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## PREFACE

This collection of papers arose from the Workshop on Dialect and Education held at the Rolduc Conference Centre in Kerkrade, the Netherlands, from January 7-9, 1987. The Workshop was financed by the Economic and Social Research Council of the United Kingdom as part of a research project on British dialect grammar directed by Jenny Cheshire and Viv Edwards (ESRC project no. C-00-23-2264: 'The Survey of British Dialect Grammar'). The original aim of the workshop was to bring together researchers who had worked on similar problems in different European countries, so that we could 'pool resources', and benefit from each other's experiences; a further aim was to allow researchers in the field of dialect and education in Belgium, Denmark, West Germany and the Netherlands, whose work had not yet been widely disseminated in the English speaking world, to reach a wider audience. But when we received the responses to our invitation early in 1985 it became clear to us that many people were interested not just because they wanted to report their work to an English-speaking audience, but also because many of them thought it was time to revive interest in the educational problems which are posed by language variation, and which have yet to be resolved. We hope that this volume will help to revive that interest.

The chapters in this volume, then, represent a sample of the work which has been taking place in five European countries over a number of years. We are, of course, aware that there has been research in this field in other countries, besides those represented at the Workshop and in this volume, but we hope that this collection marks the beginning of a shared European perspective on the topic. Our aim has been to provide an historical perspective on this work, as well as to present more recent and previously unpublished research findings. In addition to the ten papers first presented at the Workshop, a further nine contributions have been invited to extend the scope of the volume and to give a more representative picture of research initiatives and classroom innovations in these five European

countries (these nine are the two papers by Ammon; and the papers by Cheshire & Trudgill; Hagen; Jones; Rosenberg; van Calcar, van Calcar & de Jonge; Hollingworth and Williams).

One paper, 'Language in the Classroom' by Co van Calcar, Wim van Calcar and Coen de Jonge, deserves special mention here. Co van Calcar was killed in a tragic road accident in Paris in December, 1986. He was greatly missed at the Workshop three weeks later, and he will be greatly missed in the future. We feel privileged to be able to include this, his last piece of work, in the present volume.

THE EDITORS  
LONDON/NIJMEGEN  
MARCH, 1988

1

Dialect and education in Europe: A general perspective

Jenny Cheshire, Viv Edwards, Henk  
Münstermann and Bert Weltens

The issue of dialect and education is by no means a new one. It has sparked a great deal of heated debate in Europe and elsewhere for at least a century (see Hollingworth, 1977; and Hollingworth, this volume, Chapter 19), and there is little sign of any satisfactory resolution. The last 20 years has seen a rapid growth in serious study of the subject. In most cases, research has addressed local issues: linguists and educators have been slow to realise that many of the problems and possible solutions to those problems are common to many different situations in many different countries. This is particularly true within the United Kingdom. While researchers in Continental Europe have, to some extent, discussed ideas and pooled their experience, British researchers whose attention has been focussed more closely on developments in the English-speaking world than on the other side of the Channel and the North Sea, are only starting to discover the work of European colleagues and the potential for co-operation on a wider scale.

A quick review of the work presented in this volume makes it clear that there are a number of differences between the situation in Britain and elsewhere in Europe. The degree of mutual intelligibility between indigenous British dialects is almost certainly higher than is the case, for instance, in the Netherlands, Germany, France or Italy. The relationship with the standard is also a little different, with many European dialects enjoying greater status than British non-standard varieties. However, points of similarity are far more noteworthy and we hope to show that there is enough common ground to justify comparisons and co-operation.

An appreciation of this common ground depends, to a large extent, on an understanding of the social, political and linguistic history of the countries concerned. The aim of this introduction is therefore to provide a brief overview of the various issues which recur in discussions of dialect and schooling. Such a framework is essential if we are to be able to interpret the many disparate elements which have made up European research on language in education over the last two decades.

### Linguistic Diversity in Europe

Although Europe is recognised as a linguistically diverse area, the extent of that diversity tends to be underestimated. Countries such as Belgium and Switzerland, which officially recognise more than one language within their frontiers, are the exception rather than the rule, and the picture which emerges from a rapid survey of the national languages of Europe is, at the very least, misleading. German, for instance, is spoken not only in the Federal Republic and East Germany and Austria, where it is recognised as the official language, but in Denmark, Belgium, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Rumania, the USSR, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Danes are normally assumed to speak Danish, but Denmark also has substantial German and Frisian speaking populations.

Nor is linguistic diversity restricted to multilingualism: there is considerable variation within the same language. In multilingual countries that share the standard language with neighbouring countries, e.g. Dutch in Belgium or German in Switzerland, the standard language has developed distinct regional standard varieties, at least in the spoken form. Thus a distinction can be made between standard Dutch as spoken in the Netherlands and 'Belgian Dutch' (cf. Van de Craen & Humblet, this volume, Chapter 2), a distinction which has much in common with that between 'British English' and 'U.S. English', except that in this case distinct national varieties have not been codified and officially sanctioned.

In other situations, where languages are spoken within a country but do not have official status, we are typically dealing with dialects of neighbouring standard languages. The fact that these situations are often the result of territorial conflict between adjacent countries does, of course, explain why these varieties have not received official recognition. A prime example is the (now) French region of Alsace where a German dialect, Alsatian, is spoken. Another well-documented case is the Hungarian-speaking rural community in Austria reported in Gal (1979). The varieties concerned are often forced into a position comparable to that normally

associated with minority languages, such as Breton in France; Basque in France and Spain; Frisian in the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark; and and Welsh and Gaelic in Britain.

#### Dialect and Standard

Variation is also to be found within the same language in the same country. In Europe and, indeed, in other parts of the world, certain varieties have emerged over the centuries as standard languages. This process has been a lengthy one, often lasting for centuries and passing through a number of separate though often overlapping stages (see, for discussion, Haugen, 1966; Leith, 1983). In each case, one dialect came to be used as the dominant variety, particularly by the rich and powerful sections of society. There followed a period of elaboration in which the number of domains in which the new standard variety was used was greatly extended. Eventually, the standard language was codified, through the writing systems of the various countries, through dictionaries and grammars and, in some countries, through language academies.

The range of variation that exists within a single language differs from country to country, and also within different countries. Linguistic differences between dialects and the standard variety can exist at any or all linguistic levels: phonetic, phonological, prosodic, morphological, lexical, syntactic, or pragmatic. We have chosen not to discuss the various terminological and theoretical distinctions that could be made here, since they do not bear directly on the theme of this volume. For discussion of the terms 'language', 'dialect' and 'accent' we refer readers to Chambers & Trudgill (1980).

In some regions the linguistic differences between dialect and standard are relatively great, and 'bidialectal' speakers may switch from dialect to standard in different situations. Communities of this type have been termed 'divergent dialect communities' (see Trudgill, 1986). Often speakers see the varieties as distinct entities they are, that is, 'focussed' (see Milroy, 1982; LePage & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) so that they are able to respond to questionnaires asking which variety they use in different societal domains (see, for example, the research reported in Weltens & Sonderer, this volume, Chapter 9). In other regions there may be no awareness of 'dialect' as a distinct entity; speakers will not switch from dialect to standard in different situations, but instead will increase or decrease the relative frequencies of individual standard or non-standard linguistic features. Linguistic variation in communities of this type have been described for cities such as Norwich, in England (Trudgill, 1974) and New York (Labov,

1966); variation of this type also occurs within continental Europe; for example, in parts of Germany (see Barbour, 1987) and in the Netherlands, such as in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

Linguists and other researchers have used different descriptive and theoretical frameworks to analyse this range of linguistic variation. The variationist framework, for example, based on the work of William Labov, is a quantitative approach which analyses the relative frequencies with which speakers use standard and non-standard variants. Chapter 11 in this volume by Williams adopts this approach. Other research traditions identify discrete varieties of standard and non-standard speech: traditional dialectology, for example, sees 'dialect' and 'standard' as distinct, though related, systems, such that there are speakers who can be considered to be speaking 'pure' dialect or 'classical' dialect. Chapters 7 and 14 by Ammon, and Chapter 3 by Jørgensen & Pedersen, show the influence of this tradition. Van de Craen & Humblet (Chapter 2), on the other hand, describe the linguistic variation that exists in Flanders as a continuum, along which they identify four major codes. Future collaborative research within Europe would doubtless benefit if we were all to use the same theoretical and descriptive framework; in the meantime, the research presented in this volume has to be seen as stemming from a number of different research traditions.

Despite differences in the nature of the linguistic relationship between dialect and standard, and differences in the way in which this relationship has been described by researchers, it is clear from the chapters presented here that there are shared educational implications for dialect speakers. For example, the elevation of one dialect to the status of a standard variety inevitably has consequences for the status of the non-standard varieties which remain. In divergent dialect communities, a kind of diglossic situation has emerged (see Ferguson, 1959; Fasold, 1985) in which the non-standard dialect is used in informal speech with family and friends, while the standard is reserved for more formal settings like school, or interactions with authority figures. While all speakers recognise the prestige of the standard variety, dialect speakers may feel that people who use non-standard speech are more sincere and trustworthy; and often consider standard speakers to be prissy and effeminate (cf. Giles & Powesland, 1975; Ammon, this volume, Chapters 7 and 14).

There is an important class dimension to this equation, since standard language speakers usually come from middle-class backgrounds and dialect speakers from working-class backgrounds. Within Europe there is, admittedly, important variation in this respect. In Britain, middle-class educated speakers, particularly in southern England, will often use only the standard variety -

or, at least, only standard grammar and vocabulary. In countries like Germany and the Netherlands, in contrast, middle-class speakers may well be bidialectal, speaking the dialect in addition to the standard. There is, often, none the less, an important correlation between language and class, particularly in urban areas, where the non-standard variety tends to be more closely associated with working-class families and the standard more closely with middle-class families. In an educational setting, dialect-speaking children are therefore subject to two conflicting forces: pressure from teachers to use the high status standard variety and pressure from peers not to abandon the variety which marks their own group identity.

#### Dialect and Education

A brief look at how the educational systems of Europe have dealt with the exigencies of promoting the standard variety reveals some striking similarities. The unchallenged position of the standard as the medium of education has seemed to necessitate savage and uncompromising attacks on the vernacular. Breton, Welsh and Gaelic speakers were subjected to ridicule and corporal punishment for the use of their mother tongues. Dutch teachers were led to believe that only standard speakers would be received into Heaven (Sturm, this volume, Chapter 20). Speakers of British non-standard dialects were characterised as having 'evil habits of speech' (Hollingworth, this volume, Chapter 19).

Early opposition to dialect needs to be seen in a broad historical context. The introduction of compulsory education was perceived by many as a moral crusade to educate the masses. In an atmosphere such as this, it is easy to understand how language could be equated with ignorance: the task of the educator was to eradicate the dialect in an attempt to ensure greater equality of educational opportunity. The absence of an adequate theory of language further ensured that educational policy makers and teachers would be swayed by widespread class and linguistic prejudice (Hollingworth, 1977).

However, the development of linguistics as an independent discipline during the 1940s and 1950s and the rapid growth of sociolinguistics in the 1960s and 1970s had important consequences for the stage on which the arguments about standard and non-standard speech were rehearsed. The first serious discussion about the relationship between language and educational success emerged in the work of the British sociologist, Basil Bernstein, throughout the 1960s. Bernstein postulated two polar codes: the 'elaborated' and the 'restricted' codes and he argued that the different

distribution of these codes might account for the evidence that working-class children tend to underachieve at all stages of education (see Bernstein, 1971-1975). Although Bernstein has strenuously denied that this was his intention, his work was widely interpreted in Britain, in North America and in Europe as suggesting that the standard language could be equated with the elaborated code and working-class non-standard dialects with the restricted code.

Bernstein's work has been attacked on a number of fronts. Jackson (1974), for instance, has pointed out that the theory of language codes is both untestable and unrelated to linguistic evidence. Writers such as Labov (1970), Stubbs (1976) and Trudgill (1975) have pointed to the lack of linguistic evidence and the fact that the brief examples which Bernstein uses are often invented or based on artificial test situations. Labov (1970), in particular, has suggested that Bernstein has failed to take into consideration the effect which situation can have on speech, showing how a child who appears 'non-verbal' in formal settings like school behaves as a 'normal' fluent speaker in other, less threatening situations.

A great deal of recent research has provided further evidence against the Bernsteinian stance. Writers such as Tizard & Hughes (1984) and Wells (1985, 1987) have shown that the main differences in language use occur not between middle and working-class children, but between home and school. At home, conversations are frequently longer and more equally balanced between adult and child; children ask more questions and spend more time in conversation with adults. None the less, the legacy of Bernstein lives on. The highly influential *Language for Life* (Bullock, 1975) advocates that health visitors should urge parents to 'bathe their children in language'. Tough (1985) talks in stereotypical terms of homes where children do not engage in conversation with adults and where children ask them questions only when seeking permission. Teacher attitudes in many countries reflect similar concerns (see, for instance, Dannequin, 1987, for France; and, in this volume, van Calcar *et al.*, Chapter 16, for the Netherlands, Van de Craen & Humblet, Chapter 2, for Belgium and Jørgensen & Pedersen, Chapter 3 for Denmark). The background to the development of language awareness programmes also reflects this concern (see Jones, this volume, Chapter 17).

The debate which developed as a result of the work of Bernstein signalled the drawing of the battle lines. On the one side were the supporters of the deficit hypothesis, mainly educationalists and psychologists, who considered that working-class non-standard dialects were inadequate for communication. On the other side were linguists, and others, who drew on the accumulated knowledge of several decades of descriptive language study

and a growing appreciation of the complex interrelationships between language and society. They supported the difference hypothesis, which argues that all languages and dialects are perfectly regular, rule-governed systems and that while there are obvious *social* differences between language varieties, and the functions which they have traditionally fulfilled, there are no *linguistic* grounds for arguing that one variety is superior to another. This is a conflict which has periodically reared its ugly head in various forms in various countries ever since. If we are to understand why this should be the case, we need to move beyond the observable linguistic phenomena to take into account the wider political context in which the debate is situated.

It has to be acknowledged that the linguists' doctrine of equality, which holds that all varieties are, in some important sense, felt to be equal to one another, has ideological rather than scientific status (cf. Hymes, 1972; Graddol & Swann, 1988). It is very doubtful whether this position is open to empirical investigation (for discussion, see Hudson, 1983). It is, however, an observable fact that whenever the work of linguists challenges entrenched linguistic and social attitudes it provokes extremely hostile reactions. One such example is the legal case which forced the Ann Arbor Education Board to officially recognise Black English as the home and community language of many of its students (cf. Labov, 1982). Another example was the controversy surrounding the publication in the United Kingdom of John Honey's (1983) pamphlet, 'The Language Trap'. Honey's basic position was that the doctrine of equality espoused by linguists and sociolinguists has contributed to the declining moral and educational standards in British schools: attempts to encourage the use of non-standard varieties in the classroom are having the effect of denying children access to the standard language, which would allow them to be socially mobile. The pamphlet is ill-informed about linguistics and sociolinguistics; Graddol & Swann (1988) suggest that Honey's argument is best read as a contribution to the political debate, showing how his pamphlet was used by the political Right in a wide ranging political agenda.

#### Organisation of the Book

The research reported in this book can only be appreciated against the historical, social and political backcloth to language and education that we have sketched above. Part I contains brief national perspectives on the 'linguistic landscapes' of each of the five countries represented at the Kerkrade Workshop, and on what is known about the problems of dialect in education in those countries. Part II contains reports of research that has

been carried out into various aspects of the problem, such as the underachievement of dialect speakers in school; teachers' attitudes towards dialect and standard; teachers' responses to dialect in school work and in classroom interaction. This research was carried out at different times during the period 1972-87, and the different contributions reflect the different prevailing intellectual climates during that period. Some of the early research was carried out at a time when Bernstein's ideas were at their most influential, and it attempted to put his theories to empirical test; some took place during the height of the linguistic difference/linguistic deficit debate, and it places itself clearly within the 'difference' camp. We present the research reports in chronological order, so that the historical perspective can be clearly seen. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the research is that although it was carried out at different times and within different intellectual traditions, it shares a common concern: dialect speakers continue to underachieve at school, and a realistic remedy for this has yet to be found. Part III contains papers reporting on some practical initiatives at implementing research insights in the classroom; again, these papers are presented in chronological order. Part IV contains typical examples of what happens when (socio)linguists embark on discussions on language in society. Finally, a 'Postscript' attempts to sum up what we have learned so far, and offers a view on where we should be directing our efforts now.

The focus for the present volume is, of course, *dialect* in education. On occasions, however, the discussion has broadened to include *languages* other than the standard. One such example is the inclusion of Frisian (cf. Wilts, Chapter 18; and Hagen, Chapter 4). The Frisian situation receives attention not because we feel the educational questions associated with it to be any more important than, for instance, those of Welsh in Wales or Gaelic in Scotland, but because the distribution of Frisian speakers across Dutch, Danish and German borders makes it a subject of concern for several European countries. On other occasions, discussion extends to the languages of ethnic minority communities within Europe (cf. Giesbers *et al.*, Chapter 15; Edwards, Chapter 21; Hollingworth, Chapter 19; Jones, Chapter 17; Sturm, Chapter 20). We believe that, if progress is to be made within the vitally important area of language in education, it is essential that links should be made between the position of indigenous dialect speakers and the more recently arrived linguistic minority communities.

This is, inevitably, a somewhat disparate collection of papers, representing as it does the research findings and the views of people working in different countries, at different times, and in different research traditions. We think, however, that although there are differences in their approach, their common theme provides a unity. Despite the research that has been