



# Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition

DENNIS R. PRESTON

BASIL BLACKWELL

Copyright © Dennis R. Preston 1989

First published 1989

Basil Blackwell Ltd  
108 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1JF, UK

Basil Blackwell Inc.  
432 Park Avenue South, Suite 1503  
New York, NY 10016, USA

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Except in the United States of America, this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Preston, Dennis R.

Sociolinguistics and second language  
acquisition. – (Language in society)

1. Foreign language skills. Acquisition

Sociolinguistic aspects

I. Title II. Series

401 '9

ISBN 0-631-15245-8

ISBN 0-631-15247-4 pbk

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Preston, Dennis Richard.

Sociolinguistics and second language acquisition / Dennis R.  
Preston.

p. cm. – (Language in society)

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-631-15245-8 – ISBN 0-631-15247-4 (pbk.)

1. Language and languages–Variation. 2. Second language  
acquisition. 3. Language and languages–Study and teaching.

I. Title. II. Series.

P120.V37P74 1989

401 '9–dc19

88-37942  
CIP

Typeset in 10/11½pt Times

by Joshua Associates Ltd, Oxford

Printed in Great Britain by Billing & Sons (Worcester) Ltd

# Language in Society

## GENERAL EDITOR

Peter Trudgill, Professor of Linguistic Science,  
University of Reading

## ADVISORY EDITORS

Ralph Fasold, Professor of Linguistics,  
Georgetown University

William Labov, Professor of Linguistics,  
University of Pennsylvania

- 1 Language and Social Psychology  
*Edited by Howard Giles and Robert N. St Clair*
- 2 Language and Social Networks (Second Edition)  
*Lesley Milroy*
- 3 The Ethnography of Communication (Second Edition)  
*Muriel Saville-Troike*
- 4 Discourse Analysis  
*Michael Stubbs*
- 5 The Sociolinguistics of Society  
Introduction to Sociolinguistics, Volume I  
*Ralph Fasold*
- 6 The Sociolinguistics of Language  
Introduction to Sociolinguistics, Volume II  
*Ralph Fasold*
- 7 The Language of Children and Adolescents  
The Acquisition of Communicative Competence  
*Suzanne Romaine*
- 8 Language, the Sexes and Society  
*Philip M. Smith*
- 9 The Language of Advertising  
*Torben Vestergaard and Kim Schrøder*
- 10 Dialects in Contact  
*Peter Trudgill*
- 11 Pidgin and Creole Linguistics  
*Peter Mühlhäusler*
- 12 Observing and Analysing Natural Language  
A Critical Account of Sociolinguistic Method  
*Lesley Milroy*
- 13 Bilingualism  
*Suzanne Romaine*
- 14 Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition  
*Dennis R. Preston*

## Editor's preface

We often hear claims along the lines that a particular scholar is 'probably uniquely qualified' to speak or write on a particular topic. Given the intensive and specialized nature of academic activity, and given the current increasing narrowness of this specialization, such claims will often have some foundation. The author of this particular volume is himself probably uniquely qualified to write on the present topic, but his unique qualification is of a rather different and more impressive kind. It lies, not in narrow specialization, but rather in deep specialization in two separate topics which have traditionally had, within linguistics, two different literatures, two different sets of courses, and two different groups of practitioners. He is thus probably uniquely qualified to develop a synthesis and to provide an informed discussion of the relationship between second language acquisition studies and sociolinguistics. There can be few other scholars who have the necessary depth of knowledge in both fields. Dennis Preston has carried out important research and taught courses in sociolinguistics, and is very well-known, for example, for his work in perceptual dialectology. But he has also carried out significant research in second language acquisition, and acquired considerable practical experience in the field as a classroom teacher and as a foreign language teaching adviser.

It is perhaps surprising that Dennis Preston is unusual in this way, and it is certainly regrettable that so few have as yet been able to take advantage of the high degree of overlap between at least parts of the two areas. The amount of potential cross-pollination is considerable, and it is our hope that this book, which is the first to treat the relevance of the whole of sociolinguistics for the whole of second language acquisition, and vice versa, will inspire new research, new courses, and a new outlook. We would like to see, not only more cooperation between the fields, but also, where appropriate, a blending and a blurring of distinctions between them. That language acquisition takes place in a social context, that second language acquisition may help us understand some aspects of linguistic change, that variation occurs in the language of learners as well as of native speakers – these and many other phenomena need to be considered from the perspectives of both socio-

linguistics and second language acquisition studies. The social matrix of language learning and language use is too central to language acquisition for it to be ignored. And the value of language acquisition as a proving ground for sociolinguistic theories is as yet relatively unexploited.

This book will be of interest to those who are familiar with the theory and practice of both second language acquisition and sociolinguistics, but it should also be of relevance to, for example, historical linguists and to students of first language acquisition. The book is based on original empirical and descriptive work, as well as on a wide knowledge of the literature, but it is also of clear theoretical significance. Variability in human language is a subject that is still poorly understood, and the innovative overall framework provided by *Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition* takes us a step further along the road in our ability to analyze and comprehend it.

Peter Trudgill

# Acknowledgments

I wrote this book partly because I was encouraged to do so and partly because I have a split personal history of research in sociolinguistics, dialectology, and language attitudes on the one hand, and in foreign and second language learning and teaching on the other. That should be the right combination.

At the risk of sounding peevish, I confess that I also wrote this book to challenge the notion that theoretical linguistics is hard and sociolinguistics is easy. Though I hope not to make the latter arcane to disprove this, I want to show that the complexity of language and sociocultural facts stands behind a rich, intellectually rewarding field and that its findings are of considerable importance to all who look at language, regardless of perspective. I want to show here that interaction between sociolinguists and SLA researchers in particular can be (and has already been) rewarding.

Many people have been of great help in the coming of age of this book, not the least my first mentors in things linguistic – Fred Cassidy, Dave Maurer, and Marty Stevens. Charles Scott first attracted my attention to SLA when he assigned me an ESL class at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and trained me to do the job after the fact. I have always been grateful to him for that confidence.

At the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Robert Roeming and Diana Bartley appointed me curriculum director for two summers (1969 and 1970) of the first large-scale teacher training efforts for ESL specialists in ABE. Much of what I learned about the importance of related fields to SLA came about as a result of that intensive training experience and the colleagues with whom I worked – Helene Aqua, Teresa Gomez, Carol Guagliardo (later Preston), Ralph Kite, Pat Mullen, Yvette Polcyn, Dan Rose, Jim and Jackie Stalker, Darnell Williams, and an exciting and skilled group of teachers who taught us more than we taught them.

From that same time, Gene Brière of the University of Southern California has tried to keep me psycholinguistically honest, and I have come more recently to appreciate his efforts.

Also at the same time I got to know Roger Shuy, then the leader of a Center for Applied Linguistics traveling sociolinguistic gang which included Joan Baratz, Ralph Fasold, Bill Stewart, and Walt Wolfram. What they had to say about language variation and the uses of that information in education had more than a little influence on me, and Roger, who collaborated with me on a United States Information Agency project to prepare materials on language variation for NNS ESL teachers, has continued to help my work along.

In 1972, Jacek Fisiak, Director of the Institute of English at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, asked me to train several of his people in sociolinguistics, most of whom also had a considerable interest in SLA. I am grateful to him for that opportunity and for the Fulbright grant which took me there. Most importantly, I value the many hours of conversation with friends I made in Poland – Janusz Arabski, Jurek Bańczerowski, Karol Janicki, Tomek Krzeszowski, Waldek Marton, Kazik Polański, Jim Sehnert, Mike Sharwood Smith, Olek Szwedek, and others (friendly diminutives intended). My Polish days gave me an opportunity to work on and think about SLA as I had not done before.

Dick Day, Chairperson of the Department of English as a Second Language at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, invited me to spend 1980–1 as a visiting professor and run sociolinguistically amok among his faculty and students. Since Derek Bickerton was putting the finishing touches on *The Roots of Language* just then, it would be unnecessarily dishonest not to acknowledge his influence and the friendship he and Yvonne and Carol and I started and kept up.

In 1987 Sue Gass, Carolyn Madden, Larry Selinker, and I organized the XIth University of Michigan Conference on Applied Linguistics: Variation in Second Language Acquisition; their insights from SLA and the input from that conference have been especially welcome. Larry and John Swales, former and current Directors of the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan respectively, have talked about genre, discourse, and other matters with me and have each read and commented on the whole book; what advice of theirs I have followed has undoubtedly helped, what I have ignored I will likely come to regret.

Peter Trudgill, editor of this series, has taught me a great deal about language variation and change in his lectures, his writings, and in personal conversations; his comments on this book have been very helpful. I regret that in return I have been able to teach him only that language is a boat.

Much of this book was written while I held a faculty research fellowship from Eastern Michigan University. Without that, there would not have been time.

Penultimately, this book has grown out of respect for those students who have taught me the greater responsibility of educating teachers whose work takes them into immediate touch with people in need of a new language. It is



good to know that some I have had a hand in educating have helped their students stay out of the clutches of loan sharks, get bargains in grocery stores, find work, and get to the bathroom in new languages.

Finally, as the dedication says, one who has always done what the previous paragraph suggests – as an ESL teacher here and abroad, as an ESL and bilingual teacher trainer, and as a bilingual program administrator – is my wife, Carol Guagliardo Preston. Her concern for those who need another language has inspired me, and her skill, hard work, and enthusiasm in providing language for those who need it most have kept me in awe. She is largely responsible for what little clarity this book may have, and it is dedicated to her and, through her, to the acquirers of new languages.

I am grateful to the following for permission to reproduce material already published elsewhere: Academic Press for figure 1.2 (from R. Fasold (1984), *Variation theory and language learning*, in P. Trudgill (ed.), *Applied Sociolinguistics*); Basil Blackwell for figures 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9 (from L. Milroy (1980), *Language and Social Networks*); Cambridge University Press for figure 1.5 (from D. Bickerton (1975), *Dynamics of a Creole System*), figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.10, and 2.11 (from J. K. Chambers and P. Trudgill (1980), *Dialectology*), figure 2.4 (from H. Giles (1979), *Ethnicity markers in speech*, in K. R. Scherer and H. Giles (eds), *Social Markers in Speech*) and figures 1.1, 2.12, and 2.14 (from P. Trudgill (1974), *The Social Differentiation of English in Norwich*); Center for Applied Linguistics for figure 2.3 (from W. Labov (1966), *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*); Edward Arnold for figure 3.6 (from E. B. Ryan, H. Giles, and R. J. Sebastian (1982), *An integrative perspective for the study of attitudes toward language variation*, in E. B. Ryan and H. Giles (eds), *Attitudes towards Language Variation*); *Language Learning* for figure 3.2 (from R. Kaplan (1966), *Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education*, *Language Learning*); MIT Press for figures 3.4 and 3.5 (from R. Brown and R. Gilman (1960), *The pronouns of power and solidarity*, in T. A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language*); Mouton de Gruyter, A Division of Walter de Gruyter & Co., for figure 4.1 (from S. M. Ervin-Tripp (1971), *Sociolinguistics*, in J. Fishman (ed.), *Advances in the Sociology of Language*); Prentice Hall Inc. and the authors for figures 1.3 and 1.4 (from W. Wolfram and R. W. Fasold (1974), *The Study of Social Dialects in American English*); *Technology Review* for figure 3.1 (from B. L. Whorf (1940), *Science and linguistics*, *Technology Review*); University of Michigan Press for figure 2.6 (from H. Kurath (1949), *A Word Geography of the United States*); University of Pennsylvania Press for figure 2.13 (from W. Labov (1972a), *Sociolinguistic Patterns*), and figure 3.6 (from W. Labov (1972b), *Language in the Inner City*); University of Texas Press for figure 2.5 (from E. B. Atwood (1950), 'Grease' and

'greasy': a study of geographical variation, *Texas Studies in English*; *Word* for figure 2.9 (from U. Weinreich (1954), Is structural dialectology possible?, *Word*).

Superior Township,  
Michigan, USA

# List of abbreviations

ABE	adult basic education
ESL	English as a second language
LSP	language for special purposes
L1	first (native) language, mother tongue
L2	second language, target language
NNS	nonnative speaker
NS	native speaker
SLA	second language acquisition (including foreign language learning)
TESOL	teachers of English to speakers of other languages

For Carol – the world's greatest  
ESL/bilingual teacher, teacher trainer, and administrator

LANGUAGE IN SOCIETY 14

Sociolinguistics and  
Second Language Acquisition

# Contents

Editor's preface	viii
Acknowledgments	x
List of figures	xiv
List of tables	xvi
List of abbreviations	xvii
Introduction	1
<b>1 The sociolinguistic background</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Approaches to language variation	6
1.2 Accounts of language variation	12
1.2.1 The variable rule	13
1.2.2 The dynamic paradigm	24
1.2.3 Pidgin and creole	34
1.2.4 Language choice	38
1.2.5 Larger units	42
1.2.6 Language attitudes	49
1.3 The ethnography of communication	52
<b>2 Individual characteristics</b>	<b>53</b>
2.1 Ascribed	53
2.1.1 Age	53
2.1.2 Sex	64
2.1.3 Nativeness	78
2.1.4 Ethnicity	86
2.1.5 Region	91
2.2 Acquired	106
2.2.1 Role	106
2.2.2 Specialization	109

2.2.3	Status	113
2.2.4	Fluency	118
2.2.5	Individuality	119
<b>3</b>	<b>Interactional factors</b>	<b>122</b>
3.1	Setting	122
3.1.1	Time	123
3.1.2	Place	126
3.1.3	Length	128
3.1.4	Size	131
3.2	Content	132
3.2.1	Situation	132
3.2.2	Topic	135
3.2.3	Genre	140
3.3	Relations	145
3.3.1	Solidarity	145
3.3.2	Network	152
3.3.3	Power	160
3.4	Functions	163
3.4.1	Purpose	163
3.4.2	Outcome and goal	171
3.5	Tenor	174
3.5.1	Distance	174
3.5.2	Manner	179
3.6	Participation	186
<b>4</b>	<b>A taxonomy of language variation</b>	<b>194</b>
4.1	More categories	194
4.1.1	General linguistics	194
4.1.2	Sociology of language	199
4.1.3	Media	208
4.2	Applications	215
4.2.1	A sociolinguistic application	216
4.2.2	An SLA application	229
<b>5</b>	<b>Sociolinguistics and the learning and teaching of foreign and second languages</b>	<b>239</b>
5.1	Variationist theories of SLA	239
5.1.1	A dual competence model	241
5.1.2	A continuous competence model	242
5.1.3	A variable competence model	246

5.1.4 A sociolinguistic model	252
5.2 Applied sociolinguistics	269
<b>6 Summing up</b>	<b>273</b>
Notes	277
References	288
Index	319



## List of figures

<i>Figure 1.1</i>	Alveolarization of -ng in Norwich	18
<i>Figure 1.2</i>	Accuracy of Japanese learners' realization of English /z/ in four linguistic environments	21
<i>Figure 1.3</i>	The innovation and spread of a feature in wave theory	25
<i>Figure 1.4</i>	Interruption of spread in one direction	26
<i>Figure 1.5</i>	S-curve displaying the smaller number of individuals who actually participate in variation between the 20 and 80 percent levels	28
<i>Figure 2.1</i>	Norwich (e) by age and style	57
<i>Figure 2.2</i>	Norwich (ng) by age and style	58
<i>Figure 2.3</i>	New York City (eh) in Jewish and Italian groups	87
<i>Figure 2.4</i>	Language use in interethnic contact situations	89
<i>Figure 2.5</i>	[gris] vs [gri:z] pronunciations of the verb 'grease' in the eastern United States	92
<i>Figure 2.6</i>	Three isoglosses dividing the north from the north midland in the eastern United States	93
<i>Figure 2.7</i>	Generalized map of southern Indiana respondents' hand-drawn maps of the speech areas of the United States	95
<i>Figure 2.8</i>	Generalized map of southeastern Michigan respondents' hand-drawn maps of the speech areas of the United States	96
<i>Figure 2.9</i>	Dialect boundaries based on (a) phonetic and (b) structural (phonemic) contrasts	97
<i>Figure 2.10</i>	Distribution of the variable (u) in the East Midlands and East Anglia	100
<i>Figure 2.11</i>	Distribution of northern, southern, mixed, and fudged lects for the variable (u) in the East Midlands and East Anglia	101
<i>Figure 2.12</i>	Norwich (a:) by class and style	114
<i>Figure 2.13</i>	The New York City pattern for (r) by class and style, showing the lower middle class crossover typical of hypercorrection	115