THE ART OF
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Preface

Although learning languages has long been a hobby of mine, it was only in the late 1970s that I began to read the sociolinguists and to think seriously about the problems of incorporating language into social and cultural history. I soon discovered that other British historians were thinking on similar lines – Raphael Samuel, for instance, Gareth Stedman Jones, and Jonathan Steinberg. Discussions with them and conferences in Dublin, Cambridge and Brighton helped me to formulate these problems more precisely, and to reflect on possible methods of approaching them. Working with Ruth Finnegan on the series of Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture increased my awareness of the variety of oral styles. Most important of all has been the dialogue with Roy Porter in the course of our editing two volumes of essays on the social history of language (not to mention planning a third).

Written originally as conference or seminar papers, these essays are deliberately exploratory rather than definitive, an attempt to reconnoitre terrain which the next generation may well cultivate more intensively. I have taken advantage of the opportunity afforded by this collected edition to revise or develop the argument in some places, to add more examples, and to take account of recent work in both

history and linguistics, as well as eliminating repetitions and making the system of references uniform.

I am grateful to Cambridge University Press for permission to reprint chapter 1, and to the Center for Kulturforskning, Aarhus University, for permission to reprint chapter 3. The essay on silence will be delivered as my ‘farewell lecture’ at the University of Nijmegen in 1993 and published by the university press there, while the essay on conversation appears in print for the first time.

The international Republic of Letters, more effective than ever in the age of jets and word processors, has been extremely supportive of this project. I have learned a good deal from the discussions following talks on these themes in different parts of the world (including the polyglot environments of Helsinki and Vienna). I am especially grateful to Rudolf Dekker for the information – on Dutch, on Latin, on silence – which he has sent me over the years. Chapter 2 in particular has benefited from the advice and the references offered by an international group of scholars, including Rino Avesani, Derek Beales, Dietrich Briesemeister, Zweder von Martels, Robert Muchembled, Eva Österberg, Roy Porter, Nigel Spivey, and Joe Trapp. I am most grateful to them all. My wife, Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke, read the draft chapters with a critical eye and drew my attention to some eighteenth-century texts. She has also initiated me into life in a bilingual environment. The book is dedicated to her.

1

The Social History of Language

In the last few years a relatively new area of historical research has developed, which might be described as a social history of language, a social history of speaking, or a social history of communication. Consciousness of the importance of language in everyday life has become widespread in the last generation or so. As the rise of feminist and regionalist movements shows, dominated groups have become more sharply aware of the power of language as well as the involvement of language with other forms of power. Again, the philosophers, critics and others associated with the movements commonly labelled structuralism and deconstruction, despite their many disagreements, share a strong concern with language and its place in culture.

Whether they are involved with one or more of these movements, or with oral history, another recent development, a number of historians have also come to recognize the need for the study of language for two reasons in particular. In the first place, as an end in itself, as a social institution, as a part of culture and everyday life. In

the second place, as a means to the better understanding of oral and written sources via awareness of their linguistic conventions.[1] All the same, there still remains a gap between the disciplines of history, linguistics, and sociology (including social anthropology). The gap can and should be filled by a social history of language.

It is no new idea that language has a history. Ancient Romans, such as Varro, and Renaissance humanists, such as Leonardo Bruni and Flavio Biondo, were interested in the history of Latin.[2] Discussions of the origin of French, Italian, Spanish, and other languages were published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, forming part of the debates about the relative merits of Latin and the vernaculars and the correct ways of speaking and writing the latter.[3]

In the nineteenth century, the dominant school of linguists, the so-called 'neogrammarians', was much concerned with the reconstruction of early forms of particular languages, such as 'protoromance' and 'protogermanic', and with the formulation of laws of linguist evolution.[4] This was the approach against which the linguistic Ferdinand de Saussure, now seen as the father of structuralism, reacted, on the grounds that the historical school of linguists was too little concerned with the relation between the different parts of the language system.[5] In Saussure's day, however, the historical approach remained dominant. The *Oxford English Dictionary,* planned, as its title-page declared, on 'historical principles', began publication in 1884, while its French equivalent, edited by Emile Littré, began in 1863.[6] Histories of English, French and German which have since achieved the status of classics date originally from the years around 1900.[7]

All the same, this approach to the history of language lacked a full social dimension. Children of their time, these

nineteenth-century scholars thought of language as an organism which 'grows' or 'evolves' through definite stages and expresses the values or 'spirit' of the nation which speaks it. Their concerns were national – or even nationalist – rather than social. They studied the internal history of languages, the history of their structure, but neglected what has been called their 'external history', in other words the history of their use.[8] They showed little interest in the different varieties of the 'same' language spoken by different social groups. On the other hand, this concern is central to contemporary sociolinguistics, which crystallized into a discipline in the late 1950s in the United States and elsewhere.

Of course, awareness of the social significance of varieties of speech is far from new. It has been argued with some plausibility that in Italy the sixteenth century was 'the time in which language first came to be regarded as a primarily social phenomenon'.[9] One Italian writer published a book in 1547 'On Speech and Silence', organizing the study according to the modern-sounding categories 'who', 'to whom', 'why', 'how', and 'when', [10] thus reminding us of the debt which sociolinguistics owes to the tradition of classical rhetoric.

Other writers also made acute sociolinguistic observations at this time. Vincenzo Borghini, for example, noted and tried to explain the archaism of the speech of Tuscan peasants, arguing that 'they converse less with foreigners than townspeople do, and for this reason change less.' In his famous dialogue on 'civil conversation', Stefano Guazzo described the harsh accent of the Piedmontese, the Genoese propensity to swallow their words, the Florentines with their mouths 'full of aspirations', and so on.[11]

A similar sociolinguistic awareness can be found in the plays of Shakespeare. In a famous scene in *Henry IV*, for example, Hotspur criticizes his Kate for saying 'in good

sooth' because this turn of phrase was not aristocratic. 'You swear like a comfit-maker's wife, ' he tells her. What Hotspur wanted to hear was 'a good mouth-filling oath'. In the seventeenth century, Molière, as we shall see below, had his ear particularly well tuned to the social nuances expressed by different varieties of language. One might say the same of Goldoni in the following century.

Nineteenth-century novels, from Jane Austen and George Eliot to Leo Tolstoy and Theodor Fontane, are a still richer source of observations on the social meaning of differences in speech. Think, for example, of Rosamond Vincy in *Middlemarch,* objecting to her mother's phrase 'the pick of them' as 'rather a vulgar expression', while her carefree brother Fred counters with the assertion – which has its parallel among linguists today – that so-called 'correct' English is nothing but 'the slang of prigs'. When the old lawyer Standish, in the same novel, swears 'By God!', the author intervens to explain that he was using that oath as 'a sort of armorial bearings, stamping the speech of a man who held a good position'. He used it, as we might say, as a status symbol.[12]

The perceptiveness and articulateness of these writers was out of the ordinary. All the same, there would be little need for a social history of language if ordinary speakers were not more or less aware of the social meaning of styles of speech, while social climbers have always been hyperconscious of such matters.

Again, it is no new idea that language is a potential instrument in the hands of the ruling class, an instrument which they may employ as much to mystify or to control as to communicate. The use of Latin in early modern Europe is an obvious example, and it will be discussed in detail below (p. 37). The use of another foreign language, 'law French', in English courts was criticized on similar grounds by men as diverse as Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, King James I, and

the seventeenth-century radicals John Lilburne and John Warr.[13] Again, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the British sociologist Herbert Spencer was already recommending historical research on what he called 'the control exercised by class over class, as displayed in social observances – in titles, salutations and forms of address'.[14]

All the same, as the philosopher Alfred Whitehead once remarked, 'Everything of importance has been said before by someone who did not discover it.' In other words, there is an enormous difference between the vague awareness of a problem and systematic research into it. In the case of the relation between language, thought and society, pioneering explorations were made from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, notably by the sociologist Thorstein Veblen, the literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, and the linguists Fritz Mauthner, Benjamin Whorf and Antoine Meillet.

Veblen, for example, paid serious attention to linguistic phenomena when formulating his famous 'theory of the leisure class'.[15] Bakhtin criticized the structural linguist Saussure for his lack of interest in change over time and developed the theory of 'heteroglossia' (*raznorechie*) according to which a language, Russian for instance, is the result of the interplay or struggle between different dialects, jargons and so on, different forms of language which are associated with different social groups and their diverse points of view, so that each user of language has to appropriate it from the mouths of others and adapt it to his or her own needs.[16]

Fritz Mauthner by contrast was a linguistic determinist. Developing Nietzsche's idea of language as a 'prison' (*Gefängnis*), Mauthner once declared that 'if Aristotle had spoken Chinese or Dakotan, he would have produced a totally different system of logical categories' ('Hätte Aristoteles Chinesisch oder Dakotaisch gesprochen, er hätte zu einer qanz andern Logik gelangen müssen').[17] Whorf's

controversial but influential essays made essentially the same point, arguing that the fundamental ideas of a people, such as the Hopi Indians – their conceptions of time, space, and so on – are shaped by the structure of their language, its genders, tenses, and other grammatical and syntactical forms.[18]

In France, Antoine Meillet, a former pupil of Saussure's but committed to a historical approach, described language in Durkheimian terms as 'eminently a social fact ('éminémment un fait social'). He was a semi-determinist who argued that 'Languages serve to express the mentality of the speaking subjects, but each one constitutes a highly organized system which imposes itself on them, which gives their thought its form and only submits to the action of this mentality in a slow and partial manner.'[19]

The French historian Lucien Febvre, a former pupil of Meillet, illustrated his theory of the relation between language and mentality in a study of François Rabelais and the problem of unbelief. In this study, Febvre argued that atheism was impossible in the sixteenth century, among other reasons because of the lack of abstract concepts in French which might sustain such a worldview.[20] Earlier in his career, between 1906 and 1924, Febvre had written a number of review articles on the history of language in the *Revue de Synthèse Historique,* praising the work of Meillet and telling historians that they needed to follow what the linguists were doing, for example the study of the introduction of French into the south of France in the centuries before the French Revolution.[21]

The subject was also of great interest to Febvre's friend and colleague Marc Bloch. Indeed, it has been suggested that Bloch learned the comparative method of which he set such store from the linguists, from Meillet in particular.[22] Historians in other countries and other fields – the church historians Gustav Mensching, Jozef Schrijnen and Christine

Mohrmann, for example, the Spanish cultural historian Amerigo Castro, and the Swedish historian Nils Ahnlund – were also studying aspects of language and society at about this time.[23]

As for the stage of systematic research, it was reached a generation ago, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with the development of what has been variously called 'sociolinguistics', 'ethnolinguistics', 'the sociology of language', the 'ethnography of speaking' or 'the ethnography of communication'. In the English-speaking world, the most influential figures include Joshua Fishman, John Gumperz, M. A. K. Halliday, Dell Hymes, and William Labov. The different names for the new discipline or subdiscipline represent substantial differences of approach, macrosociological or microsociological, concerned with 'language' in the wide or the narrow sense. All the same, they should not be allowed to obscure what the different schools have in common, or the relevance of this common body of ideas for social historians.[24]

Since some British, American and German historians have recently taken what has been called a 'linguistic turn' and are now very much concerned with certain aspects of language and communication, it may be worth attempting to define the difference between their approaches and the social history of language recommended (and, I hope, practised) in this volume.

On one side, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas are concerned with general theories of hermeneutics and of communicative behaviour. They do not ignore history, but their interest is in the major trends in the history of the modern West, rather than in everyday communication at a local level.[25]

On the other side, in the six massive volumes of their *Grundgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe,* Reinhart Koselleck and his colleagues concern themselves with language as a

source for the ‘history of concepts’ (*Begriffsgeschichte*) rather than with speaking or writing as human activities worthy of historical attention for their own sake.[26] In a similar way to Koselleck, some English-speaking historians of political thought (notably J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner) have focussed on changes in what they sometimes call the ‘language of politics’, while social historians have examined the ‘language of class’ and ‘the language of labour’.[27]

My aim here is not to criticize either of these important enterprises, but simply to suggest that there is or ought to be what might be called ‘conceptual space’ between them for a third approach, more sociological than Koselleck’s, Pocock’s or Skinner’s and more concrete than that of Habermas. This third approach might be summed up as the attempt to add a social dimension to the history of language and a historical dimension to the work of sociolinguists and ethnographers of speaking.

The concern with speech as well as with written communication in the past deserves emphasis. Like the history of popular culture, the historical ethnography of speaking involves a shift of historical interest from the communicative acts of a minority to those of the whole people. As in the case of popular culture, it is difficult to find sources which are both rich and reliable, but sources for the history of speech do exist, as we shall see.

What do these ethnographers and sociologists have to offer historians? They demonstrate an acute awareness of ‘who speaks what language to whom and when’.[28] They show that the forms of communication are not neutral bearers of information but carry their own messages. They have put forward a number of theories which historians can test. They have also created a rich analytical vocabulary. Just as the Bedouin have many words for ‘camel’, and Eskimos for ‘snow’, because they draw finer distinctions in

these areas than most of us need to do, so the sociolinguists have many words for ‘language’.

In this vocabulary, a central place is taken by the term ‘variety’ or ‘code’. (The term ‘code’, used by the structuralists in opposition to ‘message’, seems to be going out of use because of its ambiguities).[29] A variety may be defined as a way of speaking employed by a particular ‘speech community’.[30]

The notion of ‘speech community’ has been criticized – like other notions of community – for assuming social consensus and ignoring conflict and subordination.[31] To ignore social and linguistic conflict would indeed be mistaken, but the rejection of the idea of community surely goes too far. After all, solidarity and conflict are opposite sides of the same coin. Groups define themselves and forge solidarities in the course of conflict with others (a point which will be argued in more detail on pp. *67–76* below). Hence the validity of this criticism of the idea of ‘speech community’ depends on the way in which the concept is used. In these pages it will be employed either to describe common features of speech or to refer to individual or group identification with particular speech forms, without making assumptions about the absence of linguistic or other conflict or about the overlap between a community defined in linguistic terms and the social or religious communities to be found in the same region.

Simplifying brutally, as brief introductions inevitably do, it may be suggested that sociolinguists have used this idea of a variety of language to make four main points about the relations between languages and the societies in which they are spoken or written. These points may well seem rather obvious when they are stated in a bare and simple form, but they have not, so far at least, been fully integrated into the practice of social historians. They are as follows:

1. Different social groups use different varieties of language.
2. The same individuals employ different varieties of language in different situations.
3. Language reflects the society or culture in which it is used.
4. Language shapes the society in which it is used.

The following pages will comment on these points one by one and offer a few historical illustrations.

(1) Different social groups use different varieties of language.[32] Regional dialects are perhaps the most obvious example of varieties, which not only reveal differences between communities but also – at least on occasion – express consciousness of these differences, or pride in them. What linguists call 'language loyalty' may also be described as a consciousness of community, at least of what Benedict Anderson has called an 'imagined community'.[33] However, a common speech may coexist with deep social conflicts. A distinctive accent – if nothing else – unites Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, and blacks and whites in South Africa or in the American South.

Some other varieties of language, based on occupation, gender, religion, or other sectors, from football to finance, are known as 'social dialects', 'sociolects', or 'special' or 'sectional' languages (*Sondersprache, langues spéciaux, linguaggi settoriali*).[34] The secret language of professional beggars and thieves (variously known as *Rotwelsch, argot, gergo,* 'cant' and so on) attracted the interest of writers relatively early, and guides to it appeared in print from the sixteenth century onwards.[35] The language of soldiers (say) or lawyers has attracted less attention so far, but deserves extended analysis from this point of view.[36]

Again, the language of women was and is different from that of men in a number of ways. In many societies these differences include a predilection for euphemisms and for emotionally charged adjectives, a rhetoric of hesitancy and indirection, and a closer adherence to standard or 'correct' forms. Women do not simply happen to speak differently from men. In many places they have been and are trained to speak differently, to express their social subordination in a hesitant or 'powerless' variety of language.[37] Their intonation as well as their vocabulary and syntax is affected by their perceptions of what men want to hear.[38] As one Shakespearian character remarks of another, 'Her voice was ever soft / Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman' (*King Lear,* Act 5, Scene 3). Even Mrs Thatcher bowed to this convention when, as prime minister, she took lessons in elocution in order to lower the pitch of her voice.[39]

We are also told that 'Statistical measurements show that men speak more loudly and more often than women; are more apt to interrupt, impose their views, and take over the conversation; and are more inclined to shout others down. Women tend to smile obligingly, excuse themselves and stutter, or in fits of insecurity attempt to imitate and outdo men.'[40] Alternatively, they employ strategies of indirectness, like the wives who practise the art of asking their husbands 'tiny and discreet questions', a point recently made about a village in Spain but one with a much wider relevance, the limits of which future social historians may care to chart.[41]

Again, distinctive varieties of language have often been the mark of religious minorities. In a pioneering study, the Dutch historian Jozef Schrijnen pointed out that the early Christians, like lawyers, soldiers, boatmen and other social groups, employed a *Sondersprache,* a variety of Latin which expressed their solidarity. They coined new terms, such as *baptizare,* or used old terms, such as *carnalis,* in a new

sense, and thus ‘created a close-knit speech community’ (‘schuf eine engere Sprachgemeinschaft’), expressing the strong solidarity of a persecuted group.[42]

In late medieval England, the heretics known as Lollards appear to have developed a distinctive vocabulary. In early modern times, the puritans were supposed to be recognizable by their nasal twang as well as by the frequency with which they used terms such as ‘pure’, ‘zeal’, or ‘carnal’, a usage parodied in Ben Jonson’s play *Bartholomew Fair.*[43] Quakers stood out not only because they insisted on using the familiar ‘thee’ and ‘thou’ to everyone, but also by their refusal to use certain common words such as ‘church’, not to mention their special use of silence in prayer meetings.[44]

Elsewhere in Europe, religious minorities were also recognizable by their speech. According to a sixteenth-century Italian writer, Stefano Guazzo, the French Calvinists or ‘Huguenots’ could be recognized by their tone of voice, so quiet as to be scarcely audible, as if they were dying. Their speech was so full of biblical phrases that it was known irreverently as ‘the dialect of the Promised Land’ (‘le patois de Canaan’).[45] The typical German Pietist, according to the late eighteenth-century critic F. A. Weckherlin, ‘whimpers or sighs in a whining, meek and quiet manner’ (‘weinerlich, sanft und leise wimmert oder seufzt’), as well as employing a distinctive vocabulary with favourite adjectives such as ‘liebe’ or turns of phrase like ‘the fullness of the heart’ (‘Fülle des Herzens’).[46]

Varieties of language are also associated with social class. Given the reputation of the British in such matters, it is no surprise to discover that the best-known discussion concerns the so-called ‘U’ and ‘non-U’ forms of English. It was the linguist Alan Ross who coined the term ‘U’ to describe the language of the British upper class, and ‘non-U’ for that of everyone else. He explained, or more exactly

asserted, that ‘looking-glass’ was U, while ‘mirror’ was non-U; ‘writing-paper’ U, ‘note-paper’ non-U; ‘napkin’ U, ‘serviette’ non-U, and so on.[47] His ideas were taken up and popularized by his friend Nancy Mitford.[48]

Considerable anxiety seems to have been aroused by this discussion, at least in Britain, and a generation later, now that the dispute has passed into history, it might be worth investigating whether linguistic usage changed in some circles as a result. However, such pairs of terms were not new in English usage. In 1907, a writer on etiquette, Lady Grove, was already claiming that one should say ‘looking-glass’ rather than ‘mirror’, and ‘napkin’ rather than ‘serviette’.[49] In any case, although they are widely believed to reflect a peculiarly English obsession with class, distinctions of this kind do have parallels in other parts of the world.

In Philadelphia in the 1940s, for instance, it was U to refer to one’s ‘house’ and ‘furniture’, but non-U to call them ‘home’ and ‘furnishings’; U to feel ‘sick’, but non-U to feel ‘ill’. In similar fashion, Emily Post recommended her readers never to say that someone has an ‘elegant home’ but to call it a ‘beautiful house’.[50] Long before this, in eighteenth-century Denmark, the playwright Ludvig Holberg put a character on stage in his *Erasmus Montanus* (Act 1, Scene 2) to comment on the way in which language was changing to reflect some people’s social aspirations or pretentions. ‘In my youth people spoke differently here in the hills from the way they do now; where they now speak of a “lackey”, they used to say “boy” ...a “musician” was called a “player”, and a “secretary” a “clerk”‘ (‘I mi Ungdom talede man ikke saa her paa Bierget som nu; det som man nu kalder Lakei, kaldte man da Dreng ... en Musikant Spillemand, og en Sikketerer Skriver’). Generations earlier, in seventeenth-century France, François de Callières, later private secretary to Louis XIV, wrote a dialogue called *Mots à la mode* (1693),

pointing out differences between what he called ‘bourgeois speech styles’ (‘façons de parler bourgeoises’) and patterns characteristic of the aristocracy. One participant, the marquise, declares herself unable to bear a bourgeois lady who calls her husband *mon époux* rather than *mon mari.* Ways of speaking thus reveal ‘different social classes’ (‘espèces de classes différentes’).[51]

Earlier still, in sixteenth-century Italy, the writer Pietro Aretino, who rejected the linguistic purism of Pietro Bembo and other humanists because it was unnatural and artificial, mocked it by introducing into one of his dialogues a woman of low status and high pretensions who claimed that a window should be called a *balcone,* and not, as was more common, a *finestra;* that it was proper to say *viso* for ‘face’ but improper (or non-U) to say *faccia,* and so on. His joke would have had little point if other people had not been taking the matter seriously.[52] In the same milieu, courtiers seem to have affected a special form of pronunciation, a kind of drawl, criticized by a speaker in Baldassare Castiglione’s famous *Courtier* (book 1, chapter 19) as speaking ‘in such a languid manner that they seem at their last gasp’ (‘così afflitta, che in quel punto par che lo spirito loro finisca’).

It is not only in the West that varieties of speech symbolize status. In Java, for example, the elite have their own dialect (or better, ‘sociolect’), High Javanese, which is distinctive not only in its vocabulary but in grammar and syntax as well.[53] Among the Wolof of West Africa, accent, or more exactly pitch, is a social indicator. The nobles speak in low-pitched quiet voices, as if they do not need to make an effort to gain their listener’s attention, while commoners speak in high-pitched loud voices.[54] In a similar way, an Elizabethan writer on English advised his readers that ‘in speaking to a Prince the voice ought to be low and not loud or shrill, for th’one is a sign of humility, th’other of too much

audacity and presumption.'[55] The parallel with the low voice which Elizabethan men preferred in their women will be obvious enough.

From a historian's point of view, it is important to note that linguistic status symbols are subject to change over time. In Britain, unlike many other parts of Europe, regional accents have been non-U for a couple of centuries. However, they were not always so. At the court of Queen Elizabeth, Sir Walter Ralegh is said to have spoken with a broad Devonshire accent which did his career no harm, while Dr Johnson, that arbiter of correct English, spoke broad Staffordshire.[56]

It does not follow from this propensity to change that the social symbolism of varieties of language is completely arbitrary. The American sociologist Thorstein Veblen put forward the fascinating suggestion that the ways of speaking of an upper class (or 'leisure class', as he put it) were necessarily 'cumbrous and out of date' because such usages imply 'waste of time' and hence 'exemption from the use and need of direct and forcible speech'.[57] The Wolof example quoted above would seem to illustrate this point, for which it would not be difficult to amass many supporting instances. Some sixty years after Veblen, his idea of necessary links between varieties of language and the social groups employing them was reinforced by another sociologist, Basil Bernstein, whose views have generated considerable controversy.

Studying the language of the pupils in some London schools in the 1950s, Bernstein distinguished two main varieties (or as he called them, 'codes'), the 'elaborated' and the 'restricted'. The restricted code employs concrete expressions and it leaves meanings implicit, to be inferred from the context. In contrast the elaborated code is abstract, explicit and 'context-independent'. Bernstein explained the contrast in terms of two different styles of

childrearing, associated with two types of family and two social classes. Broadly speaking, the elaborated code is middle class while the restricted code is working class.[58]

Originally designed to explain the relative failure of working-class children to achieve good grades at school, Bernstein's theory has much wider implications, especially for the relationship between language and thought explored by Whorf and others. From the point of view of a historian of mentalities, there are intriguing similarities between the two codes and the contrasts which have so often been drawn between two styles of thought, whether they are labelled 'primitive' and 'civilised', 'traditional' and 'modern', 'prelogical' and 'logical', or (rather more usefully, in my view) 'oral' and 'literate'.[59]

Bernstein's remarks about British children aroused a storm of criticism, claiming, for example, that he had suggested that individuals are prisoners of the code they use and that he had emphasized the weaknesses of the working-class code while stressing the positive features of the middle-class one.[60] Some of these criticisms certainly hit the target. All the same, Bernstein's hypotheses about the manners in which styles of speech and styles of thought are acquired in childhood remain extremely stimulating and suggestive.

The fundamental question for historians remains that of explaining how and why some languages or varieties of language have spread (geographically or socially), or have been successfully imposed in the course of time, while others have receded. Linguists have become increasingly interested in this problem in recent years, and it would seem to be a promising area for interdisciplinary cooperation.[61]

(2) One conclusion from these recent studies of language spread is the need to study people who speak more than