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Preface

When we interact with other people on a one-to-one basis, we tend to think of such encounters as examples of an interpersonal process. In fact, however, much of our daily social life is concerned with *intergroup* behaviour. In other words, we do not just react to people solely as other human beings, our behaviour towards them is often governed by the fact that they are of a particular profession, sex, social class and ethnic group. How much of social behaviour is dependent on such intergroup categorizations is of course an empirical question. However, the importance of social categorization was never so clearly unveiled to me as when writing a previous monograph for this series with Peter Powesland, "Speech Style and Social Evaluation". This volume was concerned with interpersonal perception and speech: how we evaluate others on the basis of their language varieties, and how and why we change our speech style when interacting with others. Although the book was originally conceived of at the inter-individual level, I could not escape the fact that time and time again much of the cognitive activity involved in social communication was related to intergroup behaviour. Even a large number of my own studies which I quoted were in fact concerned with reactions to speakers of various ethnic groups, or with so-called "interpersonal" interactions between members of different ethnolinguistic groups. In short, I was being drawn closer and closer to the conclusion that speech played its most prominent roles in intergroup behaviour. It was not only a potent cue to ethnic (and other social) categorizations, but also a dynamic element in that group members could use it to reduce cultural barriers, or alternatively, to emphasize them.

Fortunately, I was in a position not only to develop these notions with my friends and colleagues, Richard Bourhis and Donald Taylor, but also to be stimulated by the social psychological theory emerging from the work of Henri Tajfel and his co-workers. The present monograph was born with an eye to presenting some theoretical order into a field that is being actively researched across the social sciences. The fact that language, ethnicity and intergroup relations has been studied in an educational, social anthropological, linguistic and sociological context was justification enough for this monograph to take on a multidisciplinary flavour. But more than that, as a social psychologist, I felt

along with my European colleagues that if we are to contribute anything lasting we must not take account of our phenomena in a sociocultural, or even historical, vacuum. However naïve our initial attempts may now be in this integrative direction, I feel that we need at least a beginning. There seems no better place to start than with the topic of this monograph. Intergroup processes are an integral part of our social behaviour and language behaviour an essential feature of that.

I am extremely grateful to Donald Taylor for his advice and support during the compilation of this volume. Finally, I am indebted to Henri Tajfel without whose theory and encouragement this monograph would never have appeared.

HOWARD GILES

October 1977

Contents

Contributors

Preface

Introductory Essay
H. GILES
References

1. *Language and Ethnicity*
J. A. FISHMAN
What is ethnicity?
Paternity
Patrimony
Phenomenology
The recurring symbolic role of language in the ethnicity experience
The role of boundaries in ethnicity
Mutability of ethnicity
Mutability of content
Mutability of membership
Mutability of saliency
The manipulation of ethnicity
Civility, rationality and individuality
Conclusions
Notes
References

2. *Ingroup and Outgroup Reactions to Mexican American Language Varieties*
E. BOUCHARD RYAN and M. A. CARRANZA
English *versus* Spanish
Varieties of Spanish
Varieties of English
Methodological considerations
Conclusions
Notes
References

3. *Language, Technology and Persuasion in the Middle East: Three experimental studies*
R. L. COOPER, J. A. FISHMAN, L. LOWN, B. SCHAIER and F. SECKBACH 83
Introduction 83
The Jericho study 86
The first Jerusalem study—university students 90
The second Jerusalem study—housewives 92
Summary and discussion 96
References 98

4. *Threat to Ethnic Identity and Second-Language Learning*
D. M. TAYLOR, R. MEYNARD and E. RHEAULT 99
Teaching a second language 100
Individual characteristics and second-language learning 101
Social determinants of second-language learning 102
Method 105
Results and discussion 106
Summary and conclusions 116
References 117

5. *The Language of Intergroup Distinctiveness*
R. Y. BOURHIS and H. GILES 119
Introduction 119
Method 122
Subjects 122
Experimental setting and materials 123
Procedure 123
Results 125
Analysis of speech changes 125
Verbal content 127
Ss' perceptions of the situations 128
Discussion 128
Notes 132
Appendix 1A 133
Appendix 1B 134
References 134

6. *Language, Humour and Intergroup Relations*
A. J. CHAPMAN, J. R. SMITH and H. C. FOOT 137
The Welsh language: its demise and revival 138
The Welsh language: a major dimension of ethnic identity in Welsh adults 141
The Welsh language: a major dimension of ethnic identity in children at Welsh-medium primary schools 145
Ethnic humour 147

An ethnic humour experiment on young children in Wales 151
Brief résumé: introduction to experiment 151
Results and discussion 162
Notes 166
References 166

7. *Why Albanian-Greeks are not Albanians: Language Shift in Attica and Biotia*
P. TRUDGILL and G. A. TZAVARAS 171
Problems 173
Attitudes 175
Ethnicity 178
Notes 183
References 184

8. *Emergent and Stabilized Multilingualism: Polyethnic Peer Groups in Urban Kenya*
D. PARKIN 185
Stabilized multilingualism and ethnic polarization 188
Emergent multilingualism and ethnic polarization 190
Nairobi: a political profile 190
A Nairobi speech community 192
The process of ethnic polarization among the young: case material from Nairobi 194
Analysis 198
Conclusions 201
Notes 208
References 209

9. *News Media, Language and Race Relations: A Case Study in Identity Maintenance*
C. HUSBAND 211
The consolidation of English as a racist language 212
News media: newsworthiness and the construction of news from events 215
Race relations: the news media and definitions of the situation 218
Race relations: news media language crystallized in headlines 222
Reporting race relations: the news media as an agent of identity maintenance 229
Notes 235
References 236

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10. *Educational Policies on Languages: The Case of the Children of Migrant Workers*
A. VERDOODT 241
The issues 243
References 251

11. *Ethnic Identity and Bilingual Education*
J. R. EDWARDS 253
Language, ethnicity and nationalism 254
Indigenous minorities 256
Immigrants 261
Ethnic identity and bilingual education 267
Bilingual education: roles and aims 268
Bilingual education and social change 270
Bilingual education and ethnicity 271
Conclusions 276
Notes 278
References 279

12. *Language, Ethnic Identity and Intergroup Relations: One Immigrant Group's Reactions to Language Planning in Québec*
P. M. SMITH, G. R. TUCKER and D. M. TAYLOR 283
The situation in Québec 284
Language planning in Québec 285
An ethnic community in Montreal 288
The present study 289
Method 290
Results and discussion 293
The influence of SES 294
The influence of ethnic identity 300
Conclusions 303
Notes 305
References 305

13. *Towards a Theory of Language in Ethnic Group Relations*
H. GILES, R. Y. BOURHIS and D. M. TAYLOR 307
Ethnolinguistic vitality: a structural analysis 308
Status factors 310
Demographic factors 312
Institutional support factors 315
Intergroup relations and speech accommodation: sociopsychological analyses 318
Tajfel's theory of intergroup relations 318
Giles's theory of speech accommodation 321
Language and ethnic group relations: a theoretical analysis 324
Social categorization 325

Social identity 325
Social comparison 328
Psychological distinctiveness 329
Cognitive alternatives 331
Group strategies for social change 335
Conclusions 343
Notes 344
References 344

Index 349

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Introductory Essay

H. Giles

The content of this book is concerned with the interrelationships between language, ethnicity and ethnic group relations. Many authors have discussed the linkage between language and ethnicity (Fishman, 1972; Taylor and Simard, 1975; Lambert, in press), yet few have linked these to the dynamics of inter-ethnic group relations in a testable theoretical fashion. Moreover, when one looks at social psychological accounts of intergroup relations, little attention is afforded language processes (LeVine and Campbell, 1972; Doise, 1976). This is somewhat surprising given the current vitality of language issues all around the world. One recalls the Soweto riots in South Africa in the summer of 1976 when large numbers of Blacks and Whites were killed. The catalyst of this situation was a language issue. When the confrontation with police occurred, Black students along with adults were protesting the White government's insistence that their educational curricula be presented in the Afrikaans language. In commenting on this situation to the press,* Black leaders made the following statement:

> . . . the situation has unearthed the innermost frustrations of Black people which were hidden from the outside world. Although there is a prevalent belief in some quarters that Afrikaans as a medium of instruction was not a direct positive factor in these riots, this is not so. Afrikaans was forced down Black students just as much as the Trust Land Act, pass laws, and migratory labour . . .

For Black people in South Africa, Afrikaans is seen as a very potent symbol of White domination and oppression (cf. Vorster and Proctor, 1976). It can be argued that their being forced to imbibe it (in accumu-

*Reported in *The Times* (London), June 23rd. 1976.

lation with other factors) was perceived by Blacks as an intolerant, abhorrent attack on their social identity.

Other examples of the impact of language spoken in ethnic group contexts abound (see Fishman, 1972), but given that succeeding chapters are devoted to many such issues, mention will be made of only a few more. In the same summer of 1976, commercial air services at Montreal's airports were halted for a week when Québécois air controllers engaged in industrial action for a refusal at their not being allowed to use French as a medium of air communications. Indeed, this (essentially language) dispute was described by the Canadian Prime Minister as potentially the most divisive the country had faced for 30 years. Some Australians at this time also began to question the existence of their own distinctive cultural identity and the way in which they had assimilated to American and European traditions. In an article* about the "Australian Renaissance" (Ockerism), attention was drawn to language as a core issue in the group's identity:

> . . . Americanization of the language is much more significantly pervasive than the high incidence of skate-boards and roadside fast food parlours. . . . . The American invasion of the Australian stomach was always on the cards. But the invasion of the language is less easy to laugh off. . .

Finally, Hancock (1974) observed that "one Afro-American Peace Corps volunteer was quite hurt to learn that the Sierra Leoneans referred to him as *oyimbo*, 'white man', not because of his appearance but because of his language and behaviour".

As can be seen, these issues have ramifications at all levels of social life, in government legislation, educational policies, mass media, intergroup communication, individual attitudes and behaviour, etc. With this in mind, this book presents original contributions from authorities in various disciplines in the general area of language and ethnic identity. In the final chapter, an attempt is made to integrate these diverse, yet complementary, approaches into a theoretical framework where none as yet exists. At the same time, however, there are no intentions of making extreme statements about any glorified role of language in inter-ethnic relations. In fact, two chapters (one by Trudgill and Tzavaras, and the other by Edwards) question the overriding significance of language as *the* symbol of cultural identity and whether cultural pluralism through

*Reported in the *Observer Review* (London), June 27th. 1976. In this regard, see Fox (1968), and Parkin's discussion of it in Chapter 8.

educational policies is necessarily a desirable venture in all instances. Therefore, an important aim of this book is to address itself to the following questions: Is language important in ethnic group relations? Just how important is it, and why? How is it employed by dominant and subordinate ethnic groups? Naturally enough, no definitive answers to these questions will ultimately be presented. Nevertheless, suggestions will be offered, and methodologies for future study will be presented together with a theoretical framework in which to examine these issues.

The succeeding chapters are intended to give the reader an impression of the interrelationships between language, ethnicity and intergroup relations at a dynamic level. For instance, chapters address themselves not only to how a subordinate ethnic ingroup perceives its own language and that of the outgroup and how it uses language in interaction with it, but also how this dominant outgroup itself responds to the ingroup's actions and maintains its power and superiority and distinctiveness over them. It will be noticed that the term "language" is not meant in any restrictive fashion to imply simply discrete languages, such as French or English. Indeed, it will be argued later (Chapter 13) that such a limitation has constrained theory in this area long enough. Language will refer to any linguistic feature, or set of features (e.g. dialects, accents, words)* which an ethnic group values or uses in making itself distinctive from a competing outgroup. The succeeding chapters will now be briefly outlined with the admission that it will be biased in the direction of my own theoretical predilection; much of the inherent richness of each chapter will then of necessity escape this review.

In Chapter 1, Fishman looks at the relationship between ethnicity and language from a basically phenomenological perspective, that is, in terms of how an ethnic group conceptualizes its collectivity and experience. It is argued that at the outset, we need to understand ethnicity as a construct before we can hope to understand the linkage between it and language behaviour. In this way, he discusses the experience of ethnicity that group members feel they have inherited from their birthright (their *paternity*) and the ways in which they express this behaviourally (their *patrimony*). Fishman considers the ways in which language functions for these two elements by showing how it transmits feelings of ancestral continuity and can be used by group members expressively and symbolically. He argues that language can often be the

*For a short discussion of the distinctions between languages, dialects and accents, see Giles and Powesland (1975).

most salient symbol of ethnicity because it carries the past and expresses present and future attitudes and aspirations. Fishman also examines the ways in which the experience of ethnicity may change for group members from time to time. It is important to note, however, that these formulations are not always Fishman's personal views as much as his attempt to report the ethnicity experiences of those who are intimately involved with them. This dynamic account of the experiental nature of what ethnicity is, and how language is so intimately related to it, is an invaluable starting point for examining this relationship in specific intergroup contexts.

Ryan and Carranza in Chapter 2 take up the symbolic role of language in the context of Mexican American–Anglo American relations in the Southwest of the United States. Their chapter reviews extensively the empirical research (including their own) into ingroup and outgroup attitudes to Mexican American speech. Despite large differences between the studies in their methodological procedures which makes clear interpretation difficult, the authors discuss the problems involved for a subordinate ethnic group to use its language varieties as symbols of cultural pride under assimilationist pressures from the Anglo dominant group. In fact, such pressures often cause many individuals to attempt to leave the subordinate group and join the dominant one as depicted in Fishman's discussion of changing ethnic allegiances. Nevertheless, a positive redefinition of Mexican American identity is coming about in terms of the Chicanismo revival, and Ryan and Carranza show how Spanish and its local Mexican dialects are viewed as symbols of ingroup solidarity, particularly by females and the young in certain social contexts. This chapter also cautiously points out that it is necessary not to consider an ethnic group as homogeneous (an issue we shall take up in Chapter 13); within the group exist many identifiable and diverse subgroups. Except for certain Mexican Americans who have adopted the positive self-referent, "Chicano", various degrees of Mexican-accented English do not (as yet) appear as symbols of group identity. However, the fact that these people still use Mexican-American-influenced English may, it is argued, be a deliberate tactic to hold on to their identity when using the outgroup language. Nevertheless, adoption of the outgroup language does have its social rewards in terms of attitudes of perceived competence and status, even among the ingroup.

Cooper, Fishman, Lown, Schaier and Seckbach in Chapter 3 also present data in different cultural contexts which suggest that adoption

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