# Descriptivists or social activists: a dilemma in sociolinguistics

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After an attempt at locating sociolinguistics among linguistic disciplines, the author considers the roles of linguists in social controversies about language.

## Introductory

Sociolinguistics was introduced as an optional course in our Department in the early 70's, as soon as the present writer obtained his *»veniam legendi«*. This was thanks to the freedom that Professor Filipović, Head of the Linguistic Section, extended to young teachers in choosing special courses they wanted to teach, once the traditional courses (phonetics and phonology, modern grammar, semantics, history of the language) were covered. At first the course was organized as a continuation of an introductory linguistics course, and students were given selected chapters from Randolph Quirk's *»The Use of English«* (Longman 1962) as a set book, accompanied by lectures based on Labov's *»Social Stratification of English in New York City«* (CAL 1966). However, the response of the undergraduates was good and other set books were tried: Bell's *»Socilolinguistics«* (Batsford 1976) Fishman's *»Sociology of Language«* (which happened to be available in a good translation, Svjetlost Sarajevo 1978),Trudgill's *»Sociolinguistics«* (Pelican 1974), Hudson's *»Sociolinguistics«* (CUP 1980) and Wardaugh's *»An Introduction to Sociolinguistics«* (Blackwell 1986).

211

Various sociolinguistic »classics« selected from sociolinguistics anthologies like Pride and Holmes's »*Sociolinguistics*« (Penguin 1972) and Giglioli's »*Language and Society*« (Penguin 1972) have been discussed during the seminars. Thus our undergraduates have been made aware for over twenty years now both through the textbooks, lectures and seminars of the main trends in the discipline. In addition they have been lead to link their sociolinguistics information to the problem of learning and teaching English as a foreign language to the speakers of Croatian, where the obvious constructs like communicative competence and aspects of ethnography of communication offer a welcome insight for comparisons between the use of language in different communities. This also involves a comparison between attitudes to the Standard Language and other available varieties, both by scholars and ordinary speakers, in the English speaking countries and in their own culture. The idea behind the introduction of these and other comparative topics was the feeling of dissatisfaction with sociolinguistics generalizations and interpretations from the data of a single language, in this case English, which could result in »monolingual sociolinguistics« (Hymes) without the awareness of varying traditions in attitudes towards language.

Sociolinguistics courses at postgraduate level, first offered by the English Department to an interdepartmental postgraduate linguistics programme, are, of course, differently structured, taking into consideration – when taught by an English language specialist – that the students have their backgrounds in different philologies.

So much for the record to the potential historian of the Zagreb English Department.

# I

The advent of sociolinguistics in the 60's must be partly seen as a reaction to the Chomskyan decontextualized conceptualization of language, the point which has been argued so plausibly that we can only echo the accepted views. It has been repeated so often that for Chomsky language is a »secondary« concept, it is a series of sentences generated by the grammar, and grammar is the center of interest for a linguist.This view diminishes or eliminates the role od sociolinguistics as a linguistic discipline since its subject is 'language' and questions of language are basically questions of power but these are not,allegedly, the sorts of issues that a linguist should address (Romain 1994,1). And that is the crux of the conflict. Should the narrowing of interest to grammar only rule out the study of how language functions in society ?

Even those theoretical linguists who do not deny sociolinguistics a legitimate place in linguistic studies envisage it as a softer discipline, attractive to laymen, as distinguished from what has become mainstream linguistics.Thus in a recent review of Jackendoff's book inspired by Chomskyan linguistics Wasow criticizes the author for not paying any attention to social aspects of language, to »the world outside the speaker's skull« as »by ignoring the social aspect of language Jackendoff is forced to omit the discussion of language variation and change, topics which linguistically naive audience usually find especially interesting.« (Wasow 1995, 594) The fact that Wasow includes functionalists, a respectable linguistic school, among the linguists as also being interested in social aspects of language does not weaken the implication of his quoted statement.

And, indeed, there is something attractive to an average educated person in many sociolinguistic topics, as they seem to concentrate on certain questions that »one always wanted to ask but was afraid ( or embarrassed) to« especially in the course of one's education. Philologists and linguists themselves considered those topics a kind of »couloir« discussion points hardly to be incorporated into the core of their research. According to one description reiterating the above claim »sociolinguistic standpoint represents a bridge between the purely layman's view and a purely linguistic view admitting to the former a grain of truth and supplying the latter with the necessary extra-linguistic aspects. Sociolinguistic conceptualization takes into consideration linguistic facts about the language structure and history and also sheds some light on these by going deeper into the social functions of language.« (Bugarski 1986,105–6). We shall see later that this view could be classified as a »weak version« of sociolinguistics and has been questioned, particularly with regard to the meaning of »going deeper« into the social functions of language.

Similarly to the way that Chomsky suspects the importance of sociolinguistics, there are, of course, doubts concerning his own idea of linguistics. One of his critics characterizes his claim (to quote Wasow again), 'that people have mental grammars in their heads and it is the job of the linguist to determine what they consist of and how they came there' (Wasow 1995, 594) as »language-as-a-machine-in the-brain-myth« and comments:

»A language is no longer envisaged as needing human-language users at all,or a human brain to house it,as long as it has a machine to generate it; and its sentences need serve no social or communica-tional purposes of any kind...« (Harris 1987 quoted by M. Toolan, 1989 : 272)

Obviously, the rift between the two disciplines is deeper than the quoted »weak version« of sociolinguistics would suggest, and, apparently, it is more and more dif-ficult to insist (as the present writer would like to) that the two are complementary and that both can make contributions in trying to understand the phenomenon of human language.

213

## II

A certain rift can also be noted within sociolinguistics itself as represented by its most influential research results, Labovian type studies – almost a synecdoche of the discipline – on the one hand, and some recent thinking on the other. It mainly concerns problems of the correlation of linguistic variables with social data and their explanation, and closely related to that,the problem of the causation of the variables and their variants.

In Labov's research procedure, which in many ways stands as the most impressive achievement in sociolinguistics, one of the important constructs, the speech community, is based primarily on linguistic features and on the idea of the linguistic consensus of its members. It covers a certain space inhabited by interacting individuals using different variants of established variables (eg. rotic and non-rotic pronunciation) with different frequencies (usually expressed in percentages) according to the speaker's social class. But in spite of the variation in their actual usage, the members of a community, presumably, agree in recognizing the prestigious variant and aim towards it in monitored speech that sometimes results in hypercorrection (which proves this hypothesis).

This model, known as the social consensus model, is rejected by some critics, because, in their opinion, it hardly explains the persistence of non-standard varieties and minority languages. If consensus regarding the norm existed, there would hardly be variation in language. In the opinion of these critics of the consensus model, only a different model, taking into consideration conflicts and divisions in society, would help explain the state of the affairs.

The maintenance of non-standard language would suggest resistance to change, which may emerge from the fact that the acceptance of a standard variety entails the change of identity, normally, a difficult step for a person to take.On the other hand, the maintenance of non-standard varieties can also result, for certain social groups, from lack of access or the difficulty of access to the standard form. The consensus model is also criticized because it stops at »empirical correlationism« (G. Williams, 1992) (a certain social group uses a certain percentage of a variant as distinguished from another social group) without being interested in explaining what causes established correlations within variables thus »...the whole exercise appears to be descriptive rather than analytical...the impression is that he (Labov, D. K.) merely seeks to describe the relationship between social and linguistic variables rather than employing one set of variables to explain the other«. (Williams 1992,79). At least one of the feminist critics of the consensus model went further as eg. in the statement that »the studies of 'difference'are not just disinterested quests

for truth, but in an unequal society inevitably have a political dimension« (Cameron, quoted by Chambers 1995, 130.)

The latter statement opens an important set of problems around the question whether linguistic scholars' task is limited to pointing out the truth or to getting involved into implementing their insight via public debates and directly influencing the non-academic sphere.[1]

In this second role of an 'activist' the scholar becomes an *intellectual* trying to employ his acumen in the solution of practical problems which may require other capabilities besides the specialization. Scholars in humanities face similar problems when they purport to become social critics as indicated in the following passage referring to historians:

»The authority of a scholar-as-intellectual derives from the alchemy between two not easily combined elements: on the one hand,the professionally validated command of a specialized discipline; on the other, the capacity and willingness to speak accessibly to non specialists on matters which can never be settled by expertise alone.« (Collini, 1995, 3)

The considerations sketched above seem to have inspired certain sociolinguists to turn »activists« and become involved in public debates connected with language, some of whom tend to corroborate their views with empirical and quantitative data obtained in their research, while others act as social critics relying on theoretically based statements concerning the social role of language. The contributions of both types of intervention in the debate sound academically plausible and relevant but rather vague when it comes to directions for implementation of their proposals in practice as eg. in teaching. What is more, their suggestions are often rejected by those for whose benefit they were made (like the use of the vernacular in the classroom).

A scholar wary of ephemeral ideological fashions when the so called »facts of language« are dealt with (particularly if she or he hails from social communities where linguistic political correctness changes overnight and the backlash may be round the corner) might tend to imagine and invoke the good old times when linguistic research results were of interest mainly to other linguists or philologists and their students.

But was there such a time? Linguists of yesteryear eg. historical philologists, after all, were at least partly responsible for the codification of a number of

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[1] Similar problems face a neighbouring discipline.

»The model of a research university which has been inherited from Humboldt and Berlin, has any academic addressing two audiences: students and research peers. Cultural studies has always had the Utopian desire of addressing other audiences...It should now be possible to think in terms of taking critical work to wider audiences across the range of media from museums to television.«

(C. MacCabe, TLS, My 26, 1995, 13)

European standard languages and contributed in creating »the image of the matter«. Although their historical linguistic acumen may have been instrumental in suggesting what they deemed to have been linguistically adequate solutions, it is hard to claim for a present-day linguist, informed by contemporary sociolinguistic thinking, that they were free from the bias deriving from their social and possibly political opinions. For an example of gradual change in social awareness of a linguist regarding the definitions of Received Pronunciation one has only to compare subsequent Introductions to Daniel Jones's »An Outline of English Phonetics«.

And one can find elsewhere in the writings of the philologists of the last and of the early 20th century a kind of exaggerated importance given to the established form of the standard language either ignoring its stratification or seeing in other varieties,including the inevitable and necessary change of the meaning of words, a kind of degeneration with an implication to the effect that these forms were used by unimportant, dubious social groups. (Crawley 1989). Dialects used to be studied as historical relics with very little attention to their communication load in comparison with the standard language.It was only with the »legitimization« of the study of varieties (registers,styles, sociolects,dialects) and their correlation with social groups and situational context – »once functional realities are brought into consideration« (Fishman 1970, 94) – that fresh ways of thinking about language and its social function were introduced.This encouraged an interest in language by other specialists, eg.sociologists and psychologists, and brought some of the linguistic problems to a wider public.

The exposure of linguists as committed intellectuals in the public debates about the English language gained a special intensity among the followers of Bloomfield's ideas particularly regarding the notion of correctness which he summarized in his article »Secondary and Tertiary Responses to Language«. Robert Hall held probably the most radical view in this group expressed in his book »Leave Your Language Alone« pointing out how certain prescriptive rules were in conflict with actual usage of the educated public, and very often the result of a whim of some influential literary personality.

We cannot now follow in detail this important excursion of linguists into public life, but its results as eg. a total distancing of linguists from anything smacking of prescriptivism in language matters, and the production of at least one important piece of lexicographical work along the line of this catholic approach to language varieties ie. The Third Webster International (1961), are worth mentioning. Intellectuals who opposed this, which is sometimes called,lesser-faire view, spoke of the 'abdication of authority'in language politics, characterising the attitude of these linguists towards Standard English by the exaggerated slogan »anything goes«. It may be of interest to mention here that attacks on the »permissive« approach came from both the conservatives and the liberals, including American Marxists (Bailey 1995, 606).

## III

In order to show what we consider to be the linguist in the role of intellectual activist, we shall now look at two examples of linguists' involvement: in one case, in a specific social action connected with the public policy on language and education, and in the other, in a general dispute along similar lines.

Linked to his research on the social stratification of English and on Black English Vernacular (BEV) which resulted in his criticism of the »language deficit« hypothesis and Bernstein's treatment of the »elaborated« and »restricted« codes, Labov testified with a group of linguists in a widely reported trial in the Federal Court at Ann Arbor, Michigan, brought by a group of parents of black children who were placed in classes for the retarded or the disabled owing to their poor reading ability. In this case sociolinguists made use of the accumulated knowledge resulting from some fifteen years of research on the varieties of English to put forward the thesis and prove the existence of a »language barrier« which makes it more difficult for black children to learn how to read than for their white peers. This language barrier was convincingly presented by producing data which showed that grammatical features, like verbal aspect, were so different in Black English Vernacular compared to Standard English that certain sentences simply couldn't be translated in a one-to-one fashion between the two varieties.[2] This might be due to the fact that there are alleged to be genetic differences between BEV and Standard English as the former presumably carries Creole features (eg.the trends in copula deletion) based on the Pidgin that black slaves used, and, apparently, close to the present day Carribean Creole.

The court ruled in favour of the plaintiffs and the teachers were to be instructed about the peculiarities of BEV that would presumably help change their attitude towards the reading and other linguistic difficulties of black children. The Federal Court ruling was later referred to in other schools undertaking similar steps. However, the lawsuit and the court decision found many enemies including members of the black community who maintained that the tolerance of »imperfect« English was a conspiracy to impose »relic of Slavery« on black children thus hindering their social prospects.

[2] A sentence which cannot be fully rendered in Standard English by the grammatical forms available to signal aspect would be the following:
»I`ll be done killed that motherfucker if he tries to lay a hand on my kid again«.
»This sentence cannot be translated by the future perfect »I wll have killed« (because) it functions as true future perfective and not as future relevant form. There is no one to one translation with other English dialects. The general meaning that we have to attribute to BEV be done is that it signals the perfect completion of the action rather than its relation to the state or event that follows« ( Labov 1982, 191–2)

We have selected this example of the social activity of linguists from 1979 especially because of its post hoc detailed analysis by Labov (1982). Analysing the whole issue Labov developed several principles which should guide linguists on when and how to intervene in social issues without sacrificing the principles of scientific objectivity.

Labov's readiness to get involved in social issues comes from his view of language and linguistics which differs, though it is not totally opposite, from the view of, what he calls, formal linguists. For him linguistics »is the study of an instrument of communication that is used in everyday life« adding that he would argue »that linguistic research applies to a good many of the questions facing contemporary society:...« (Labov 1982, 166) Formal linguists,however, consider their subject to be »basic research that will give us more knowledge about mankind – but has no immediate application to the problems that most people are worried about.« (Labov, 1982, 165)

Looking back on the sociolinguists' action at the Ann Arbor trial Labov formulated several principles to help scientists, when partaking in public policy disputes, being keenly aware that these are not carried out in the value-free atmosphere suitable to scientific research.

Among the principles that Labov suggests the most comprehensive seems to be the following:

»A scientist who becomes aware of a widespread idea or social practice with important consequences that is invalidated by his own data is obligated to bring this error to the attention of the widest possible audience.« (1982, 172)

But he makes it clear that once a scholar undertakes such a step he or she becomes involved in an adversary situation where his or her knowledge and even his or her honesty may be questioned.This of course may cause irritation and may result in bias in the presentation of scientific evidence.

Since the question of public policy concerning the English language and education is a crucial point in all disputes into which linguists take part as activists or committed intellectuals, another principle developed on this occasion by Labov may be quoted.It does not represent anything particularly new for linguists who have followed sociolinguistic thinking in the last couple of decades but it may be interesting as a crystallization of what sociolinguists consider important to emphasize out of their wide repertoire of ideas in this particular area.

Labov labels it the »principle of linguistic democracy« and he formulates it in this way:

»Linguists support the use of a standard dialect in so far as it is an instrument of wider communication for the general population, but oppose its use as a barrier to social mobility.«

This principle is based on the belief that the general prohibition against the use of the vernacular in the classroom is counterproductive in the acquisition of the Standard and in learning how to read and write.But this belief, close to the heart of many sociolinguists, is opposed by many teachers and public figures. The most these debates can do is to generate some doubt about the conventional wisdom concerning non-standard forms.

We shall leave Labov's analysis at this point and pass to our second example and that is the substance of a polemic between two outstanding British linguists who disagree in principle and do not cite the kind of data that were presented in the Ann Arbor Federal Court Trial, but operate with interesting anecdotal evidence.

In the *European English Messenger,* a periodical for university teachers of English in Europe( IV/1, 1995), Peter Trudgill mounted a bitter attack on 'dialect hostility' and thus 'lack of respect for language on our Continent', apparently, irritated by some members of the Conservative Government »who assert that all English schoolchildren should be forced to speak Standard English.«

The text is obviously meant as a contribution to the public debate on how to teach English in British schools aimed probably at Eng.lit. academic colleagues,since most of the evidence used is already familiar to English language specialists who follow Trudgill's and other sociolinguists' work. Actually, some of the identical evidence has been repeated in various British and American works, since Bloomfield and the Post-Bloomfieldians. They had been critical of the exaggerated and linguistically unanalysed importance accorded to the Standard Language,which they often ostentatiously labelled Standard Dialect.

Trudgill reminds his readers that

– all dialects of English are equally complex, expressive, grammatical and not a series of errors as mistaken assumption would have it;

– lack of respect for dialects, except for the Standard language, is found among the intelligentsia, the literati, journalists and politicians,where one would least expect it;

– the process of linguistic homogenization is the cause of language and dialect deaths which is a cultural tragedy;

– dialect death may cause communication problems in points where dialect continuum enabled people to communicate across state frontiers as in the case of the Netherlands and Germany, while the standard languages have broken the continuum and made the communication more difficult;

– the way of combatting minority languages and dialect hostility is to engender positive ideas about these languages and dialects so that speakers should not feel

that their vernacular dialects are linguistically inferior (as they have become so socially) and that natural transmission of these varieties to the next generation should be warranted;

– to combat the view that dialects are old-fashioned, unsophisticated divisive and economically disadvantageous is to point to the three richest European countries, Luxembourg,Switzerland and Norway, all of them dialect-speaking and dialect preserving countries;

– the myth that dialects are inadequate to use for intellectual purposes can be refuted by observing two Swiss German professors of philosophy discussing the work of Heidegger who will combine the use of appropriate philosophical vocabulary with Swiss German dialect pronunciation and grammar;

– Standard English is a social dialect which gives immediate advantage to the pupils who use it at home.

The duty of sociolinguists,as Trudgill obviously understands it is to help the jeopardized languages and dialects to survive.[3]

Trudgill is a representative of a line of British sociolinguists who believe that the dialects may be preserved and that the conventional wisdom on this topic, which he deems erroneous, can be modified or subverted. He also looks at the problems in an international and intercultural framework.

However, looking at the statements of English philologists of the 19th and early 20th century we shall see that a number or the majority of them looked at the homogenization process as inevitable even if some of them expressed or implied regret with regard to that process. (Crawley 1989)

Randolph Quirk and Gabriele Stein in their response to Trudgill's article, in the following issue of the same periodical (IV/2 1995), seem to follow the »canonical« approach. Quirk and Stein keep away from the international topics and generalizations concerning the problems of dialect death and defend the idea of a sensitive teaching of the standard grammar and vocabulary insisting that the National Curriculum expressly admits the possibility for Standard English being expressed in a variety of accents (which apparently Trudgill did not note in the National Curriculum directions).

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[3] The gist of Trudgill`s standpoint may be seen from the following statement:
»If individuals suffer discrimination from racism, we do not suggest that they change their race, although there has been a long and sad history of Black people doing their best to look like white people. If individuals suffer discrimination as a result of sexism, we do not suggest they change sex, although there have been celebrated cases in history of women pretending to be men to counter prejudice. If individuals suffer  discrimination because of the dialect they speak, then it is the discrimination that should be stamped out, not the dialects.« (Trudgill 1995, 46)

One point which seems to divide the two sides in the dispute are the two different approaches to Standard English. For Trudgill it is an elitist social dialect (which automatically puts the middle and upper class children in an advantageous position at school since they are its native speakers). Quirk refuses, and has always done so in his writings, to accept this view and sees the Standard (but not RP) as an instrument for general wider communication, now even world-wide communication, which would be difficult to label a social dialect. Discouraging schoolchildren from learning Standard English would mean leaving them »trapped...into a parochialism that would inhibit geographical and occupational mobility«.

They also voiced the well known and very effective if not devastating evidence against those who tend to frown at corrections in pupils use of language (often heard in Britain at meetings between practical teachers and sociolinguists), namely, that some sociolinguists seem prepared to deny the schoolchildren the command of the variety they themselves are so proficient in.[4]

## IV

We have said at the beginning that sociolinguistics offers an opportunity to air many problems of language in society or language and society which were avoided earlier and not considered academically important.In the cases that we discussed we described a dispute on language public policy obviously grounded in two different linguistic ideologies, one of which has been the product of sociolinguistic thinking, the other representing something as 'conventional wisdom' and a continuation of British and American philological tradition. They may also be grounded in a deeper difference where one side sees language as a natural part of life like breathing , the other sees it as serving consciously artificial and high culture purposes, where one carefully selects every element in speech and especially writing to bring it as close as possible to the precision that one feels such texts require. Perhaps in the latter view lies the answer to the question why such importance is accorded to elaborated standard language by »the intelligentsia, the literati, the journalists, the politicians« (specified by Trudgill) and their lack of tolerance, or simply lack of interest, for non-standard forms close to spontaneous speech.

[4] »Disdain of elitism is a comfortable exercise for those who are themselves surely among the elite, but we cannot believe that Trudgill is content to disallow the masses to emulate the medium of communication that he has chosen for himself.« (Stein and Quirk, 1995, 62).

In the debate reviewed the idea of consciously supported bidialectalism has been mentioned only once, and the present writer sees this as the way to the practical solution of the problem. Many intelligent teachers seem to have instinctively resorted to it[5] whether or not they have been enlightened by sociolinguistics, Labov's principles of democracy, Bernstein's doctrine of restricted and elaborated codes, Trudgill's 'covert prestige' or Quirk's conviction of the vital importance of Standard English.

Concerning descriptivists and activists in linguistics, one would certainly agree with the principles formulated by Labov that a scholar should intervene in social issues relying on his research results. What he seems to take for granted is that this intervention takes place in a community where different opinions about a social problem, well corroborated, are seen to be in a useful competition. However, in different social systems, like those where the powers that be use all possible means to stifle opinions that they do not favour, even those about language, considering them a priori inimical, a clear and readable description is as far as a scholar can go hoping that the results of their research will, if applicable to social issues, still come to the attention of the general public. Looking at the problem in this way the weakness of generalizations based on »monolingual sociolinguistics« arises, namely, scholars's participation in social issues is closely linked to the culture (civil, social, political etc.) of their community.

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[5] Quirk quotes a newspaper report about a President of the National Union of Teachers who »told of a visiting inspector who called at a school where the local dialect was the daily mode of communication. He asked one boy to recite a poem. On rising to do so, the pupil looked at his teacher and asked `Have we to swank a bit, Miss?`«

No matter what interpretation one can give to this detail there is no doubt that the teacher allowed the use of the local variety but taught her pupils the standard for the appropriate »swanking« situations. (Quirk, 1962, 70)

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DESKRIPTIVISTI ILI DRUŠTVENI AKTIVISTI: JEDNA DILEMA U SOCIOLINGVISTICI

Autor se na početku prigodno osvrće na nastavu sociolingvistike u Odsjeku za anglistiku, da bi zatim okarakterizirao razliku između sociolingvistike i suvremene lingvističke matice, generativne lingvistike, u kojoj za sociolingvistiku nema mjesta. Sociolingvistika nije jedinstvena. Pored najpoznatijeg pravca koji dovodi u suodnos jezične varijabile i društvene slojeve, razvila se i kritika tog pravca da je isključivo deskriptivan i ne objašnjava pojave. Kritika tvrdi da ne postoji konsensus prema normi u jezičnim zajednicama, jer kad bi tako bilo, varijabilnost bi izostala. Varijabilnost jezične uporabe, koja se tvrdoglavo održava, treba tumačiti drutvenim suprotnostima. U oba ova pravca, za razliku od čistih lingvista, sociolingvisti se upuštaju u društvene rasprave kad je u pitanju jezik. Nastupajući u sudskom procesu u kojemu je s drugim sociolingvistima trebao svjedočiti da neuspjeh crnačke djece u školi u Ann Arboru, ne proizlazi iz njihove zaostalosti već iz jezične barijere između dva lingvistička sustava, Labov je razvio i neke principe koje bi znanstvenik trebao slijediti u takvim društvenim aktivnostima da ne iznevjeri znanstvenu istinu. Drugi slučaj koji ilustrira lingviste u drutvenim rasprama jest polemika između

223

sociolingvista Trudgilla i gramatičara Quirka i Stein. Prema autoru u ovoj se debati naziru dvije ideologije standardnoga jezika, jezika kao prirodnog instrumenta komunikacije nasuprot visoko razrađenom sredstvu za precizno komuniciranje u području visoke kulture. U zaključku se autor vraća na principe koje je razradio Labov i naglašuje da su takvi principi primjenjivi u stabilnim kulturama gdje se intelektualni argument prihvaća u javnosti prema njegovoj održivosti, a teško obranjivi u nestabilnim društvenim uvjetima gdje jedna ideologija zamjenjuje suprotnu pa se uvlači u sve društvene pore uključujući i stav prema jeziku. U tim uvjetima i akademski ograničen deskriptivan rad može dati nekih javnih rezultata. Dakle sociolingvistika ne smije biti monolingvalna već usporedna, da bi obuhvatila različite društvene uvjete u jezičnim zajednicama u kojima sociolingvist djeluje.