries. That is, English orthography is a near optimal spelling system for native speakers. A great deal of evidence for this claim has been presented in Chomsky and Halle (1968).

On the other hand, Shuy has found that the analysis of the syntactic structures of BE has been a greater undertaking than one might expect, and will have far-reaching implications for designers of classroom materials. Further, because syntax provides a different kind of decoding process from the "grapheme to phoneme" relationships noted above, the task of the reading teacher is far more complicated. Shuy found that a sentence like "John asked if Mary wore a coat" is frequently read by the ghetto child as "John asked did Mary wear a coat."[21] Likewise,"Mary jumps up and down" is often read as "Mary jump up and down." In these types of examples, the reader is decoding primer book syntax into BE syntax. He is not misreading did for if, wear for wore, and jump for jumps. So far as the reading process is concerned, the child has succeeded; he has decoded and understood the printed message. But if, for example, he were to read the first sentence as "John asked Mary if did she wear a coat," or as "John asked Mary if she wear a coat," this should be considered a reading difficulty. Such a rendering of the first sentence might be considered evidence of interference from the child's grammar to that of AE. In the development of reading materials, care should be taken to avoid a linguistic mismatch between the child's oral language and the language of the written text. Shuy (1968b: 11) has made general suggestions for BE-based beginning reading materials.

1. Include grammatical forms which occur in BE even though they may not occur in AE (e.g., ain't, the be in "All the time he be happy," the double negative in "I'm not no strong drinker").

2. Conversely, exclude forms which occur in AE but do not occur in BE (e.g., the third person singular verbal suffix in "John talk all the time").

3. Write beginning materials in such a way that the syntactic structures of the written text are coincident with the syntactic structure of the student (e.g., adverbial phrases should be reduced to their nominalized equivalents when this reduction occurs in the dialect). Thus, AE "Samuel's brother is working as a janitor" would be reduced to BE "Samuel brother, he a janitor."

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[21] For discussion and more examples of this type of phenomenon in indirect questions, see Labov and Cohen (1967). These authors found that AE sentences formed by early rules in the grammar will be repeated by subjects without delay in the equivalent "nonstandard" form. That is, when the first sentence below is read to the subject, he will repeat instead the second sentence, which is the BE equivalent of the first sentence:

I asked Alvin if he knows how to play basketball.

I ask Alvin do he know how to play basketball.

However, this phenomenon does not occur with sentences formed by relatively late rules in the grammar (e.g., in sentences containing nonrestrictive relative clauses).

These suggestions lead to the following empirically testable questions:

1. In AE texts, what kind and how much interference is caused by the absence of BE grammatical features?

2. What kind and how much interference is caused by the presence of AE features in the text which are not used by speakers of BE?

3. What kind of interference is caused by syntactic variations between BE and AE features?

The extent to which reading materials should "reflect the way people talk" is not clear. One alternative which must be considered, however, is the possibility of constructing materials for children from the black ghetto so that these materials reflect the syntax, lexicon, and interests of speakers of BE.

Another phenomenon which will have implications for the teaching of reading is known as age-grading. Age-grading may be defined (rather loosely) as that dialectal phenomenon in which the grammar of a child changes as a function of age.

Dillard (1967) has found that age-grading occurs frequently in the Washington Negro dialect. Let us consider one example of this type of linguistic behavior. As Dillard points out, many teachers are unaware that the sex reference of pronouns is not a language absolute. Thus, many of the languages of the world do not distinguish between the third person singular masculine form of the pronoun (he) and the third person singular feminine form (she). Thus in Quechua (a South American Indian language) the same word may mean he, she, and even it. Therefore it does not seem completely impossible to a linguist to learn that forms like

He a nice little girl.

I don't know her (referring to a male).

are encountered in the Washington BE dialect among children in the five- to six-year-old group. Age-grading soon eliminates this "small-fry" grammatical form (that is, gender differentiation is introduced in the grammars of these children).

As Dillard remarks, adult speakers are likely to give short shrift to a person who can be considered to have trouble with gender forms. Other forms, which do not bear such personal or pseudo-psychological stigmata, disappear more slowly. The undifferentiated form of the pronoun as possessive (as in he brother "his brother," she brother "her brother") seems to disappear between the ages of nine and fourteen.

It must be emphasized that the examples cited in this paper are representative of just a few of the differences between BE and AE.

Furthermore, these examples are not rare, or infrequent, or sporadic features of BE. They are systematically occurring, rule-governed forms which are characteristic of a particular dialect of American English. But, on the other hand, neither does a given variant always appear in a given context. This statement may be exemplified through examination of Labov's findings (1966:207-243) regarding the presence or absence of final and pre-consonantal [r] in the following words in New York City speech:

| | |
|---|---|
| car | card |
| bare | bared |
| beer | beard |
| flower | flowered[22] |

First, however, "linguistic variable" must be defined. The term here shall refer to an abstract object which may have two or more physical realizations, one of which may be null. The following notational device (after Labov) shall be used: (X) shall refer to the linguistic variable x.

For illustration of this definition, consider the linguistic variable (r), which appears in the deep structure representations of words like car, card, etc. As observed earlier in this section, these words are pronounced in different ways by speakers of different American dialects. That is, the deep structure representation of car, /kar/, may be physically (phonetically) realized as [kaːə] or [kaːr], depending on the dialect of the speaker. Or again, (r) may have the null representation as in the pronunciation [kaː]. Thus, the abstract object (r) has as its physical realization the sounds [ə], [r], and null.

To return now to Labov's study, the variant forms associated with (r) were classified according to the following procedure. Whenever a definitely constricted [r]-like sound was heard, 1 was recorded. If an unconstricted glide ([ə] or [ɒ]), or no glide was heard, 0 was recorded. To assign an (r)-index value to a segment of speech, the number of 1's was counted and their sum divided by the total number of occurrences of (r). In this manner, a figure was arrived at which represents the percentage of 1's (occurrences of [r]-like sounds) in

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[22] But not the [r] in red, merry, or four o'clock. Also, words with the mid-central vowel of her, bird, work were studied under a separate heading.

The informants whom Labov used in his survey were residents of Manhattan's Lower East Side. For details regarding the socioeconomic standing of this population, see Labov (1966:154-204).

the total number of instances.[23] As will be seen, this figure is dependent upon the speaker's speech style and his socioeconomic status.

Labov defines five styles each of which is considered to be a section of a stylistic continuum:

A. Casual Speech. The style in which the subject "argues with his wife, scolds his children, or passes the time of day with his friends."

B. Careful Speech. The type of speech which normally was elicited when a subject answered questions which he recognized to be part of an interview designed to sample his linguistic behavior.

Notice that these two speech styles represent types of speech which may be termed "conversational." The last three styles which Labov defines are reading styles, and are steps in the direction of a more formal context.

C. Reading Style. Subjects were given five paragraphs to read in which the chief variables (one of which was (r)) were successively concentrated.

D. Word Lists. Subjects repeated lists known by heart (such as the days of the week) and lists of near-minimal pairs, and minimal pairs from the reading described in C.[24]

D'. Minimal Pairs. Subjects were given lists of minimal pairs to read. In the case of (r), this variable is the sole differentiating element (in words like dock-dark, guard-god), and therefore receives maximum attention.

Labov used three indicators as a means of determining an individual subject's socioeconomic status within the local community. These were the subject's occupation, education, and income. With reference to any one of these indicators, a subject was grouped into one of four categories. The categories for occupation were the following:

IV. Professional, managers, officials (salaried and self-employed).

III. Clerks and salesmen.

---

[23] Hereafter, the term "[r]-like sound" will be shortened to "[r]." It should be understood, however, that "[r]" is meant to indicate any constricted, mid-central vowel occuring word-finally and preconsonantally.

[24] A minimal pair may be roughly defined as a pair of words which differ by only one sound feature (e.g., pit-pet and bit-bid are minimal pairs).

II. Craftsmen and foremen; self-employed white- and blue-collar workers.

I. Operatives, service workers, laborers, and permanently unemployed persons.

The other two indicators, income and education, are, as one would expect, closely related to each other and to occupation.

On the basis of these indicators, an index number ranging from 0 to 9 was assigned to each subject. These indices were then arranged into the following groups: 0-2, 3-5, and 6-9. Each of these groups was then informally labeled as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| lower class | 0-2 |
| working class | 3-5 |
| lower middle class | 6-9 |
| middle class | |
| upper middle class | |

However, Labov found that the variable (r) stratifies the population into far more than three distinct class groups. He presents ample evidence that (r) shows much finer stratification: It differentiates the New York community into a great many strata.

Consider next Figure 1, which summarizes Labov's findings with respect to the use of (r). (The dotted lines indicate reading styles.) This diagram reflects several facts which are quite striking. Notice that except for the reading style of 6-8 (an unexpected deviation which we discuss below), the directions of lines are uniform, with steadily changing values[25] as they progress from left to right. The values represented by these lines show a stratification of styles on the axis of informal to formal. The separation of the class strata is clearly shown by the separation of the 0, 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9 lines: The lower a person's ranking on the socioeconomic scale, the fewer occurrences of [r] will be found in his speech. Figure 1 also shows a steady rise in the use of [r] with increasingly formal styles, a relation which holds, with only one exception, for all points on the diagram. Moreover, at each style all class strata are differentiated.

At the extreme left of Figure 1, we see that most of the strata are grouped very near to the zero index for (r). The lowest group, class 0, never uses any [r] in casual speech, the other groups practically

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[25] Except for the change from B to C styles for class 9.

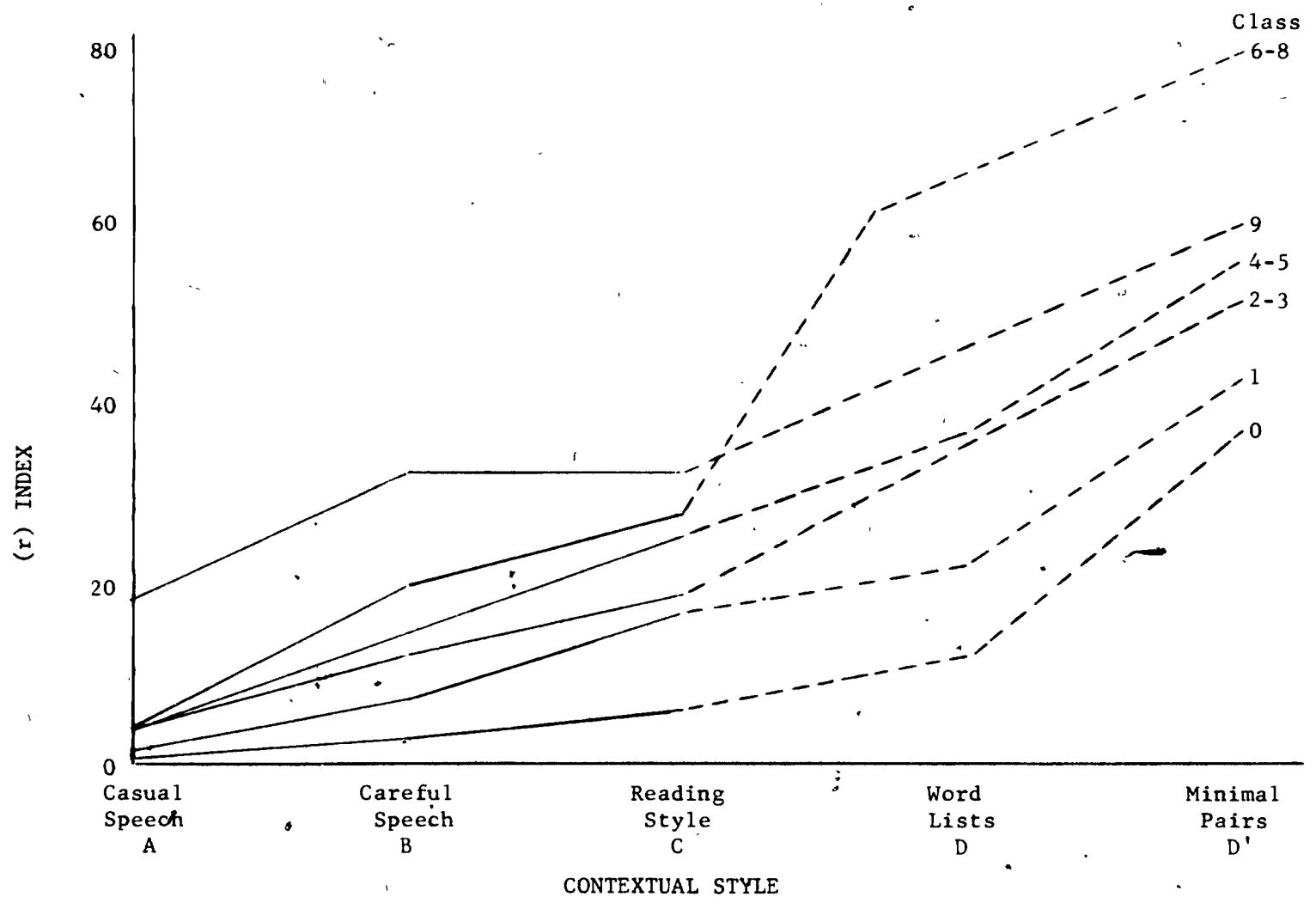


Figure 1: Class and style stratifications of (r) in car, guard, etc. for native New York City speakers. From Labov (1966:240)

none. On the other hand, group 9 shows an (r) index of 18, averaging one out of every five vowels with [r]. As Labov points out, this is a very noticeable amount, enough to distinguish class 9 speech in everyday life.

With the exception of the deviation already noted with respect to the 6-8 class, Figure 1 summarizes the following information:

1. (r) stratifies the population into at least six groups, and there is no sign of a sharp break in behavior between classes 0-8.

2. No speakers in Labov's sample always used [r] in any context, and all speakers used [r] at least some of the time.

3. The class group 6-9 is not a coherent unit with respect to (r); this group is differentiated into two classes: (1) a lower middle class and a middle class which use [r] infrequently in casual speech and a maximum number of [r] in the most formal styles, and (2) an upper middle class which is the only class to use a significant amount of [r] in casual speech.

Consider, again, the problem of the crossover of class lines between styles C and D for the 6-8 class. Referring once more to Figure 1, notice that the behavior of lower middle class and middle class (6-8) is almost totally opposed to the behavior of the upper middle class.

The 6-8 class uses no more [r] in casual speech than the great majority of New Yorkers. In careful speech and reading styles this class follows the same gradual increment in (r) index as classes 0-5, but at a higher level.

The sudden upward jump for isolated words carries the lower middle class from a low of 4% to a high of 78% in the use of [r]. This phenomenon can best be explained as a hypercorrection by people consciously aware that (r) is a socially significant class marker. This usage may be contrasted with the relatively steady pattern followed by the upper middle class. As we see, the upper middle class pattern starts at a moderate value of (r) index in casual speech, and then increases slightly to reading style and careful speech, and then goes on to a less extreme rise for isolated words. Notice too that the working class groups also show a sudden increase in Style D': The direction of class 5 reflects the more extreme example of class 6. Labov concludes that these classes are not immune from the sudden increase in the highly self-monitored style D'.

Without taking into account evidence from schools or the mass media, and even without comparing the usage of various classes, Labov considers it reasonable to interpret the sudden jump upward between Style C and D as an indication of the social prestige of [r]. In other words, both axes of variation reflect the establishment of a feature

which is acquiring social prestige. Along the axis of stylistic variation, the use of [r] may be seen to penetrate the habits of an individual; along the axis of social variation, it may be viewed as penetrating the population as a whole.

It is important to mention that Labov found that essentially the same inferences must be drawn for no less than five other linguistic variables which he studied. In short, it can be demonstrated that certain easily identifiable features of a person's speech are related to: (1) the style of speech he happens to be utilizing at a certain point in time, and (2) his socioeconomic background.

Another relevant question about a difference between two dialects is its magnitude. Are observed differences in surface structures the result of even greater differences in the deep structure of sentences, or are these differences merely the result of low-level transformational rules and even later phonological rules?

Suppose that G and G' are identical grammars of some language. Suppose that a rule R is modified in G' and becomes R'. If R and R' appear late in their respective grammars, then it is quite likely that the differences between G and G' will be much less profound than if they appear early in G and G'. One example in which the surface structure of a BE sentence differs from its AE counterpart because of the application of a late rule has already been mentioned. This example deals with sentences such as (1) and (2), where in the BE version (sentence 1) the copula has been deleted by a phonological rule.

(1) We on tape.

(2) We're on tape.

Not all differences in surface structures are due to differences in phonological rules. Examples of this kind are not difficult to find. Before considering such an example, however, let us first illustrate what is meant by the derivation of a sentence. Consider this AE sentence:

(3) Nobody saw anything.

Let us assume that (4) is the deep structure for this sentence:[26]

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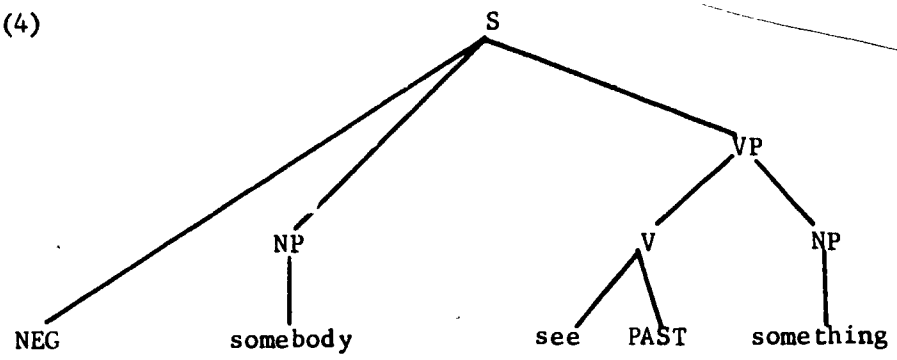
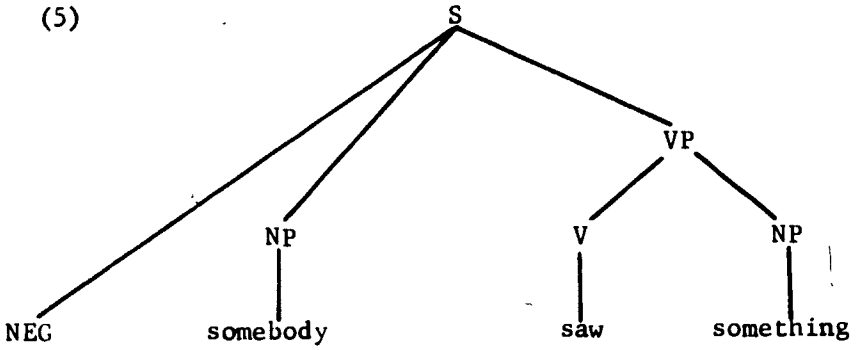
[26] The usual analysis for sentences like (3) is to postulate that the morpheme PAST precedes the verb in the deep structure. For justification of this analysis see Thomas (1965:60-61).

(4)



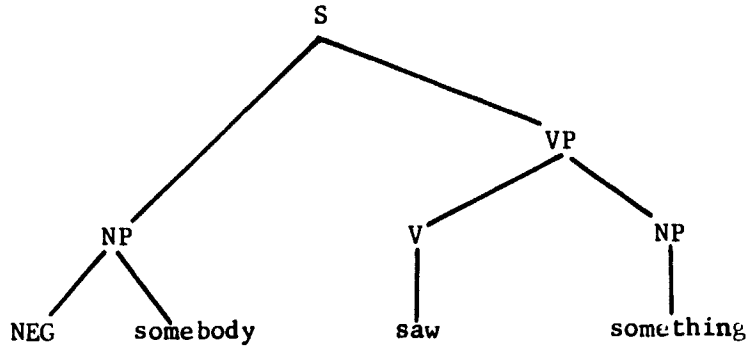

"NEG" stands for "Negative" and may be considered a meaningful element or morpheme whose function is the negation of sentences. The morpheme PAST is rewritten as -ed with all regular verbs. However, since see is irregular, see+PAST is rewritten by a special rule (call it Rule P) as saw instead of the expected seed. Thus, Rule P changes (4) into (5):

(5)



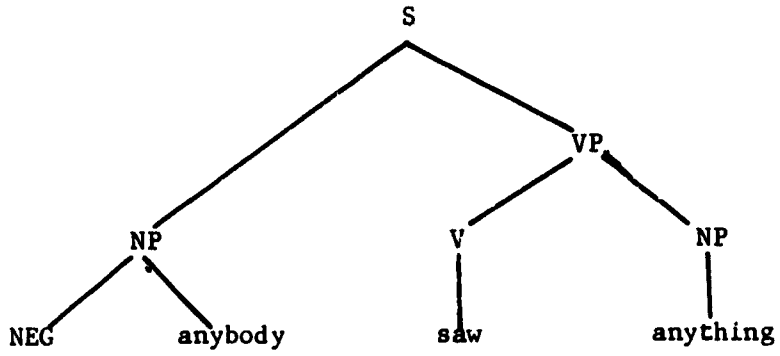

There is another rule in English (call it NEG-Attachment) which adjoins NEG to the first indefinite pronoun in the string being operated upon. This rule changes the structure (5) into (6):

(6)



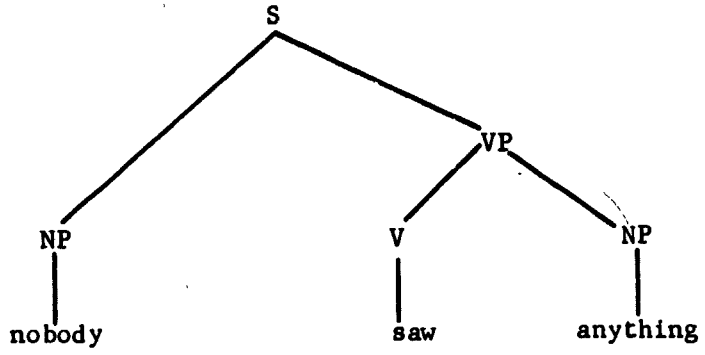

Next, a rule (call it SM-ANY) changes some to any when the morpheme NEG appears in the sentence. We have

(7)




Finally, the rule NEG-Incorporation changes any to no when any is preceded by NEG, as it is in (7).

(8)




To summarize, the steps in the derivation are as follows. The "+" in the third line of the derivation indicates that NEG has been adjoined to the left of somebody and is now "dominated" by NP.

(9) (i) NEG somebody see PAST something

(ii) NEG somebody saw something (by Rule P)

(iii) NEG+somebody saw something (by NEG-Attachment)

(iv) NEG+anybody saw anything (by SM-ANY)

(v) nobody saw anything (by NEG-Incorporation)

Let us next consider the BE equivalent to (3):

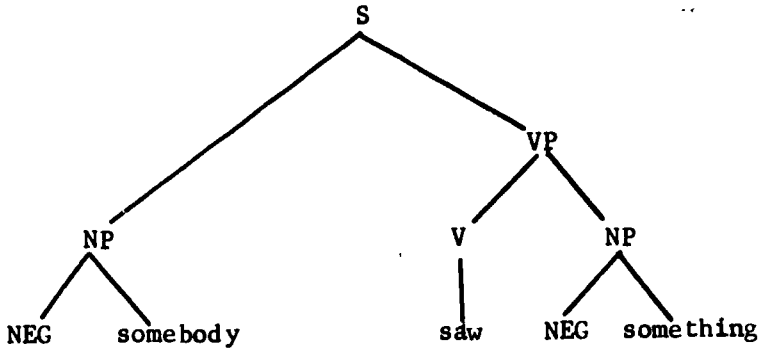
(10) Nobody saw nothing.

Now compare the derivation of this sentence to the derivation of its AE equivalent, (3). As might be expected, the differences in these two sentences are not due to differences in their deep structures, but are due to rather minor differences in low-level transformational rules in the grammars of BE and AE. As shall be seen, the occurrence of (3) in

AE and (6) in BE may be accounted for by positing a very simple difference in the rules of these grammars. BE has generalized NEG-Attachment so as to adjoin NEG to all of the indefinites in a sentence instead of to just the first indefinite.

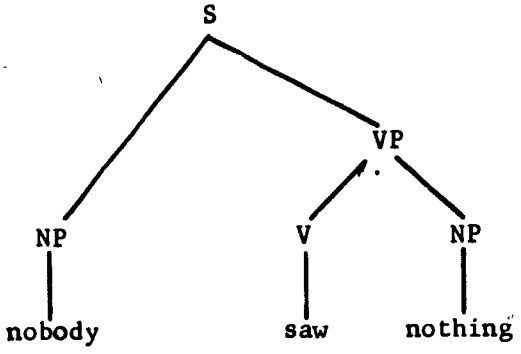
In fact, the steps in the derivations of these two sentences are the same until the third step of the derivations. That is, instead of the structure (6), the structure (6') occurs in the derivation of the BE sentence.

(6')




Instead of attaching NEG to the first indefinite in the sentence as in AE, the rule NEG-Attachment operates in BE to attach NEG to both indefinites in the sentence. Rule SM-ANY next applies to this structure, changing both occurrences of some to any. NEG-Incorporation now applies twice in exactly the same way as it does in BE: by changing any to no when any is preceded by NEG. This results in the surface structure (7').

(7')




Summarizing again, the lines of the derivation of the BE sentence are given in (11). Compare these to (9).

(11) (i) NEG somebody see PAST something

(ii) NEG somebody saw something (by Rule P)

(iii) NEG+somebody saw NEG+something (by NEG-Attachment)

(iv) NEG+anybody saw NEG+anything (SM-ANY doesn't apply)

(v) nobody saw nothing (by NEG-Incorporation)

The question was asked somewhat earlier in this section whether differences in surface structures are the result of deeper differences--differences at the level of deep structures--or are merely the result of low-level transformational and phonological rules. The investigations of Labov and Cohen (1967) have regularly pointed to the latter alternative. Although the two sentences discussed above may not appear to differ greatly in their surface structures, it is not difficult to find pairs of sentences whose differences are more striking. But again, analysis often shows that these differences are superficial.[27] Consider the following example from Labov and Cohen:

(12) It ain't no cat can't get in no coop.

which has the AE equivalent

(13) There isn't any cat which can get in any coop.

Here, the differences between (12) and (13) are quite striking. However, Labov and Cohen conclude that these differences are due to "simple modifications and extensions of standard transformational rules."

From these examples it is clear that a systematic study of BE grammar must determine the relative order of rules and their relation to standard AE rules. However, the investigation must not end here. In the words of Labov and Cohen (1967:10):

> We must also say something about their relative constancy within casual and spontaneous speech, the ease with which they alternate with other rules in formal speech, and their resistance to change or correction within the schoolroom situation.

Presumably, a surface form which is further removed from its AE equivalent in casual speech than in formal speech will be less resistant to "change" or "correction" within the classroom. Thus, a first step in studying syntactic (and phonological) variables is to note the existence of particular forms of interest. The second step is to place them in the total population of forms which have the same meanings and with which they alternate. After this is done, it will be possible to form some idea of the nature and importance of variant rules by determining their frequency of application in varying linguistic and social contexts.

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[27] However, there remains a very likely possibility that there may be differences at the level of deep structures between AE and BE.

One of the aims of sociolinguistic research is to investigate the relations between rules, and to arrive at a comprehensive view of the linguistic structures involved. It seems reasonable to assume that before it will be possible to measure accurately the reading performance of children who speak BE, the differences between the grammars of BE and AE must be precisely formulated. Further, it will be of great interest to see whether (as suggested by the example discussed above) AE and BE rules can be shown to be variants of each other.

## FIELD METHODS AND ANALYSIS

The linguistic competence of an individual or a group is not subject to direct investigation. It is not possible to approach an untrained native speaker and ask him to describe his grammar. Nor is it usually possible to ask a native speaker specific questions about his language and obtain any directly useful response. For example, if a ghetto child were asked whether a sentence which sounds like "John look good" is in the present tense or past tense, there is no reason to expect that he would know what was being talked about. Even if he were familiar with the grammatical terms, a usable answer might not be received. For the sentence is ambiguous and could have both the underlying representation (deep structure) of "John looks good" or the underlying representation of "John looked good." To expect an untrained individual to inform the investigator that the wrong question has been asked is to expect too much.

It is part of the linguist's job to ask the right questions. The linguist can reasonably expect a native speaker to recognize whether an example is or is not an acceptable sentence in his language. By carefully constructing or utilizing distinguishing contexts, the linguist can lead a native speaker to provide the type of information desired without asking him to use technical linguistic terminology. In general, a fluent speaker of a language is unaware of the formal relations and abstract constructs which characterize his language. A speaker understands his language in much the same way that a basketball player understands Newtonian laws of motion. Each can use the system and function within it, but generally cannot describe it in terms useful for the scientist. On the other hand, if made aware of his language by an interview situation, an individual will tend to adjust his usage to one he considers appropriate to an interview situation.

A person's casual, unself-monitored speech reflects the most systematic part of his linguistic competence (Labov, 1966:475). Stylistic variation can best be understood as variations from casual speech.[28] Thus, to understand the structure underlying a

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[28] In support of this statement consider the data presented in the preceding section concerning "r-lessness" in New York City speech, where hypercorrection is seen to occur in the more self-conscious styles, but not in the more relaxed, conversational styles.

child's relatively formal classroom speech, it is necessary to have a description of his casual speech as well. This presents the linguist with a serious problem. It is relatively easy to elicit "Sunday" pronunciation and syntax. It requires more sophisticated techniques to record and analyze large quantities of unself-monitored casual speech.

The questionnaire used by Labov in his Lower East Side Survey (Labov, 1966: 589-602) is excellent for obtaining large amounts of speech relatively quickly. Unfortunately, interviews conducted in this format (in which a strange interviewer chats with a small number of subjects [informants] for 45 minutes) have had only limited success in eliciting truly natural everyday speech. The presence of a stranger and a tape recorder in a speaker's livingroom simply makes the situation different from conversing with a group of friends.

One solution which Labov has developed to overcome the effects of the tape recorder and the interviewer is to conduct group interviews. He noted that peer group control was so strong that when talking to friends in front of a microphone, his subjects used their in-group, casual style rather than the more formal style they used when talking to him. By spending relatively large amounts of time with pre-existing natural groups, Labov has been able to gain their confidence and cooperation and to overcome to a large extent the effects of being a stranger (Labov, Cohen, Robins, and Lewis, 1968a:51-52).

Some technical difficulties arise in attempting to use group interview techniques. To accurately distinguish the various speakers participating in a group session, it is necessary to have a separate tape channel for each person. This implies a maze of wires and a rather restricted set of possible interview situations.

A more serious difficulty arises in group interview situations. Relatively little speech is obtained from each speaker. To obtain usably large samples of each speaker's idiolect, it is also necessary to conduct supplementary interviews with each group member. Even if mainly non-casual speech is elicited during the supplementary interviews, the recordings from the group sessions can serve as an independent check on the direction of any stylistic shift that has occurred.

Labov's group interviewing techniques have been developed for use specifically with adolescents. Various other means have been attempted to elicit free speech from elementary school children. Harvey Rosenbaum (see Stolz et al., 1967) has worked with first, second, and third graders using two different techniques for eliciting speech. One of these consisted of showing the children pictures from the Children's Apperception Test (Bellak and Bellak, 1949) and asking them to describe what was going on. The second technique consisted of tape recording the children's presentations of short anecdotes to their classmates in a "show and tell" session. Each technique met with partial success. The techniques elicited large volumes of speech from some children, but very

little from others. The stimuli used by Rosenbaum seemed to have only a limited correlation with the students' willingness or unwillingness to talk in front of a tape recorder.

Besides the data from free conversation, various other types of information can be elicited. Various perception tests have been designed to check whether speakers hear distinctions they do not make (Labov, 1966: 455-480; Stolz et al., 1967). Legum has given such tests to elementary school children with generally favorable results (unreported research, 1967) although some children under 9 have difficulty in understanding the directions given to them. Subjective reaction tests to determine speaker's reactions to various dialect features recorded ir short passages on tape can give invaluable information as to how social attitudes interact with language variation. So far as is known, no such tests have ever been given to children. A study utilizing such a test over a range of age groups might shed light on the development of attitudes toward linguistic diversity.

To elicit normative phonological forms among adolescents and adults it is generally desirable to administer a reading task consisting of a short story of about 250 words and one or more types of word lists. Unfortunately, such tests are impossible to administer to children and semi-literate adults. The authors have anecdotal evidence that a picture-naming task can be successfully substituted for word lists. As mentioned earlier (under THEORETICAL LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS), only a limited conceptual framework is available for analyzing language variation.

For this reason, very few theoretically oriented tools have been developed for use in sociolinguistic fieldwork and analysis. To date, all published sociolinguistic descriptions have been ad hoc collections of data.[29] These data, when well organized, have suggested regularities between the social nature of language and the linguistic correlates of social behavior. Nevertheless, this has been done without benefit of any conceptual model of sociolinguistic organization.

Generative theory provides an explicit, although incomplete, formalization of what an "ideal" language without variation would look like. The success of that theory may in part be measured by the degree to which it says something valuable about the way individual human cognitive systems are organized. Nevertheless, the limitation of generative theory in handling language variation is a major fault indicating that the theory is in need of expansion and revision. Labov and Cohen (1967:3) have stated the matter as follows:

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[29] Labov, Cohen, Robins, and Lewis (1968) is an important exception. It states its descriptions in a slightly revised, generative-transformational framework.

> For linguists who have been raised in the tradition of categorical rules without exceptions, there is a great temptation to regularize these variables by some bold abstraction from the data. It is simple to assume that such variation as shown [above] is due to mechanical dialect mixture, external to linguistic structure, and that behind all this are two pure dialects: one with stops for all th-'s, for example. Such an assumption is ever more convenient in disposing of the frequent -ed speech forms which occur with apparent irregularity in this speech community. The process of inferring the rules for competence from the facts of performance is then simplified to the act of discarding inconvenient data. But close study of adults, adolescents and pre-adolescents shows that such systematic variation occurs at all age levels; it is an inherent part of the structure of the langauge, and rules must be written to reflect this fact.

Most generative descriptions of modern languages have been based on data drawn mainly from one speaker. Typically, if the linguist is fluent in the language he is describing, he obtains his data through introspection. Occasional checks are made on the validity of specific acceptability judgements by quizzing another fluent speaker of the language on an informal basis. If the linguist is not fluent in the language, he generally relies upon the data supplied him by a single informant. In outlining the major features of a language this procedure has caused little difficulty. As more refined grammatical descriptions have been made, however, disputes have arisen over the validity of the data used for specific analyses.

Labov's studies have clearly shown that analyses based on the intuitions of one speaker are insufficient to capture the regularities which are observable in linguistic variation. For example, his study of "r-lessness" and subjective reactions to linguistic diversity in New York has shown (see p. 27 above) that speakers have at least a partial and implicit knowledge of the parts of the system they do not use in their own speech. As an examination of Figure 1 (p. 25) will show, however, not only does no speaker produce the full pattern, it would be extremely unusual for any speaker to ever hear the full range of usage in New York City. Under these circumstances, it would be inconceivable for anyone to acquire an ability to utilize the full range of New York usage.

DeCamp (1968a) found that a more satisfactory description of Jamaican creole dialects could be obtained by treating them as points on a dialect continuum than by postulating a number of separate dialects that happen to be related historically. Stolz and Bills (1968) used scalogram analysis in a pilot study of central Texas speech to rank order 23 speakers and 12 linguistic variables on a standard-nonstandard

dialect continuum.[30] These studies suggest that there exist deep-seated inter-individual linguistic regularities which grammars, to be complete, must describe.

As long as introspective procedures are followed it is possible to claim that the system of rules presented in a grammar has an analog in the head of some individual. Generative linguists have for the most part operated with the implicit restriction that grammars must describe only entities which could conceivably have such analogs. Grammars which satisfy this restriction may be called idiolectal grammars. When the restriction that grammatical descriptions must be idiolectal in nature is dropped, it becomes necessary to reasses the nature of linguistic descriptions.

In order to capture the kinds of generalizations discovered by Labov, DeCamp, and Stolz, a non-idiolectal grammar which reflects group norms is needed. More precisely, to be a model of a language, a grammar must reflect the various subgroup norms within the language community. Furthermore, the grammar must indicate how these norms are related to each other, and predict the ways in which styles, idiolects and dialects can be expected to differ from other styles, idiolects and dialects. Grammatical theories and grammars which meet these criteria should lead to empirically testable hypotheses (including teaching strategies) dealing with language variation. In particular, a non-idiolectal grammar of a language can be disconfirmed by exhibiting styles, idiolects or dialects of the language which differ in unpredicted ways. Thus, although a theory which allows non-idiolectal grammars is stronger than one that does not, it also is subject to an added set of empirically verifiable constraints. Idiolectal grammars constructed within such a theory will be subject to all the constraints which currently apply to them. In addition, such grammars must meet the constraint that they do not cause the non-idiolectal grammar of which they are a part to be falsified. In other words, one effect of expanding grammatical theory to allow non-idiolectal grammars is to constrain more highly the notion of what is a well-formed idiolectal grammar.

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[30] The coefficient of reproducibility was .96. The informants' socioeconomic indices were found to be highly correlated with their rank ordering on the dialect continuum. The Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient was +.77. When thirteen remaining informants who had not been scored at the time Stolz & Bills (1968) was published were added to the sample, the coefficient of reproducibility rose to .976 and the rank-order correlation was calculated as +.80. The correlation between years of education and position on the dialect continuum was also calculated to be +.80. (W. Stolz, personal communication, March 14, 1969).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Neither teachers of black ghetto children nor developers of reading instructional treatments typically come from the black ghetto culture. American education in general reflects normative culture. Therefore, the teacher and the developer of reading instructional treatments share the difficult task of bridging the gap between normative culture-defined entry skills and attitudes and those of the child from any of the American subcultures. Sociolinguistic data of the sort described in earlier sections can be expected to have some effect upon narrowing the gap between such children, particularly of the black ghetto culture, and the instructional system. Sociolinguistic data on BE might be used in a number of ways. First, it could contribute to the development of formal phonics-based reading instruction designed particularly for BE speakers. Second, it could be used to demonstrate that BE has the same regularity and generality as AE. Third, it could be used as the basis for "BE as a Second Dialect" instruction for teachers. Finally, it could be used as the basis for "AE as a Second Dialect" instruction for black ghetto children if this proves desirable.

Before sociolinguistic data on BE can be used to reduce the mismatch between child and instructional system, it must, of course, be obtained. Plans are well underway for the Laboratory to obtain such data within the framework of a BE Child Language Survey.

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