

CONTRASTIVE SOCIOLINGUISTICS RECONSIDERED

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The present paper is intended to be both a continuation and a revision of my earlier considerations pertaining to contrastive sociolinguistics (Janicki 1979). I do not assume, however, that the reader of the present paper is acquainted with the earlier work in question.

I hope not to err in saying that the authors of the overwhelming majority of contrastive analyses to date (cf. articles from *PSiCL*) conceptualize language as knowledge, and simultaneously work at a relatively high level of idealization (they accept regularization, standardization and decontextualization as kinds of idealization). This philosophical standpoint has led to the acceptance of the ideal speaker-hearer as the locus of language. As a corollary, the question does not arise of what *real* speakers a given competence-related linguistic statement is true. This perspective seems to have brought about the fact that contrastive linguists of that philosophical orientation have been speaking about contrasting *languages* without addressing themselves to the question of how precisely languages can be distinguished from one another. Fisiak *et al.* define contrastive analysis as "the systematic study of two or more languages in all the language components" (1978:9). This definition appears to reflect the assumption made by most (all?) 'competence-linguists' that 'a language' is a theoretical linguistic notion.

When one adopts a significantly lower level of idealization, as I do, it becomes indispensable to redirect one's attention away from linguistic knowledge, and simultaneously toward linguistic behavior. Standardization and decontextualization get dispensed with, and the locus of language is no longer the ideal native speaker-hearer. The essence of language may be then seen for example as abstract meaning potential (Halliday 1978), which needs to be studied, among other ways, through actual linguistic behavior in real situations. It can be discerned immediately that lowering the level of idealiz-

ation, and, what follows, having to study language behavior, implies a markedly increasing significance of the *real* speaker.¹

With the focus on *behavior* and the *real speaker* (as emerging through discarding standardization and decontextualization) the question of whether *languages* or varieties thereof can be contrasted should be posed anew. Once the linguist views language as behavior, the universe of his interest becomes much larger, and the various categories of speakers and situations have to be attended to in a principled manner. This is a fact that the contrastive sociolinguist has to incorporate into his analysis. Within this philosophical and methodological perspective, it is critical to define linguistic facts (which may be presented as 'grammars') in terms of precisely what population they are true of. In what follows I will try to show what consequences for contrastive (socio) linguistics are brought about by principled attending to linguistic behavior and rejecting standardization and decontextualization as kinds of idealization.

In the essential part of Janicki (1979) I stated that for any meaningful contrastive sociolinguistic analysis to be carried out a number of levels of comparability have to be established. The levels include the sociolectal and the

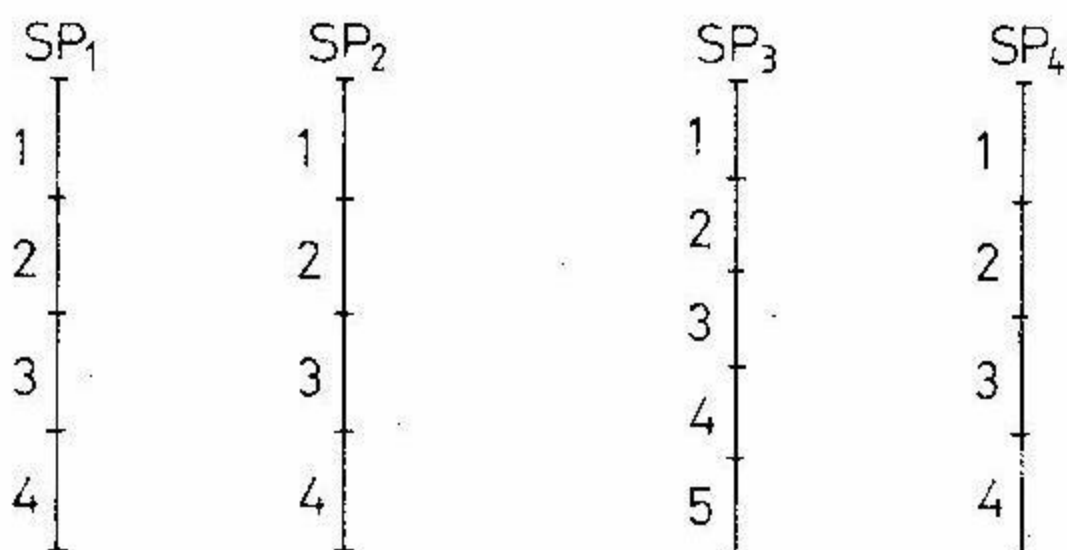


Fig. 1

Fig. 2²

stylistic levels. For instance, with interest in the language of two large socially stratified speech communities one has to sociologically predefine the groups of people whose linguistic behavior is meant to be compared. Moreover, it is necessary to secure the comparability of the two categories compared.

¹ It needs to be stressed that the reorientation toward studying behavior should by no means be identified with behaviorism. In other words, my approach is behavioral, not behavioristic. Conceptually, my analysis leaves space for viewing language as knowledge, but at the same time allows a basically nonmentalistic perspective on language, as the individual researcher wishes. I find committing myself on this central philosophical issue to be inessential for the present considerations.

² SP stands for a macro speech community, and 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 stand for micro speech communities sociologically defined.

Thus, with reference to Fig. 1 and 2, if the tertium comparationis is the functional relations holding among 1—4, 1—5, 1 of SP₁ is comparable with 1 of SP₂, and 1 of SP₃ is *not* comparable with 1 of SP₄. It is possible, however, to conceive 1 of SP₃ and 1 of SP₄ as comparable if the criterion for comparability is a set of sociological indices, and if 1 of SP₃ and 1 of SP₄ share them all. In either case, i.e., with either functional relations or a set of indices as the criterion of comparability the tertium comparationis is sociological in nature, stands outside the linguistic properties compared, and thus, incidentally, allows the researcher to avoid the danger of circularity.³

Similarly, for a stylistic comparison to make sense, comparability has to be maintained at the contextual (use — in terms of Halliday et al. 1964) level. Again, crudely, if speaker A's consultative style (as conceived by Joos 1959) is compared with speaker B's formal style, then comparability within the analysis has not been respected and no conclusions of significant interest can be arrived at.

It seems that the perspective adumbrated above, though a possible linguistic perspective, is of special value to the sociologist. An alternative working perspective will be presented, which is in some cases more appropriate for the linguist to adopt. The latter will, however, cast some doubt upon the plausibility of contrastive sociolinguistics understood as an extension of contrastive linguistics, the way the latter has been most commonly conceived to date.

Let me now examine the consequences of the first alternative (henceforth A1), which may be viewed generally as *studying linguistic behavior of sociologically predefined speech communities in predefined situations*. To begin with, one has to keep in mind the fact that the sociologist's object of inquiry is different from that of the linguist. While, obviously, we can argue endlessly over various definitions, boundaries between disciplines, objects of study, and interdisciplinarity, there seems to exist a general consensus as to the different descriptive foci as related to linguistics and sociology. In this con-

³ As Krzeszowski (in press) rightly points out one needs a tertium comparationis outside the properties compared. Otherwise, one faces the danger of circularity, which Krzeszowski presents as follows: "We compare in order to see what is similar and what is different in the compared materials; we can only compare items which are in some respect similar, but we cannot use similarity as an independent criterion for deciding how to match items for comparison, since similarity (or difference) is to result from the comparison and not motivate it" (5). I fully realize that the concept of tertium comparationis and its applicability to contrastive sociolinguistic analyses of any kind requires extensive exploration. Positing *pragmatic equivalence* as the tertium comparationis for all contrastive analyses going beyond the sentence (this seems to be what some authors suggest, cf. Krzeszowski op. cit.) may in fact be an oversimplification. As a detailed discussion of the issue would expand the present paper enormously, I take up the topic of tertium comparationis in contrastive sociolinguistics in a separate paper, which is in preparation.

nection, A_1 may be looked at as an exponent of sociological theory rather than that of linguistic theory, i.e., social groups (e.g. classes) are sociological constructs devised to answer sociological questions. In view of this fact A_1 may appear to be very fruitful if the sociologist decides to embark upon linguistic facts in order to verify his sociological theory. In other words, when the sociologist studies linguistic behavior he will or will not be able to obtain support for the isolation of sociological categories.

I now need to pause at the notions of 'a language', 'a sociolect', and 'a dialect'. As Hudson (1980) convincingly shows, the term 'a language' can be used only in a rather non-technical way, because linguistic reality cuts across what are commonly thought to be language boundaries, and because there is no one criterion that delimits languages. Consequently, 'a language' (such as Polish, French, Spanish) is not strictly a linguistic notion in so far as it is defined in terms of who speaks it. Likewise, the terms 'sociolect' and 'dialect' have been used for quite a long time now to refer to varieties of a language characteristic of socially defined groups and regionally defined groups, respectively. Again here, however, the use of the three terms in question serves mainly sociological purposes as 'languages', 'sociolects', and 'dialects' are linguistic varieties associated with groups of individuals predefined in non-linguistic terms.

It should be of considerable interest now to see how linguistic facts actually relate to such sociological categories as social group or social class. Thus the questions may be asked: Are there linguistic facts corresponding to the isolated (by the sociologist) social groups? Are there other facts that cut across those groups? The two questions may be reformulated into: How linguistically real are sociolects, sex-bound varieties, age-bound varieties, etc.? or still differently — what is the ontological status of sociolects, dialects, etc.?

Some answers to the questions may be found when linguistic facts are scrutinized against such nonlinguistic categories as region (geographical) and social group (sociological). With reference to the former, the existing evidence seems to indicate that there are no natural boundaries between dialects as some isoglosses cut across territories commonly associated with separate dialects (cf. e.g., Chambers and Trudgill 1980). Moreover, there is every reason to believe that most, if not all, isoglosses have a unique distribution (Hudson 1980). In view of this fact 'a dialect' can be conceptualized only as a set of linguistic items arbitrarily distinguished from another set.

As contrastive analyses of linguistic items marked for regional distribution do not make much sense, I would now like to proceed to a discussion of socially marked linguistic items. I have mentioned 'regional dialects' only to provide a reference and some background information for the further discussion. As it appears, the distribution of isoglosses in geographical space shares many characteristics with that of linguistic items identified in social

space. I would like to stress in passing that I use 'linguistic item' in the sense of Hudson (1980), i.e., I consider 'linguistic item' to be any recognized linguistic entity. The operational definition of 'linguistic item' will be a function of the researcher's conceptualization of language and the theory that the researcher thinks is the best to account for the aspect of language that he is interested in. Thus, 'linguistic items' may be lexical items, rules of various kinds, constructions, constraints on rules, systems (as in systemic grammar), etc.

Fig. 3 below is intended to be a model of linguistic items distributed in social space. Let 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the vertical axis be social classes defined in terms of some socio-economic index.

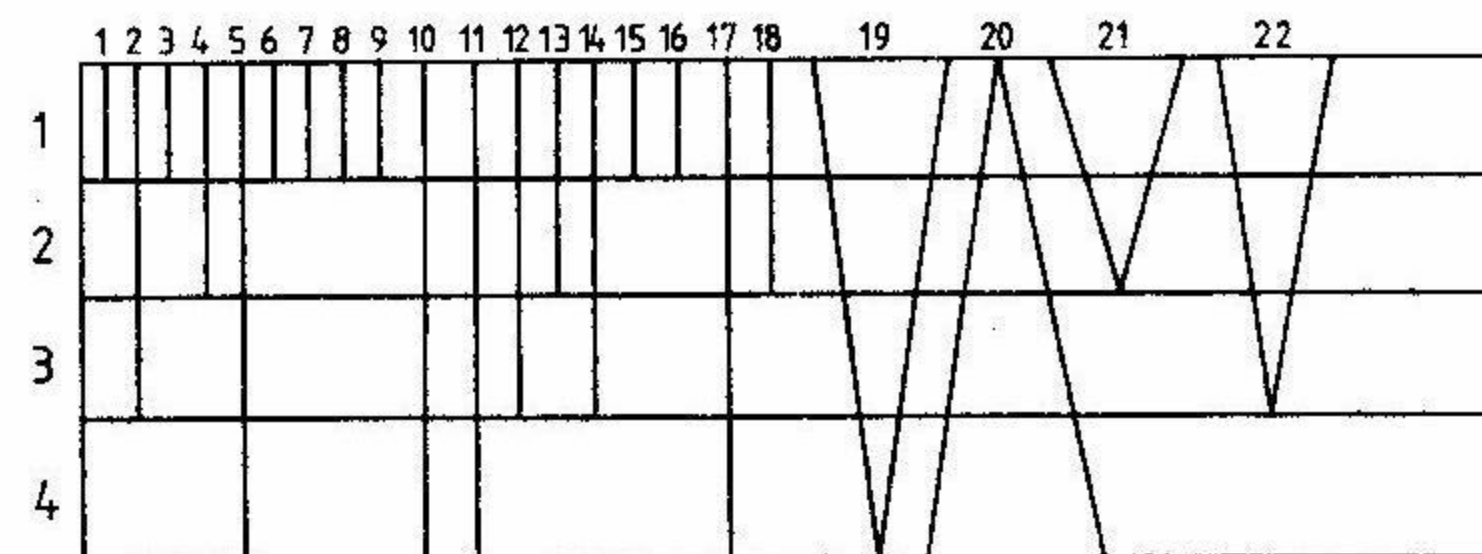


Fig. 3

In Fig. 3 let the category of consideration be 1, i.e., attention should for a moment be paid to the distribution of items which *all* are characteristic of 1. Obviously, the assumption has been made that the sociolinguistic 'order' of 2—4 is equivalent to that of 1. To reiterate, 1 is a sociologically predefined category, a predefined group of people whose language is subject to analysis. Fig. 3, in my opinion, reflects linguistic facts as they relate to social classes. That is, there are linguistic items characteristic of 1 and only of 1 (items 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16 of the horizontal axis). There are others which are characteristic of 1 as well as of 2 (items 4, 13, 18), and still others characteristic of 1 as well as of 2 and 3 (items 2, 12, 14), and still others characteristic of all the social classes differentiated in some way. Most significantly, however, the set of items characteristic of 1 includes those whose distribution in social space is marked quantitatively. In other words, 1 includes items which: a. occur in 1 exclusively, b. occur in 1 as well as in other categories, and c. occur in all categories with varying frequencies. At present, it seems most difficult to define even rough proportions of items in any of the three categories. Also, establishing the distribution of a considerable number of items

for any real set of categories parallel to the hypothetical 1—4 of our example is an extremely difficult task.

The model presented above is subject to further discussion. Namely, while our present knowledge, scarce as it is, allows us to strongly believe that linguistic items such as 2, 5, 19, 20 (i.e., those going beyond one social class) really exist, the existence of items such as 1, 3, 6, etc. (i.e., those that are characteristic of only one category) is a bit more doubtful, i.e., it cannot be ruled out that sociolects differ from one another only in quantitative terms. If this were actually true, then items such as 19 and 20 would be the only item type for the sociolinguist to work with.

In the context of what I have said as far one has to remember that social space may be defined by means of a variety of parameters. Therefore, even if items such as 1 and 3 do not exist in the social space defined in terms of social class parameters, they may exist in the social space defined in terms of the speaker's sex, or age.⁴

Irrespective of whether items such as 1 and 3 exist, which we are not able to determine at present, it remains to be clear that items such as 2, 13, 19, 21 do exist. In this connection, the question arises of what linguistic reality 'sociolects' refer to. Also, one could address oneself to the layman's contention that people of different social standing speak different kinds of language. The sociolinguist can put the question and the contention together in his attempt to answer the former and account for the latter. As regards the latter then; as the layman operates on stereotypes (some=all, often=always), he tends to believe that linguistic variation in social groups is only of a qualitative nature. We are now left with the question of what 'sociolects' actually are.

Usually defined as speech conventions characteristic of social groups, 'sociolects' are nothing but sets of linguistic items whose qualitative and quantitative features correspond to the sociologically predefined social groups. It follows that the notion of 'sociolect' cannot be used in linguistics in any technical way other than, trivially, when being synonymous with 'linguistic item' (Hudson 1980).

Fig. 3 is an oversimplification to the extent that social classes constitute an oversimplification of social reality. That is, within social classes (usually

⁴ Obviously, some languages include linguistic items specifically characteristic of the female or the male speaker, e.g., cf. Polish 'musialam' (female) vs 'musialem' (male). The two forms are standard, formal Polish. In what Jooos would call the casual or intimate styles, males and females may and in fact do reverse the endings for whatever reason. The occurrence of 'musialem' (female), though of extremely low frequency, is a linguistic fact. For that reason it does not seem to be a nonsensical idea to believe that perhaps the distribution of most linguistic items in social space is marked quantitatively, not qualitatively.

defined in terms of occupation, education, income, etc.) there obviously exists further social differentiation as people can be grouped along a number of dimensions such as age, sex, size of family, father's occupation, friendship network, religion, social mobility, ethnicity, etc. Moreover, most of those social dimensions correlate in some complex way with linguistic facts. Thus, it becomes necessary to plot linguistic items on a multi-dimensional map of social factors. Assuming that the dimensions written out below do actually correlate with linguistic variables, the map might take on the following form:

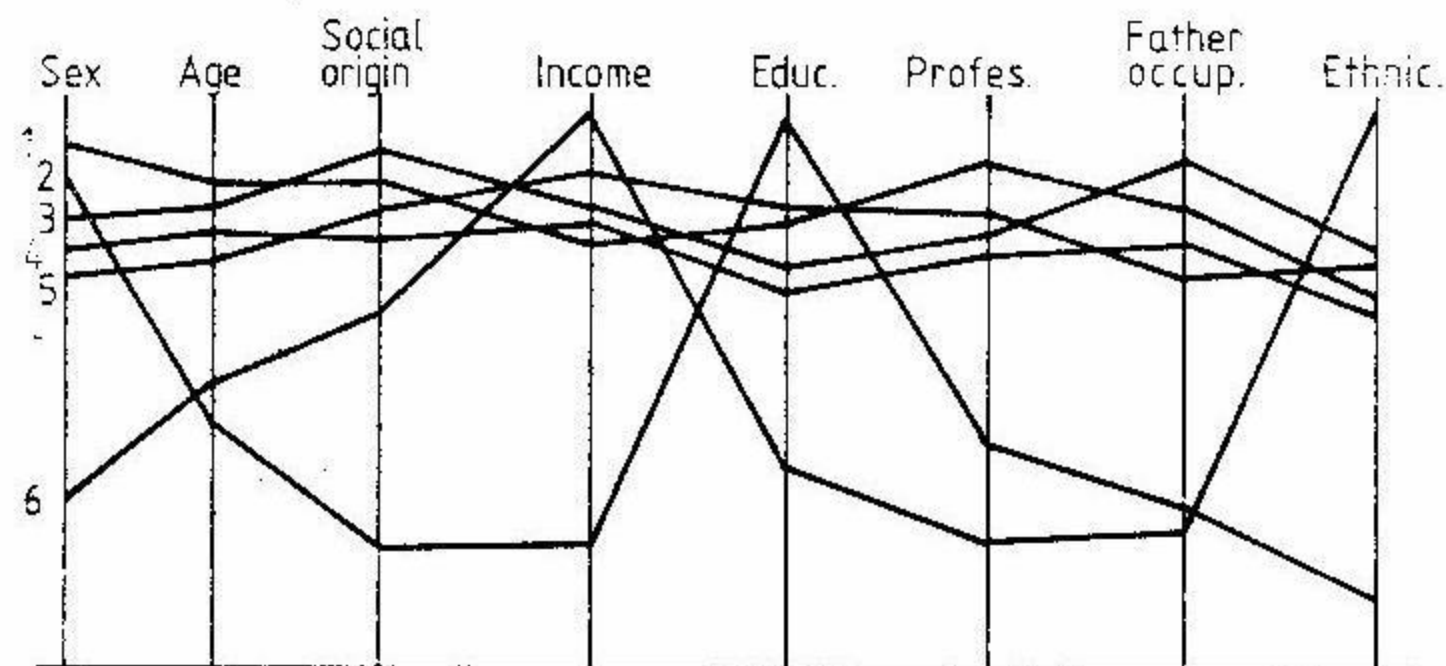


Fig. 4

All that Fig. 4 intends to show is that linguistic items tend to bundle together (items 1, 3, 4, 5). 'Bundling together' does not necessarily mean, however, that many items may have the same distribution in social space. On the contrary, it cannot be ruled out that each linguistic item has its own unique distribution. Furthermore, in addition to the items that bundle together there are others which cut across bundles (items 2 and 6). It should be remembered that the bundling in question may be both qualitative and quantitative, i.e., there seem to exist social category networks which can be characterized by the existence or non-existence (occurrence or non-occurrence) of a given linguistic item (e.g., a lexical item), and, there are other networks which can be linguistically described in terms of how frequently a given linguistic item materializes in linguistic behavior.

To make the whole of my foregoing discussion more clear, let me give some examples. The final bilabial consonant (sic!) in Polish words such as *ida*, *robią*, etc., may occur in the linguistic behavior of speakers differentiated by the following social features: either sex, any education, age- 40-60, working class origin, any income, any profession. The lexical item 'balanga' (a

fling) can perhaps be marked as: either sex, age- up to 40, any social origin, any income, at least secondary education, father's profession — any, religion — any. Likewise, the morphological ending *am* (as in *robitam*, *mialam*, etc.) may be marked as: sex — female⁵, age — any, social origin — any, education — any, profession — any, religion — any.

The examples given above are not real in the sense that the marking of the linguistic items brought up has not been verified empirically. I believe that no convincing *real* examples can be given at present because systematic empirical research along the lines presented above has not been carried out yet. In any event, all that those examples are intended to indicate is that items will intersect. Many will differ only by one feature, e.g., all social features being equal, speaker A will exhibit linguistic item X and speaker B will not, only because speaker A's religion is Y and speaker B's is Z.

As was stated in Janicki 1979, for the researcher to commence a contrastive sociolinguistic analysis, establishing comparability at the 'user' level has to be followed by establishing comparability at the 'use' level.⁵ In other words, when studying the linguistic behaviour of two comparable groups of people the formal style of group A has to be compared with the formal style of group B, the consultative style of group A has to be compared with the consultative style of group B, etc. A closer look at variation according to use (registral, stylistic variation) permits one to claim that stylistic variation (like dialectal and sociolectal) cannot be viewed as a set of distinct varieties conditioned contextually (Hudson 1980). Rather, the speaker's, and by extension, a group of speakers' repertoire should be conceived of as a network of linguistic items of which some bundle together (again, as in sociolectal and dialectal variation), i.e., have similar contextual distribution, others have identical contextual distribution, and still others significantly have a unique contextual distribution, i.e., clearly cut across the bundles. It follows that linguistic items marked for context can be defined in terms of a set of values pertaining to a number of context (situational) dimensions. Halliday (1978) distinguishes three dimensions, Ervin-Tripp (1971) distinguishes five, Hymes (1974) distinguishes thirteen, Preston (1979) distinguishes several more, and they all seem not to have been able to identify all the relevant dimensions. Also, what is of utmost importance is the fact that identifying all the relevant dimensions is only the first step in the analysis since we will still be left with the formidable task of having to exactly define the contextual distribution of each linguistic item thus determining which items are uniquely distributed and which are not.

In view of what I have said so far the distribution of linguistic items in the multi-dimensional *contextual* space will graphically look like the following:

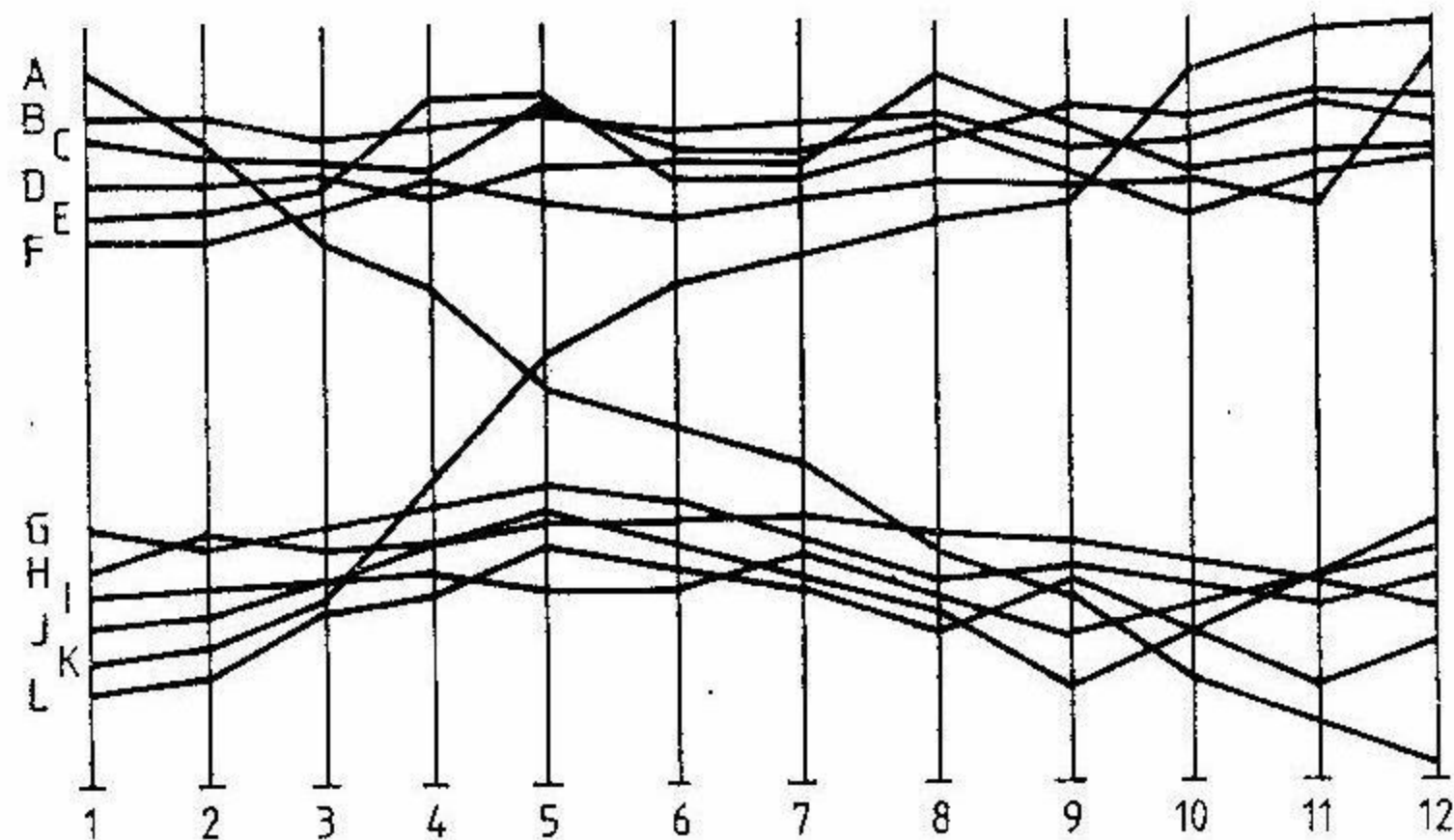


Fig. 5

1—12 stand for dimensions such as setting, topic, function, channel, speaker's emotional state, listener's emotional state, role-relationship holding between the interlocutors, listener's perceived age, listener's sex, listener's perceived social status, etc. Those are variables correlating with linguistic items (A—L) in a manner still largely unknown to us. One of the significant tasks that the sociolinguist faces is thus isolating the complete list of the relevant dimensions and values of those dimensions that correlate with linguistic items.⁶

Let me now bring all the present discussion back to contrastive sociolinguistics. Clearly, in view of what has been said so far, the A1 option (=studying linguistic behavior of sociologically predefined groups in non-linguistically predefined situations) can be either supplemented or replaced by option A2, whose critical characteristic is that of studying the distribution of linguistic items in the multi-dimensional social space. Thus, A2 is no doubt a linguistic perspective, an exponent of linguistic theory. It might seem to follow that A2 is the perspective for the contrastive sociolinguist to adopt. Whether A2 allows viewing contrastive sociolinguistics as an extension of contrastive linguistics is a question that I will take up shortly. In what follows I will try to show that both A1 and A2 are legitimate perspectives enabling the reaching of different goals, except that A2 no longer allows 'contrasting' in the sense of Fisiak et al. (1976).

⁵ For the 'user-use' distinction cf. Halliday et al. (1964).

⁶ The distance between items G and F is preserved only for the reader to better grasp the idea of bundling. In reality there is no distance of any sort.

As was mentioned at the outset of this paper, A1 serves mainly sociological purposes. A1 may thus provide linguistic information on the functioning of social groups predefined in non-linguistic terms. Interestingly enough, that information may be taken seriously to the effect that definitions of social groups might incorporate the linguistic data provided.

In addition to the main sociological function, A1 will prove inevitable upon attempting to contrast the standard varieties of two languages, and will thus turn out to be useful in serving practical linguistic purposes. Language standardization always involves selection — selecting a variety to be considered 'standard' (Haugen 1966). Selection, in turn, implies resorting to one set of speakers and not others, as well as one set of situational variables, and not others. That is, standard varieties have normally been conceived as relating to specific social groups (those of high social prestige), and realms of activity (e.g., cultural events, mass media) non-linguistically preselected. Standard varieties are delimited for practical reasons of which the following three are the most important:

1. enabling relatively unencumbered communication within large, national aggregates of individuals, who, most often, do not naturally share a significantly homogenous variety,
2. in foreign language learning/teaching, having to select one variety out of the many varieties of the foreign language is simply unavoidable if foreign language learning is to be feasible, and
3. translation requires preselecting varieties to be resorted to in the process.

It is not a goal of this paper to discuss the issue of how standard varieties have been or should be delimited. Suffice it to emphasize that in the history of 'standardization' it has been speaker and situation categories that have served as the basis for the procedure to be carried out upon (cf. Edwards (1976), Quirk (1968), Dittmar (1976)). Thus 'standardization' is clearly an exolinguiistic process. It is the society's intervention in linguistic reality; it is an intervention of a sociopolitical nature.

Once standard varieties have been delimited, we are faced with the question of why standard varieties should be contrasted at all. It seems that the main two reasons are: 1. the practical needs of foreign language learning/teaching, and 2. the practical needs of translation. This kind of contrastive analysis will offer information on how linguistic items are distributed in two sets of predefined social categories, e.g., one such set (in L_1) will generate characteristics A, B, C... of the second person singular pronoun, another set (in L_2) will generate characteristics D, E, F... of the pronoun. Obviously, information on L_1 and L_2 in this respect will help account for *some* errors made by foreign/second language learners, and it will constitute valuable material in the overall process of foreign/second language learning/teaching, and in that of translation. Contrasting standard varieties, valuable as it might be for prac-

tial reasons, will not provide much information as to how linguistic items are *actually* distributed in social space. This is because delimiting and then contrasting standard varieties of two languages fall within the scope of A1, i.e., involve a non-linguistic predefinition of phenomena under investigation. In conclusion, it turns out that the A1 perspective serves *theoretical sociological* purposes and *practical linguistic* purposes.

The other perspective, A2, differs from A1 mainly in that A2, unlike A1, does not presuppose the predefinition of speaker and situation categories. In other words, the essence of A2 is defining the distribution of linguistic items in social space. A2 is not an exponent of sociological theory; it may be viewed as a verificational procedure for (socio)linguistic theory. While the center of attention in A1 is social categories, the center of heed in A2 is linguistic items.

It is essential to remember that studying the distribution of linguistic items in social space constitutes the core of A2. In this way, A2 resembles what Trudgill (1974) calls 'cluster analysis', in which linguistic similarities lead to grouping speakers together and identifying the nonlinguistic features that they share. More importantly, however, A2 will, implicitly or explicitly, bring to light the fact that boundaries between languages, dialects, or any varieties for that matter, are fluid. It follows, again, that 'a language', 'a dialect', or 'a variety' is a social notion in so far as it is defined in terms of who speaks it or in what social situations it is spoken.

A corollary of what has been said so far is that A2 is a trully (socio)linguistic perspective. It seems thus that within that perspective the essence of contrastive sociolinguistic inquiries will be contrasting linguistic items as they are distributed in the multi-dimensional social space. The goal here is clearly linguistic, i.e., assigning social descriptions to linguistic items helps to account for the multiaspectual reality of linguistic items, which constitute language. If one views the whole of language as complex networks of linguistic items (with respect to both 'user' and 'use'), including recognizable bundles but no discreet boundaries between them, the sociolinguist's ultimate aim — accounting for language, will necessarily involve taking resort to those very linguistic items. If, in turn, one conceives of contrastive sociolinguistics simply as a method of studying language, contrasting linguistic items has to ensue.

At this point we need to reflect again on the fundamental goal of contrastive linguistics as defined by most linguists conceptualizing language as knowledge. The goal is accounting for language, and it involves contrasting 'languages'. The implication here is that languages can be viewed as discreet entities. Consequently, putting them together in order to find similarities and differences between them is a feasible endeavor. When 'languages' or boundaries between them are surveyed from the sociolinguistic viewpoint, i.e., when the analysis adopts a significantly lower level of idealization, it becomes evident that 'discreet languages' are non-existent. What seems to result is that

contrastive analysis in the sense of Fisiak et al. (1978) is no longer plausible. A close look at linguistic phenomena described in terms of behavioral (not behavioristic) theory leads one to conclude that boundaries between languages, between regional dialects, between social dialects, registers, or any other varieties are very unlikely to be able to be set linguistically. What we are left with are linguistic items associated with a complex network of relationships pertaining to multi-dimensional social space. Can we then contrast linguistic items? If so, what for?

To preempt a possible reservation one has to admit that, certainly, linguistic items have been the object of contrastive analyses for a long time now. What are "Subject clauses in English and Polish", "On 'coming' and 'going' in English and German", "On items introducing finite relative and interrogative clauses in English and Dutch" but contrastive analyses of linguistic items? However, linguistic items may be described or contrasted in a variety of ways or at various levels of language. In this connection, one should keep in mind the fact that most contrastive analyses (like those mentioned above) have been analyses of language at the phonological and grammatical levels. Linguistic items have been picked out from two languages tacitly assumed to be discreet entities with linguistic reality. What I am concerned with at present are linguistic items (including those same items that the phonologists and grammarians have been dealing with) at a higher level of analysis. In terms of systemic grammar, we are concerned here with the level of 'situation' and the interlevel of 'context'. Again, the interest in linguistic items and their distribution in social space is a corollary of one's interest in linguistic behavior.

In conclusion, I envisage the core of work in sociolinguistics (the A2 variant) to be basically a two stage analysis. First, answers should be sought to the question of what are the dimensions relevant to descriptions of linguistic items. In other words, one should try to isolate all the social parameters to which linguistic items are sensitive. The problem of utmost difficulty that the sociolinguist faces is that different linguistic items tend to be sensitive to different social parameters, with only some bundling present. Second, functional values (indicators) of the dimensions in question will have to be discriminated. The question is of, for example, what kinds of 'setting' (once 'setting' has been determined to be a relevant dimension) are linguistic items sensitive to.

We are thus brought to the fundamental question within A2 (from the point of view of the objective of the paper), namely, how can contrastive sociolinguistics be envisioned within that global perspective.

I will try to answer this question by again taking recourse to the work of the 'competence-linguist'. What the 'competence linguist' does is contrast

linguistic items or sets of linguistic items at the level of *form* and the interlevel of *phonology* (in terms of systemic grammar). In my understanding, the 'competence-linguist' has been contrasting languages without, however, explicitly claiming that 'languages' are linguistic notions. Furthermore, the 'competence-linguist' has not *explicitly* discussed the practical (teaching + translation) and the theoretical (linguistic universals) goals as viewed against such notions as 'a language', 'standard language', 'dialect', 'variety', 'style', etc.

What the 'behavior-/socio/linguist' will do is also contrast linguistic items or sets of linguistic items, except that the analysis will be carried out at the level of 'situation' and the interlevel of 'context' (again in terms of systemic linguistics). The interest in situation and context necessitates, among other things, defining the distribution of linguistic items in multi-dimensional social space. The 'behavior-linguist' seems to have to clearly distinguish between goals (theoretical vs practical) with reference to notions like "languages", 'standard languages', 'dialects', etc. Granted that distinction, A2 aims at the same type of goal that a lot of 'competence-linguists' do, namely, linguistic universals. Thus, A2 is geared toward reaching a *linguistic theoretical* goal — the description of the universals of language. One can certainly argue about the ontological status of those universals ('competence-linguist' is a mentalist whereas the 'behavior-linguist' is not necessarily so); however, I think that that discussion would go beyond the essence of the paper, and I therefore abandon it. Suffice it to say that the A2 sociolinguist is basically interested in the relationships holding between linguistic items and social space characteristics of language. In sum, the contrastive 'competence-linguist' and the contrastive 'behavior-linguist' (particularly the one who adopts the A2 perspective) have both the same *type* of research goal (linguistic theoretical) but not exactly the same goal. The difference in goal springs from differences in defining the object of inquiry. The sociolinguist and, by extension, the contrastive sociolinguist, investigate those aspects of linguistic reality that the 'competence-linguist' either implicitly ignores or explicitly rejects as legitimate objects of linguistic inquiry.

To finally arrive at the core of the answer to the question of 'how can contrastive sociolinguistics within the A2 perspective be envisioned' one may conclude that analysis of this sort will involve contrasting linguistic items in terms of their relationships to the multi-dimensional social space. Those items will only be *informally* taken to belong to different languages. The question of whether a given item belongs to language A or B will be inessential from the point of view of the goal of the research endeavor. Linguistic items will be scrutinized in social space, obviously, in order for regularities to be found, and thus for the social aspects of language to be accounted for. It can be seen that, following the present way of reasoning, one is free to study items 'intra-lingually' and 'interlingually' (i.e., items that typically belong to 'one lan-

⁷ Those are example titles of articles from *PSiCL*.

guage' or those typically belonging to two 'different languages') with basically the same theoretical objective in mind. Concluding, once one accepts my line of thought, contrastive sociolinguistic analysis (the A2 perspective) may be tentatively defined as systematic juxtaposition of linguistic items as they are distributed in the multi-dimensional (multi-parameter) social space. The goal of such analysis will be *linguistic* and *theoretical*, i.e., this kind of analysis will enable search for universal laws pertaining to the social aspects of language.

Recapitulating, contrastive sociolinguistics, emerging as a consequence of focussing on linguistic behavior, may be understood as incorporating two fundamental working perspectives. The gist of one (A1) is studying linguistic behavior of sociologically predefined groups of people in sociologically predefined situations. With the contrastive method in mind, this perspective serves *theoretical sociological* purposes (verifying sociological theories) and *practical linguistic* purposes (language teaching+translation). The other perspective (A2) focusses on describing the distribution of linguistic items in the multi-dimensional social space. A2 does not necessitate any predefinitions of sociological nature. A2 may evolve into a contrastive analysis of linguistic items as they are distributed in social space. Such analysis is rendered for *theoretical linguistic* purposes, as the objective underlying the analysis is arriving at language universals. In spite of all the differences between A1 and A2 at the notional level, the two perspectives may be taken to globally complement each other. This is because theoretical feedback and practical permeation between A1 and A2 are inevitable.

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