The Development of Sociolinguistics

Susan Ervin-Tripp

Susan M. Ervin-Tripp is Professor of Psychology at the University of California at Berkeley. She has been a Guggenheim Fellow, Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and a member of the NAS China Delegation in Applied Linguistics.

Development of term. In a 1995 newspaper, a press dispatch about a famous Los Angeles trial identified a consultant on a Spanish speaker’s testimony as a sociolinguist, without further explanation.¹ The term “sociolinguist” without hyphens was chosen by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in 1963 to identify its new advisory committee. The name was an analog of psycholinguistics, the interdisciplinary field it had successfully brokered a decade earlier. In 1980 we find the introduction to a book by social psychologists which says “sociolinguistics has acquired such momentum over a ten-year period that it is almost unthinkable for scholars of contemporary language use to think of themselves as anything other than sociolinguists, whatever their particular research interests” (Giles, Smith, and Robinson 1980:1).

Psycholinguistics committee. The Social Science Research Council is an organization in which directors from the constituent social sciences participate. Established in 1924 to advance research in the social sciences, it especially focuses on new fields of research, interdisciplinary proposals, area research, raising funds for workshops and conferences, and providing travel money, fellowships, and student funding.

What each field brought. The Committee on Linguistics and Psychology was formed after a 1951 SSRC seminar initiated by John Carroll, a psychologist with a long-standing interest in linguistics. The areas conceived for joint study at that time were mother tongue acquisition, language structure and thought, the role of dialect in social class, and the study of linguistic structure using psychological methods. A subsequent summer workshop conducted in conjunction with a Linguistic Institute laid out other areas in a monograph publishing the results (Osgood and Sebeok 1954). Participants included Thomas Sebeok, Floyd Lounsbury, and Joseph Greenfield from linguistics, Charles Osgood and James Jenkins from psychology, and six graduate students, of whom two, Sol Saporta and I, clearly remained identified later with the field of psycholinguistics.

The three central perspectives on which this summer program was based have been almost completely overthrown in current psycholinguistic research: the associative model of language learning, the Bloomfieldian model of descriptive linguistics, sequential probabilities in the information theory paradigm. Social facets of language were almost entirely absent, except as they affected conceptual categories, even though dialect was on the original agenda. What is surprising then, is why the launching of psycholinguistics was so successful. I think there are several reasons.

One reason is that the study of verbal behavior permeates much of human psychology, so many psychologists have had a need to understand language and persisted in the linkage to linguistics. This relationship was especially visible in the remarkable developments in speech perception research by the early sixties. A second reason is that the theoretical changes which next took place made the fields more compatible. The move from associative to cognitive views of learning made room for a more complex and less atomistic notion of what language was. The idea of a generative syntax suggested sweeping underlying categories, provided a framework for syntactic analysis that was congruent with cognitive psychology, and generated testable hypotheses about acquisition and second language learning. Based on these changes, there was a new wave of child language research by the late fifties and early sixties.3

In subsequent years, as generative grammar has become hegemonic, it has become apparent that ideologically the two fields are compatible, both moving towards less emphasis on learning, more on biological foundations, and

---

2 A detailed review of SSRC participation in research on linguistics and the social sciences appears in Ervin-Tripp (1974).

3 There were virtually simultaneous projects showing systematic diachronic syntactic change undertaken about 1959 in Washington by Martin Braine, in Cambridge by Roger Brown, and in Berkeley by Susan Ervin-Tripp.
towards an individualistic perspective on “the ideal speaker-learner,” which permits relatively context-free experimentation on “competence.” Both psychology and generative grammar seek universal generalizations about all humans. In psychology, even the study of differences presupposes that stimuli (such as tests) work the same for all. The spurt of interest in psycholinguistics owed, of course, a good deal to the leadership of Chomsky, whose view that linguistics was an aspect of the science of the mind, helped make issues central that linguists had once considered marginal.

The committee succeeded through its series of small conferences in spotlighting important issues which required cross-disciplinary work, legitimized them with funding agencies, and helped scholars to know one another’s work. By including graduate students in small conferences, seminars, and workshops the Linguistics and Psychology Committee introduced a new generation of cross-disciplinary scholars such as Ursula Bellugi, Jean Berko, Thomas Bever, Susan Ervin-Tripp, Wallace Lambert, Eric Lenneberg, Wick Miller, and Sol Saporta. Being in this network meant getting invited to conferences, and getting on preprint paper circulation lists so that one might be abreast of new developments before the invention of the Internet.4

**Conferences that overlapped.** Issues included in the SSRC-sponsored small conferences during the life of the Committee on Linguistics and Psychology from 1952 to 1961 were content analysis, associative processes, meaning, aphasia, and linguistic universals. Several were of consequence to sociolinguists. These included a very small conference on Bilingualism in 1954 and the Style in Language conference in 1958 for which Brown and Gilman prepared their ground-breaking paper, “The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity” (1960).

The biggest enterprise sponsored by the committee was the Southwest Project in Comparative Psycholinguistics, which was John Carroll’s proposal to test the Whorf hypothesis by using the comparative psychology paradigm, that is, repeating procedures in each of six language communities, Navaho, Zuni, Hopi, Hopi-Tewa, Spanish, and English. Two summers were spent doing this project, one in preparation, one in data collection, with teams of senior and

---

4The preprint circulation net worked as more than an extended library and information source. The role of these contact networks in professional placement and hence in the spread of these new disciplines is important sociologically. Until the affirmative action changes of the early seventies, however, which mandated public recruiting, the normal hiring mode in American universities was to contact friends in major universities and ask them to hand-pick candidates, a system which virtually excluded women and men in small institutions. It would take a special study to identify the additional increment of placement advantage from these conference connections. Undoubtedly, publication opportunities were enhanced for these young scholars.
junior researchers in each community, and a common field manual to guide them. Each procedure was pretested carefully. Topics included the effects of lexical categories on color discrimination and memory, the effects of Navaho form classification markers on color/form preferences and on memory, the commonalities and differences in synaesthesia and in semantic differential structure, the effects of language dominance on color naming, and associations in bilinguals. This study could be seen as the predecessor of the recent Max Planck studies focused on spatial categories. Joseph Casagrande, a cultural anthropologist, worked with the committee as staff member of SSRC, and joined the Navaho field team. As the only anthropologist in the planning and research group throughout, he played a major role in the Southwest Project, but had left the SSRC by the middle of the next decade.\footnote{Ed Dozier, a Tewa anthropologist, participated in some aspects of the project.}

**Why a sociolinguistics committee was formed.** While broadly cultured linguists like Sapir had written about psychological issues, linguistics and psychology had developed relatively independently of each other. But the relation of linguistics to some other social sciences was much closer. In particular, many anthropologists studied linguistics as a part of their training and as necessary to their work, and linguistic anthropologists were educated in anthropology departments. Until the fifties, it was typical for linguistics to be studied either within language/literature departments or within anthropology. As a result, linguists of the earlier generations were often multilingual, might be sensitive to aesthetic uses of language, and, if they did field work, they were aware of the role of language in the social life of communities. Only for those who studied isolated speakers, such as survival linguistics with the last speaker of a language, would that nexus become less visible. But anthropological linguists are unlikely to conceive of sociolinguistics as an interdisciplinary field since linguistics for them is in the field of anthropology.

There were other linguists who were likely to systematically consider social correlates of linguistic features, such as dialectologists and those studying dialectal change, who were concerned with geographic and social exogenous factors influencing language change.\footnote{It is clear that perspectives on the goals of the committee and its members, the theoretical issues, and so on are very different for each participant. In this review, I decided to take an institutional angle because of my committee experience and my interest in the social process of spreading new ideas, but a careful diachronic study of publications would give a deeper view of the intellectual history involved.} The idea for the creation of a committee came from a different source. Charles Ferguson had written a

\footnote{A clear statement regarding social principles in linguistic change appears in Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968).}
classic article systematizing a type of code variation in societies, “Diglossia.” In his field work and Foreign Service Institute experience he had seen the complex organization of multilingual policies, and as Director of the Center for Applied Linguistics, he was aware of the political aspects of language use and language planning. He knew that policy decisions regarding language were being made by many governments with an inadequate research basis. His goal was collaboration between linguists and sociologists on these issues when he proposed a Sociolinguistics Committee to the SSRC in 1963.8

By 1968 it was possible, in a memo to the committee projecting possible journals, to list these areas as comprising sociolinguistics: language and social stratification, language standardization, typology of sociolinguistic communication, acquisition of communicative competence, language problems of developing countries, pidginization and creolization. What is absent on this list is the focus on conversation structure that developed later.9

Members of the committee. The committee membership started out with a substantial membership of people with interests in larger societal organization, political integration, bilingualism, and ethnic relations. The senior members, who could bring prestige to the field of sociolinguistics within their professional organizations, were linguist Einar Haugen, known for his work on bilingualism, and sociologist Everett C. Hughes who had done studies of ethnic relations, including research in French Canada. Joshua Fishman was a sociologist especially interested in studies of language maintenance and language planning. Stanley Lieberson was a census sociologist interested in segregation and neighborhood patterns. Nathan Keyfitz was a mathematical demographer who studied migrations. John Useem had worked on issues of social stratification and economic development in India and the Pacific. Among the linguists were John Gumperz, who with Ferguson had edited a report on complex multilingual communities in South Asia, and Dell Hymes, whose programmatic proposal for an ethnography of speaking had just been published. The only psycholinguist, Susan Ervin-Tripp, who joined in 1966, had been studying bilinguals.

Later, the composition of the committee shifted with the replacement of Haugen, Keyfitz, and Useem, by sociologist Allen Grimshaw, who was studying race relations; linguist William Labov, working on urban dialects; Canadian sociologist Jacques Brazeau, studying relations between language communities in Quebec; and later, Charles Fillmore, relating pragmatic issues

---

8I am judging from the early composition of the committee what its goals were since I did not join the committee until 1966.

9My memory of the activities of the committee is aided by a file of the minutes for the period of my membership.
to syntax. Dell Hymes chaired the committee from 1970 to 1973, and subsequently co-chaired with Allen Grimshaw.

**Perspectives on the field.** From the start, there were two different perspectives on the committee that later came to be called by some “macro-sociolinguistics” and “micro-sociolinguistics” or “interactional sociolinguistics.”

On the whole, the research of the “macro” type was concerned with larger social units, and often with political categories like a named language, rather than with linguistic features as linguists identify them. Interactional sociolinguistics was concerned with processes in face-to-face interaction, analysis of transcripts, and linguistic features. This contrast was apparent, for example, in Fishman’s organization of two readers in 1968 and 1971 which reflected his committee experience. He called the macro version “sociology of language.” Within the readers, he used sociological subdivisions such as small group interaction, sociocultural issues, and stratification, and had sections on bilingualism, maintenance and shift of language, and language planning, which identify societal issues. Ethnography of communication, first dubbed “ethnography of speaking” by Dell Hymes (1962) appeared to be a program for the study of face-to-face interaction, but included attention to the sociocultural categorization of and attitudes toward languages and named speech varieties.

Another realignment was due to major theoretical changes within sociology. Harvey Sacks and Emmanuel Schegloff were by the late sixties beginning to develop a form of systematic analysis of conversational structure that took transcript analysis as their primary method, but treated a different level of analysis than linguists. They took as one of their goals the discovery of regularities in conversation structure, but the project eventually dovetailed with the other goals of interactional sociolinguists, such as analyzing the properties of talk in different settings and institutional frameworks, or by some, identifying indicators and markers of social identity. Gumperz used this approach in combination with fine-grained analysis of linguistic features to study cross-cultural communicative problems, for instance.

Particularly important in the early definition of an interdisciplinary field were three events. One was a symposium organized by Ferguson at the American Anthropological Association in 1957, which was edited by Ferguson and Gumperz as *Linguistic Diversity in South Asia* (1960). This publication defined issues involving superposed varieties and regional variation, aspects taken up later in Gumperz’ writing on the speech community. The introduction

---

10 This split is visible in the 1990 Fasold sociolinguistics textbooks in two volumes, the macro one called *The sociolinguistics of society* and the micro one called *The sociolinguistics of language.*
provides definitions and identifies problems about traditional linguistic treatment of these issues, and poses strong generalizations with the hope they will be tested in a variety of speech communities, presented in a mode one can recognize as typical of Ferguson's writing (e.g., in his work on diglossia and on baby talk register).\textsuperscript{11} 

In 1960–61, in a lecture to the Anthropological Society of Washington, D.C., Dell Hymes described in detail the ethnography of speaking, proposing ways in which, from the standpoint of an anthropological linguist, one sees relations of linguistic structure and social or psychological function. Here he spoke of the "speech economy of the group," and identified dimensions and strata in speaking, which he calls an "etic framework" for analysis, that is a cross-culturally possible grid for first analysis of a unit he calls a "speech event," which is the primary unit of analysis. The factors of sender, receiver, message form, channel, code, topic, and setting are not completely unfamiliar, nor are his seven functional categories that appeared later in speech act analysis. Hymes credits Jakobson, Burke, Pike, Sinclair, and Barker and Wright for his analysis. But it was Hymes' version that proved seminal for the developing field of Sociolinguistics, including his concern with socialization.

An event that was a benchmark in sociolinguistics was the symposium at the American Anthropology meetings in the fall of 1963 in San Francisco, which later appeared as a special issue of \textit{American Anthropologist} (1964) called the "Ethnography of Communication," edited by John Gumperz and Dell Hymes. Here in a major publication, the outlines of a new field from a variety of perspectives were laid out by Gumperz and Hymes. This was the first place where Courtney Cazden identified the importance of the "situation" in research, and forecast what has continued to be an important split in educational research between transcript-centered analysis of the classroom and more traditional educational psychology.\textsuperscript{12} My article reported experimental research on bilingualism showing substantial content variations with language. The article summarized a variety of evidence on interrelations of topic, linguistic features, setting, audience, instantiating many of the points Hymes proposed in his more theoretical presentation. Charles Frake made vivid and specific the structure of a speech event. As Bauman and Sherzer described it (1974:5), the issue contained "exemplary essays, mostly substantive treatments of phenomena

\textsuperscript{11}Behind anybody working on bilingualism at that time were two classics, the work of Haugen (1953) and of Weinreich (1953), which drew clear attention to the sociocultural context of contact.

\textsuperscript{12}The salience of the contrast with questionnaire/testing methods has been so great in education that the term "ethnography" was adopted in educational research with the restricted meaning of "observation," overlooking all the rest of the ethnographic methods as used in anthropology.
relevant to the ethnography of speaking, though not undertaken under its charter, but converging and contributing toward the establishment of the field.” In the same year, Hymes published his large compendium of major works which he considered relevant to this field, *Language in Culture and Society* (1964).

Not everyone involved in these developments fully liked the idea of a hyphenated, cross-disciplinary field. Among committee members, both Labov and Hymes have occasionally made this concern explicit. Hymes has spoken of “socially constituted linguistics” and would rather see linguistics broaden in scope and presuppositions to include the issues which have appeared in these conferences. Perhaps the best evidence that radical interpenetration of disciplines has occurred is that it is often hard to tell what department a student is from. On the other hand, since the demise of the committee, some linguistics departments have hardened their boundaries to restrict their attention to formal linguistics and narrow applications thereof. For this reason, attention to the broader view of linguistics has in some cases shifted to departments of applied linguistics or anthropology.

**The spread of the term “sociolinguistics.”** The term “sociolinguistics” appeared without a hyphen in a Chicago dissertation of Mayers (1961), but was not used in major publications until 1966 in two publications which were direct outcomes of the SSRC committee’s activities: Bright’s proceedings of the Lake Arrowhead conference called *Sociolinguistics*, and the special issue of *Sociological Inquiry* (also published by the *International Journal of American Linguistics*) which Stanley Lieberson assembled and called “Explorations in Sociolinguistics.” Lieberson’s collection of papers included major papers on societal issues of bilingualism and standardization, social change, stratification, census data on language and could thus be said to be a landmark for “macro sociolinguistics.” The members of the SSRC committee continued to be major sources of lexical spread for this term.

Joshua Fishman, despite a textbook entitled *Sociolinguistics* (1970) preferred the term “sociology of language” as a title for *Readings in the Sociology of Language* (1968) and for *Advances in the Sociology of Language* (1971). And when Anwar Dil initiated his important series of scholars’ collected papers, published by Stanford University Press, he called it *Language Science and National Development*, though most of the early authors he chose were sociolinguists. However, it had enormous value in making some important ideas in sociolinguistics easily available in coherent form. A University of Pennsylvania series began about the same time.

In 1967, I wrote a survey paper called “Sociolinguistics” which later was published in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (1969), and in
1973 Grimshaw did a chapter called "Sociolinguistics" for The Handbook of Communication. By 1970 a Sociolinguistics Newsletter was available from the research committee on sociolinguistics of the International Sociological Association, and substantial programs on sociolinguistics began appearing at the meetings of that association. Gumperz and Hymes combined the terms by publishing in 1972 Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication, which in one volume included a span of work across a range of disciplines, and for the first time brought the sociologists working on conversational analysis under the tent. A 1972 Georgetown University Roundtable cosponsored with the SSRC committee was called "Sociolinguistics: Current Trends and Prospects" and summarized the state of sociolinguistics.

In 1968 the committee began discussing the great need for a journal of sociolinguistic studies, and then we see Language in Society and International Journal of the Sociology of Language, founded respectively by Hymes in 1971 and by Fishman in 1974. The titles perhaps reflected a desire by publishers to appeal to nonlinguists, but that is a guess. What is most apparent in the early seventies is that just the spread of the term suggests a marked impact. The Center for Applied Linguistics was beginning to use the term in publications by 1967. Publications in Quebec, Rome, Sydney, and Mexico used the term in the late sixties, some through independent invention. In 1972 Penguin published a reader, Sociolinguistics, edited by Pride and Holmes and Language and Social Context, edited by Pier Paolo Giglioli. In 1974 they added a textbook called Sociolinguistics by Trudgill. Dittmar's compendium called Soziolinguistik was published in Germany in 1973. At the 1974 World Congress of Sociologists, 140 papers were listed as sociolinguistic, including papers on speech act theory, ethnmethodology, Chicano sociolinguistics, language census, and language in terms of a variety of institutional categories like religion, government, and science education. Clearly, sociolinguistics had arrived.

Committee meetings. Membership on the committee meant not only having a chance to learn about the work and interests of other committee members, but also being able to shape the direction of the field. The meetings were a forum for discussing new developments, sharing research findings, and formulating strategies for advancing the discipline.

---


14It is perhaps not a coincidence that Charles Ferguson directed the Center for Applied Linguistics in this period. For the names of some of the reports that were published, see the Reference section of this volume under the following: Pietrzky 1967, Wolfram 1969, and Shuy 1971 (this reported a conference on social dialects from the perspective of several disciplines. Claudia Mitchell-Kernan and I represented sociolinguistics).
members; in addition, guests came to talk about their work, in order to expand the planning vision of the committee. My records show for example on various occasions visits by Dan Slobin, Aaron Cicourel, and Harold Garfinkel, and Harvey Sacks, who explained how intensive analysis of small group interaction permits them to avoid postulation of categories and provides a discovery method.

Conferences sponsored by committee. What was clear to anyone who was a member of the SSRC committee during this period was that all this publishing activity didn’t happen by accident. It seemed to me that there were two factors involved in the success of the enterprise. One was certain individuals who took the lead, and a kind of division of labor developed. Ferguson had set up the committee, which was heterogeneous in its interests. His own experience and goals were relatively wide. He had diplomatic experience as a chair in being able to present a suggestion, let it get expanded and become a group product without his name on it. He deftly spread around commitment to the committee’s activities, and reduced the territorial disputes which can occur in such groups. Later on Dell Hymes, who succeeded as chair, also promoted breadth of attention of the committee to a variety of perspectives. Another noticeable feature of certain committee members was unusual energy and public skill in creating visibility for the field through conferences, symposia at professional meetings, correspondence, and prompt publications. Others were concerned primarily with theoretical problems, and wanted small working groups to focus on intellectual issues. Gumperz was especially tuned to new developments in social theory and helped the committee see, for instance, how ethnomethodology could be relevant to the committee’s goals.

The means available to the committee for building the field included conferences, workshops, and scholarships. The first major activity was a Summer Research Seminar held in Bloomington in conjunction with a Linguistic Society of America Linguistic Institute in 1964. The seminar brought together sociologists, anthropologists, and linguists to discuss languages in contact, linguistic indices of social stratification, and the relations of social and political change to the linguistic integration of societies. Papers prepared by the participants in the seminar were published in various places later, such as “Explorations in Sociolinguistics” (S. Lieberson, ed.) in Sociological Inquiry in 1966 and in an issue of the Journal of Social Issues on Bilingualism (J. Macnamara, ed.) in 1967.

During 1966–1968 alone the committee sponsored two small conferences on language as data and as obstacle in comparative sociological research (or the ethnography of asking questions), and on multilingualism and social
change from the perspective of Yiddish, and planned several small working groups on formal analysis of linguistic interaction in small groups, computer analysis of texts in relation to language acquisition, language problems arising from the technological revolution in bilingual and multilingual societies, and sociolinguistic research training. A conference on censuses and language data was projected.

There were two major conferences in that period. The focus of the first was on societal issues. Developing nations are often multilingual. They must discover a lingua franca, standardize means of communication in the context of diversity, develop literacy, and find means to communicate in schools, industries, cities, and political assemblies. Political decisions about language choice affect the power of competing groups and affect unification, as the blood shed over language testifies. The papers were published as *Language Problems of Developing Nations* (1968), edited by Joshua Fishman, Charles Ferguson, and Jyotindra Das Gupta. The second conference had as its focus a linguistic phenomenon, creolization. Pidgins and creoles arise in special societal conditions, in multilingual societies where the languages are quite different and in conditions of marginality which prevent the learning of the linguistic norms of the contact group. They provide the most vivid instance of communicative need generating a code, and provide an ongoing laboratory for the study of language genesis. Both of these conferences brought together scholars who had studied similar conditions in widely varying parts of the world, and both conferences defined a range of issues for collaborative research. The second was published as *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages* (1971), edited by Dell Hymes.

Although the initial focus of the committee was on comparative issues and multilingual societies around the world, attention moved to linguistic problems of ethnic minorities and to sociolinguistic surveys. Surveys in New York, Washington, Detroit, and elsewhere were initiated independently of the committee, but many of the scholars involved were members of the committee and it played a key role in stimulating the spread of such work and of panels reporting findings. For example, a symposium on sociolinguistics at the American Anthropological Association was published later in a volume edited by Smith and Shuy as *Sociolinguistics in Cross-Cultural Analysis*, and included papers on urban language issues such as Puerto Rican speech in New York. The committee has also facilitated a project on Chicano sociolinguistics.

---

15 Recent critical analysis of the Cold War and the universities has drawn attention to the fact that much government and foundation funding of social research was motivated by political goals such as political control and domestic counterinsurgency. A detailed study of this issue in sociolinguistic work remains to be done.
Committee-planned conferences explored problems of classroom communication and issues on the ethnography of speaking. The latter included sessions on community ground rules, genres, scenes and roles, and the definition of speech community, and was published by Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer as Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking (1974).

A 1972 Georgetown Roundtable cosponsored with the SSRC committee was called “Sociolinguistics: Current Trends and Prospects,” and summarized the state of sociolinguistics. Topics included language planning, multilingualism, sociolinguistic surveys and investigations of variability in language, conversational analysis, and the ethnography of speaking. Papers were published in Shuy’s Georgetown Monograph of that name, in Shuy and Fasold’s Language Attitudes: Current Trends and Prospects (1973) and in Rubin and Shuy’s Language Planning: Current Issues and Research (1973).

The committee’s sponsorship helped in fund raising for projects which took some time, for example a project in which four scholars worked on language planning for developing nations at the East-West Center in Hawaii. An immediate product of that year was a monograph by Rubin and Jernudd called Can Language Be Planned? Sociolinguistic Theory and Practice for Developing Nations. Further projects on language planning followed, spearheaded by Fishman and Ferguson.

The committee’s facilitative efforts also included a mailing list for the Group for the Study of Sociolinguistics, lists of graduate schools offering relevant training, and sessions on sociolinguistics at research meetings of disciplinary associations.

Conference on language socialization. Gumperz, Ervin-Tripp, and Dan Slobin began planning a major project on language socialization in Berkeley. The goal was to pursue three research areas: cross-linguistic study of semantic, phonological, and grammatical development in children, in the tradition of earlier psycholinguistic study of child language; the development of the social functions and social rules of language in children—child sociolinguistics—and the ethnography of communication; and the study of the nexus of beliefs and practices regarding language that are the milieu of the child’s language learning. The stated goal was to discover universal aspects of the process of learning to use language for communication in diverse settings.

Several Berkeley anthropology graduate students were working with three faculty members, Slobin in Psychology, Ervin-Tripp in Speech, and Gumperz in Anthropology. Research in linguistic socialization was planned by Jan Brukman, Keith Kernan, Claudia Mitchell, and Brian Stross. The project began with the development of a field manual by Slobin, Ervin-Tripp, and these students in Berkeley. The Field Manual for Cross-Cultural Study of the
Acquisition of Communicative Competence composed by this group was edited by Slobin, who took comparative syntactic development as a career focus at that point and has subsequently been the leader in its development.16 The manual brought together the ideas of the time about how to study phonology, lexicon, grammar in children, practicalities of using equipment and informants and interpreters, and most important for our purposes, doing a study of communicative development and linguistic belief systems. The section on communicative development was still primitive since little was known about this subject; it included study of the child’s life space in terms of settings and network, peer talk, baby talk, and routines. There were sections on the social setting of linguistic behavior in terms of social categories, cultural socialization, education, usage, taboos, bilingualism, conversational structure, special styles, and speech acts. While the analysis has been superseded, it was a pioneering effort and was the first to focus on these topics. The Field Manual was widely circulated and probably had its greatest impact on the development of comparative syntax, since that was the most developed field at the time.

The second phase of the study was the preparation of dissertations based on work in Hungary, Finland, Samoa, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, and several California sites.17 In the summer of 1968, with the aid of National Science Foundation training funds, the project brought together thirty-two students and seven field workers with faculty and visiting scholars for intensive study of the problem areas. The students had now completed their field work, along with others such as Ben Blount. Ferguson joined the three faculty to chair the phonology workshop. Ervin-Tripp and Gumperz led the two workshops on sociolinguistics, which paid particular attention to code switching, sociolinguistic rules, beliefs about language, and the social meaning of speech variation. Visiting experts came from around the world, so it was a stimulating summer.18 Among the students were many who later became productive scholars, such as Melissa Bowerman, Carol Brooks Gardner, James Shenkein, Abigail Sher, and Merrill Swain. Student reports, such as several on baby talk

---

16 The project had the support of Project Literacy, the Office of Education, the National Science Foundation, and the Social Science Research Council. Also the Institute of Human Learning at UC Berkeley housed the project until it was moved to the new Language-Behavior Laboratory.

17 Students who brought back fieldwork results based on the manual in addition to those who wrote it were Rodney Vlasek, Carolyn Wardrip, and Ben Blount.

18 Visitors who gave public lectures included a veritable who’s who: Ursula Bellugi-Klima, Basil Bernstein, Martin Braine, Courtney Cazden, Aaron Cicourel, William Gehegan, Erving Goffman, Dell Hymes, Vera John, Wick Miller, Michael Moerman, John Ross, Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff, Roger Shuy, and Carlota Smith.
register, became working papers of the Berkeley Language-Behavior Research Laboratory available through ERIC. Students reported that the most important aspect of the workshop was cross-disciplinary training and establishing a network of acquaintance with others in the field.\(^{19}\)

A subsequent related conference sponsored by the SSRC committee was organized in 1974 on Language Input and Acquisition, and published as *Talking to Children*, edited by Catherine Snow and Charles Ferguson (1977). In 1974 I organized a panel at the American Anthropological Association meetings, bringing together young scholars of language socialization who did not know each other at the time. These papers appeared as *Child Discourse* in 1977, edited by Mitchell-Kernan and Ervin-Tripp with an introduction to this book differentiating this field from psycholinguistic studies of language development. Among the participants were Ochs and Schieffelin, who subsequently have had a fruitful writing collaboration; they reinvented and extended the project conceived in the 1968 conference, refocusing both method and issues, and have been prime movers in developing cross-cultural studies of linguistic socialization. They conceive of this work as anthropological linguistics, however, not as sociolinguistics.

**Local nexus.** Several important developments in sociolinguistics came from the University of California, Berkeley; my personal connection with the development of the field probably would not have occurred had I not been there by chance.\(^{20}\) In the early sixties, there was an interdisciplinary network, at the center of which were Hymes, Gumperz, and Lamb. Sidney Lamb was developing stratificational grammar, which included notions of neutralization and realization across language strata, allowing an easy fit for the pragmatic categories that were beginning to enter linguistic analysis. He also managed a colloquium that was hospitable to a wide range of ideas about language. There was a custom of informal cross-disciplinary language discussion, for example, a Friday lunch meeting. The notions that Gumperz and Hymes presented in the American Anthropology Association meeting in 1963 had already been discussed by them in such venues. By 1963, there were discussions of creating a

---

\(^{19}\)I gave a detailed description in Ervin-Tripp (1969).

\(^{20}\)While the networks arising from conferences and committees are important, cross-disciplinary scholars can have problems from institutional marginalization, affecting their ability to train graduate students. John Gumperz has been in three different departments, Near East languages, Linguistics, and finally, Anthropology, and I have been in three also, Education, Speech, and Psychology. Geographic marginalization is to my mind even more of a problem, at least before the internet existed. An example of geographic marginalization was J. L. Fischer of Tulane University who was a sociolinguistic pioneer. There are many others.
The Development of Sociolinguistics

center for the cross-disciplinary study of language.\textsuperscript{21} The loss of Lamb to Yale in 1964 and of Hymes to the University of Pennsylvania in 1965 severely damaged this network.

In 1967 the Institute of International Studies\textsuperscript{22} offered to fund a language center, and asked a new anthropologist, Paul Kay, to chair it. As a result, a site was found for the Language-Behavior Research Laboratory, and Slobin, Gumperz, and I, who were all in different departments, had a place to confer, some facilities for work, and sponsorship for a working paper series.\textsuperscript{23} Other institutions, such as Texas, developed similar series.

An important part of this mix was the informal seminar, often in homes. These seminars made students and fellow-faculty in other departments aware of what we were doing. Through them we learned of Gumperz’ new work on code switching, which inverted the studies I had done by setting the language and watching how the other features of bilingual talk changed. Through them it was possible to see the careful training on close observation of the linguistic strategies used in natural groups which Gumperz provided for his students, and how he related these studies to language shift. Through such seminars, I talked about analysis of pragmatic functions in natural settings, during the ten-year period when I was studying requests. It was frequently students who visited these seminars who made a synthesis: Stephen Levinson, for instance was a participant. He and Penelope Brown took the larger step beyond faculty work to integrate with the discussions in the sociolinguistic seminars the ideas of Grice, Robin Lakoff, and Goffman, who all had been on the Berkeley faculty.

Later developments. By the seventies it had become clear that a functional analysis of language was coming from several directions, from speech act theory, from conversational analysis, and from a few psychologists who did empirical study of natural interaction, like William Soskin and Vera John (1963). Crosscutting this work was the study of how the interpretation or realization of functions linguistically was altered by considerations like power and solidarity, what came to be called “politeness,” so that linguistic choices other than language, dialect, or register features could convey social meaning.

\textsuperscript{21}Ervin letter to Slobin, August 5, 1963, describing Berkeley language scene.

\textsuperscript{22}cf. note 15 for a perspective on such unexpected sponsorships.

\textsuperscript{23}These working papers included many sociolinguistic prepublication items. Unfortunately, the LBRL faculty did not make sure the graduate students recognized working papers are not publications, so many important student studies, such as several of the dissertations in the SSRC linguistic socialization project, remain unpublished and are not available in most libraries. We lacked some strategic acumen in promoting the field and our students.
This work later came to be included in pragmatics with some considerable overlap with the interests of interactional sociolinguistics. Levinson, in his textbook, *Pragmatics*, regards the field as “a remedial discipline born, or re-born, of the starkly limited scope of Chomskyan linguistics” (1983:xii).

In 1985 Muyskens wrote an evaluation of the field in the *Sociolinguistics Newsletter*. He pointed out that sociolinguistics was not a unified field, that it failed to have much theoretical integration. Muyskens attributed the problem to the superficiality of the levels of language related to social features. But the problems are both institutional and conceptual, as was visible in the heady early days. There is no single social science; even sociologists who work from societal statistics have little relation to those who work on face-to-face processes. There has been an astonishing inflation of knowledge, in part just from the technological changes that have made new methods available, such as video tapes and computer text searches. Scholars are becoming more, rather than less specialized. There is even more need now for the kind of intelligent integration and programmatic projections that various scholars tried to create at the beginning of the field.