

## INTRODUCTION

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Australia has become a living laboratory for research into sociolinguistics/sociology of language, offering three main fields: aboriginal languages, local varieties of English and immigrant languages in contact with English. It is around these three subjects that this volume centres its attention, with contributions by linguists, social scientists and educationists.

Most of the contributions for this volume were originally written in 1974 for a special issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* but the size of this volume unfortunately exceeded the number of pages available. I thank Joshua Fishman for first suggesting this collection and Stephen Wurm for making possible publication in the D Series of *Pacific Linguistics*.

Of the approximately 260 aboriginal languages used in Australia when the white man settled in this country (1788), only about 150 are still spoken<sup>1</sup>, some by only a few old people (cf. Capell, 1963). The sociolinguistic aspects and implications of the considerable research into Australian aboriginal languages are discussed here by Sommer. With the ruthless pressure on aborigines to 'assimilate', and wholesale de-tribalization, a rapid language shift occurred, with cultural identity problems (cf. Sommer, in this volume), and aboriginal varieties of English (Flint 1968) and pidgins developed, some of which have become creolized. One of these, spoken in the Katherine and Roper River districts of the Northern Territory, is described here by Sharpe and Sandefur. There are indications that this creole is spoken over a more extensive part of inland Australia.

The uniformity of Australian English has been a subject of discussion. Mitchell and Delbridge (1965 a, b) ascertain very little regional difference but considerable social variation in phonology

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<sup>1</sup>Personal communication, B. Blake.

between three varieties which they designate as Cultivated, General and Broad, representing progressive deviation from Received Pronunciation, a lesser tendency towards Cultivated among males, rural people and pupils of government schools than among females, city dwellers and pupils of independent (non-government) schools. These findings are based on tapes of 9,000 adolescent school children from all over Australia recorded by their teachers. The study predates the development of sociolinguistics with its emphasis on social setting of corpus, experimental design, and code-switching or individual variation. Mitchell and Delbridge remains by far the most extensive empirical study of the subject. (Further discussion of uniformity in Australian English e.g. in Turner 1966, Bernard 1967a, 1967b, 1969, Cochrane 1959, Clyne 1970, Jernudd 1969). In this volume Eagleson and Muecke attack this question from the perspective of social variation and Thuan from that of language planning. Taylor analyzes swearing in Australian English as a sociolinguistic continuum.

Since the 1830s, sizable groups of non-English-speaking immigrants have settled in Australia. Some early groups, such as the Germans of South Australia, Western Victoria and south-eastern Queensland formed closed communities, but most assimilated rapidly. The mass immigration program launched in 1947 brought about a marked change in Australia's population composition, eating habits, attitudes to foreigners and foreign languages, and self-image. At present nearly 1/3 of Australia's population are immigrants or children of immigrants (the majority from non-English-speaking backgrounds). Studies have been conducted on acculturation and on social interaction between immigrants and native-born Australians (e.g. Johnston 1965, 1973, Martin, Medding 1973, Price 1945, 1963, 1964, Taft 1966, Zubrzycki 1964), and on interaction between Australian English and immigrant languages (Andreoni 1967, Clyne 1967, 1970, 1972, 1973, Endrody 1971, Harvey 1974, Johnston 1967, Kaminskas 1972, Klarberg 1971, Kouzmin 1974, Rando 1968). Research has so far tended to be 'piecemeal' or isolated, and no full investigation of language maintenance across the immigrant communities has yet been undertaken in Australia. (But Gilson and Zubrzycki, 1967, deal exhaustively with the immigrant press of the time). On the whole, factors operating in favour of language maintenance and factors that can either promote or impede it, depending on their combination, are similar to those in the United States (cf. Kloss 1966). Status and usefulness of the migrant language, the presence of or visits from grandparents, and the use of a standard variety of the migrant language may be added to Kloss's 'clear' language maintenance factors. Kloss's list of 'ambivalent' factors (leading to maintenance or shift) - educational level, numeri-

cal strength, attitude of the majority to the migrant language or group, sociocultural characteristics - may be augmented by four other factors in the Australian situation: Prior knowledge of the second language, the political situation in the country of emigration, ethnic denominations, and number of children in the family (Clyne 1976). Part-time ethnic schools, religious denominations, the ethnic press, ethnic clubs and societies, libraries and reading circles, and ethnic radio may all be regarded as institutions fostering language maintenance in Australia.

In this volume, Johnston and Klarberg discuss language maintenance with respect to particular ethnic groups with different acculturation problems. Smolicz and Harris devise a sociological model for the study of ethnic languages and, drawing on data from various communities, formulate conclusions on the future of immigrant languages in Australia. Rado's findings among Southern European adolescents in inner Melbourne suburbs contrast with the usual results of investigations on language maintenance (e.g. Smolicz and Harris, Johnston, Klarberg). The difference may be due to the introduction of bilingual education into the schools attended by Rado's subjects. While Johnston and Rado examine attitudes, Bolitho traces communication networks and Clyne deals with the work domain.

The social and educational injustices related to forced assimilation and monolingualism have led to government policies and private pressure (for instance, through the setting-up of 'migrant action'<sup>2</sup> groups) towards a pluralistic approach, especially in education. This is discussed by Kaldor (aborigines and immigrants), Rado (immigrants) and Tryon (aborigines). Possibilities unthought of three years ago are being realized (e.g. matriculation examinations in virtually all immigrant languages in Victoria; bilingual education which, however, was a 'fact of life' in some parts of Australia prior to World War I; ethnic language programs on special stations or access radio).

The contents of this volume does not, by any means, represent all work on sociolinguistics in Australia as it is a very rapidly-expanding field and much of our research is not Australia-centered. However, it is hoped that this volume will contribute to international as well as local interest in the Australian sociolinguistic scene.

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<sup>2</sup>In Australian English, 'migrant' = 'immigrant'

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