Chapter 7

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# Conceptual Problems in the Study of Regional and Cultural Style

## 0. Style and linguistic variation

These comments are specifically addressed to the study of Berlin style and register by WACHS, SCHLOBINSKI & DITTMAR, but since that study raises quite general issues about how the study of distinctive verbal styles should be conducted, I shall try to draw out the general methodological problems that beset any study of this kind, and for which, at present, we seem hardly to have adequate solutions. I shall concentrate on the attempt made in that study to characterize 'Berlin wit', or the mixture of verbal aggression and inventiveness that seems characteristic (and indeed is stereotypical) of Berliners.[1]

The authors are to be congratulated for insisting that we pay attention to phenomena that we are inclined to brush under the rug because we don't really know how to study them. They remind us forcibly that *there is more to language variation than just the superficial phonological and morphosyntactic variables* that have been the focus of sociolinguistic studies of urban dialects. The additional elements are, to put it loosely, *patterns of language usage*, that is, patterns of message-construction, of preferred syntactic constructions, of verbal routines; in short, in a very broad sense, matters of *style and register*.

However, good hunches can have disasterous theoretical consequences, as witness BERNSTEIN's (1971) attempts to conceptualize class-stratified patterns of language use (ably criticized by COULTHARD (1969), DITTMAR (1976) and others). It is therefore important to try and get conceptual

clarification in this area. However, this is not easy, as is made clear by the uncertain and various uses of the terms 'style' and 'register', to which we should turn.

## 1. Muddles in the models: what should we mean by 'style'?

Sociolinguists are of course not the only scholars interested in the characterization of style, and thought on the subject in literary analysis and rhetoric goes back at least as far as Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. But perhaps I may be forgiven for synthesizing (and radically oversimplifying) what one might term a *traditional approach to style* (the little book by N.E. ENKVIST, 1973, is very helpful here). On this view, we can perhaps characterize the nature of style along the following lines:

1. Style is about *form* and not *content*, a distinction that presupposes that we can compare different ways of saying the 'same thing'. 'Form' is to be characterized across *all the linguistic levels*, from paralanguage, to prosodics, to phonetics, to phonology, to morphology, to syntax and lexicon (as for example, in CRYSTAL & DAVY, 1969).

2. Style is largely a matter of *tendencies*, rather than strict co-occurrence constraints. It is thus to be characterized as a distinctive set of preferences in 'form', or a distinctive cross-level assemblage of prosodic, phonetic, lexical and syntactic features.

3. Style is explicitly, or more often, implicitly, an inherently *comparative* concept. Any isolation of a specific style presuppose a benchmark *norm* against which that style is observably distinctive.

4. Styles correlate with *contexts*, whether those are viewed primarily in terms of the producer (or author), the audience (or interlocutor, or reader), or the social situation (or event).

   All of this is eminently sensible, and close to the ordinary ('lay') use of the term 'style', which is, after all, part of our everyday metalanguage. But from a sociolinguistic perspective, this traditional concept of style will hardly serve to distinguish style from other linguistic and sociolinguistic concepts like *dialect, diglossic level, genre*, or *code* as in *code-switching*.

   We therefore turn to the sociolinguistic literature in search of a technical concept of style. But there seems to be some very fundamental confusion, or at least disagreement, in that literature about what we should mean by 'style' and 'register'. First, there is a relatively well-defined notion of style in correlational sociolinguistics, namely the Labovian concept of style as the linguistic reflexes of *degree of attention to speech* (LABOV, 1972a: Ch. 3).

This has been operationalized, for the purpose of sociolinguistic interview techniques, as the distinctions between reading styles, word-citation styles, and more casual styles of varying degrees (as elicited by asking for certain kinds of absorbing narrative). There are reasons to doubt that the linguistic reflexes thereby induced are really unitary phenomena; for example, DRESSLER & WODAK (1982), in a study of Viennese German, were able to tease apart the 'natural' phonological processes of fortition from the switch to prestige phonological variants, both to be found in 'formal style' (high degree of attention to speech). In any case, this notion of style, although relatively clear, is also relatively irrelevant to our problem, the characteriza- tion of distinctive patterns of language-use, message construction and verbal routines. For one thing, this notion of style is unidimensional (from 'casual' to 'formal') while the phenomena we wish to charaterize are multidimensional (e.g. 'aggressive' vs. 'friendly' style, as well as 'preaching style' vs. 'disc-jockey style', etc.). Secondly, since all speakers move along this one dimension (so that one can talk of shared 'channel cues' for 'casual' speech, for example), it is not clear how this concept of style could be used to pick out, e.g., the distinctiveness of 'Berlin wit'.

In short, the Labovian notion of style is tangential to our problem. It may be related, in that certain styles in our broad sense may only or mostly occur in certain styles in the narrow Labovian sense, but we can expect no greater relevance than that.[2] We turn therefore to another 'technical' sociolinguistic concept, *register*, which is often equated with style. Halliday, who seems to have originated the sociolinguistic use of the term, charac- terizes register in opposition to dialect thus: while dialect is variation correlated with *users*, register is variation correlated with *uses* (HALLIDAY, McINTOSH & STREVENS, 1964). However, we see immediately that this definition effectively makes 'Berlin wit' a matter of dialect, and in no way helps us to distinguish a special kind of linguistic variation or patterning, let alone characterize it.

One of the problems here, of course, is that all sociolinguistic concepts are unholy mixtures of *formal* (linguistic) and *functional* (social/contextual) criteria — this is no less true of concepts like 'language' ("a dialect with

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2 There is a different concept of 'style' introduced in LABOV & FANSHEL, 1977, which may be of more relevance. In an analysis of a therapeutic interview, while noting that style in the narrow sense is held pretty much constant throughout (p. 115n), they point out that one can detect switches from 'narrative style' to 'interview style' to 'family style' which correspond with 'fields of discourse'. But although we are offered phonological and lexical features of these 'styles' (p. 129f.), no clear characterization of this additional concept of style is given.

an army, a navy and a flag" as the saying goes), than of the less clear notions with which we are grappling. Thus a textbook treatment of the distinctions between dialect, diglossic level, lexical register and style might be based on a number of binary formal and functional criteria, as in Table 7.1. Here Halliday's functional distinction between variation with respect to 'use' vs. 'users' provides one dimension of contrast, while other dimensions are given by (a) the formal distinction between rule-governed (systemic) pattern vs. mere preferential usage, and (b) the formal distinction between patterns that have to be stated across linguistic levels and those that can be stated at just one level (as perhaps with 'argot', 'jargon' and lexical register). On such a treatment, style will be defined as a distinctive preferred pattern of use *within* a set of rules (at all linguistic levels) that specify a dialect, which correlates more with uses than users.

|  | Dialect | Accent | Diglossia | Register | Style |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Functional: use (vs. users) | — | — | + | + | + |
| Systemic: rules | + | + | + | + | — |
| usage | — | — | — | +? | + |
| Levels: cross (vs. uni-level) | + | — | + | — | + |

Table 7.1: Features of the variation of style

This is all laughably inadequate in relation to the complexities of the phenomena, and in any case the notion of a *variable rule* will render the distinction between rule-governed pattern and usage-preferences quite obscure.

One response to these difficulties is to abandon the formal criteria altogether, and define style and register purely on functional grounds, as any kind of distinctive linguistic variant appropriate to, or correlated with, a specific kind of social situation (viewed, for example, in terms of HYMES (1972) characterization of speech events). We would then talk about individuals' *linguistic repertoires* (GUMPERZ, 1968) as consisting of stylistic variants used in specific speech events. Such a notion of style would not contrast directly with dialect, digossic level, or even language, etc., since any of those could effectively function as stylistic variants.

Although such a purely functional view is certainly a useful perspective, it does not solve our problem of course — how to define a notion of style or register (or call it what you will) that will capture patterns of language

use that are not part of a dialect but are typical and distinctive of speakers of a dialect.

There is, finally, a sociolinguistic notion of style based directly on the traditional notion, namely the view of style characterized in terms of choice between *linguistic alternates* (on the paradigmatic dimension) and in terms of limitations of choice specified as *co-occurrence constraints* (on the syntagmatic dimension), a view crystallized nicely by ERVIN-TRIPP (1972). This view shares with the traditional view an inability to make the distinctions between dialect, diglossic level, style, etc., which led us to turn to the sociolinguistic literature in the first place.

The point of rehearsing these difficulties is just to make the point that sociolinguistics does not provide a clear notion of style and register (at least, not of the desired kind). The absence could, and should, be seen as a severe failing. I wish now to pursue just one of the underlying sources of conceptual confusion in this area, a conceptual problem which I feel is especially pertinent and troublesome to the Berlin study.


## 2. A conceptual dilemma: two views about the nature of sociolinguistics

Conceptual confusion about the nature of style can in part, I shall argue, be attributed to a more general sociolinguistic schizophrenia, a deep ambivalence between two rather different ways of thinking about linguistic variation. The dilemma is which of these ways of thinking is right.

One horn of the dilemma is a view of sociolinguistics that makes absolutely central the concept of the *sociolinguistic alternate* (as e.g. in ERVIN-TRIPP, 1972). A sociolinguistic alternate is, of course, one of two more linguistic forms that are in paradigmatic opposition and *express the same meaning* or at least *perform the same function* (there is an important slippage between moving from 'meaning' to 'function', to which I shall return). Classic examples are Labov's sociolinguistic variables (class-stratified realizations of phonological and morpho-syntactic variants), Brown and Gilman's polite vs. familiar pronouns of address (and indeed all address forms), Fergusons's diglossic levels, even Gumperz's codes in code-switching situations.

Why should the notion of sociolinguistic alternate be so central? The rationale, presumably, goes like this: if two variants V1 and V2 express the same meaning M1, then any difference in *value* or *use* must be purely social — that is, be attributable to contextual factors (like speaker's social identity, or the relationship between speaker and addressee) rather than to

message content. If this is indeed the rationale, it is not actually all that clear, because it will only be by the definition of what counts as 'meaning' that M1 will exclude an indication of, say, speaker identity. However, an example will immediately make the idea plausible again: suppose V1 is *ain't* and V2 *aren't*, and that in the appropriate linguistic environments they both mean 'are not' (there'd be a parallel but distinct pair *ain't* and *hasn't*, etc.; see CHESHIRE, 1982). But suppose further that *ain't* expresses emphatic negation, so that it is, for example, the preferred way to deny propositions put forward by an interlocutor (this may be counterfactual for working class (WC) British speakers, but is possibly correct for those middle class (MC) speakers who use it occasionally). Now suppose we find (as Cheshire has) that V1 is favoured by WC speakers. Since V1 is (on our hypothesis) emphatic, we do not know for certain whether WC speakers are simply more emphatic more of the time (perhaps accusations are more common and so the corresponding denials are too), or whether V1 is a true sociolinguistic alternate, directly indicating WC speaker identity. For this reason, two variants V1 and V2 only count as sociolinguistic alternates if they express exactly the same meaning M1.

Now, as pointed out by LAVANDERA (1978) and others, this criterion of synonymity of variants makes difficult the extension of the notion of sociolinguistic alternate from phonological variables to morphosyntactic variables, where subtle shades of meaning difference may distinguish between the variants.[3] Lexical alternates will be even harder to match exactly in meaning, let alone matters of style and register operating simultaneously at many different levels of linguistic realization. Further, as pointed out in painstaking detail by LYONS (1977), the notion of synonymity is itself not a straightforward concept: we must distinguish synonymy in all contexts (perhaps *jumper/pullover*) from synonymy in some contexts (*big house/large house*) but not others (*big sister/large sister*), cognitive synonymy from affective or connotational synonymy (*horse/steed*), and so on. And however we define the notion of synonymity it must exclude 'social meanings' while not referring to them (that would make the definition of 'sociolinguistic alternate' circular).

A further difficulty is the extension from sameness of meaning to sameness of *function*. It seems plausible enough: just as the French may indicate politeness by a choice of a polite pronoun *Vous*, so the English

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[3] Unless we exclude non-segmental phonology of some kinds, the notion of a phonological variable won't be that clear either; contrastive stress, for example, will make a meaning difference between two variants of the same vowel.

may choose a complex request form like *Would you by any chance be able to change this pound note* (as opposed to, say, *Please change this pound note*). What stays constant now is not meaning in the narrow sense but illocutionary (or at least perlocutionary) force. Similarly we might compare *hey* vs. *excuse me* as forms performing the same function, a summons, although it is far from clear what meaning, if any, *hey* (for example) has. Instead then of requiring sameness of meaning, we will demand identity of function, and using this criterion we can ask how various identical functions (they might be requesting, summonsing, greeting, etc.) are differentially realized by persons of different social identity, or persons of the same social identity in different social situations, etc. Plausible though the extension seems, it is fraught with difficulty, for if functions are allowed to become very abstract (like 'having a chat') almost anything can be subsumed under them as alternates.

I raise these difficulties for what I shall call *the alternates view* because they do not seem to have been properly thought through. Nevertheless, I assume there is something basically right about this whole approach to the subject, even if it is not entirely clear why! On this view, *sociolinguistics is the study of different realizations of the same meaning or function,* and the study of style and register would be the study of different ways of saying the same thing *within* a dialect, a repertoire, or other restriction.

Let us turn now to the other horn of the dilemma, a view of sociolinguistics that would make absolutely central the *cultural relativity of linguistic functions.* This view is familiar from the work called 'ethnography of speaking', instigated especially by HYMES (1974), where the emphasis is on the cultural uniqueness and distinctiveness of speech acts, speech events and verbal routines. Again, to see the plausibility of this view, consider an example: the Tamils of South India have a special kind of spirit possession, where roving forest demons inhabit the body of some luckless woman, who is then brought to the temple of a particular deity to be exorcised. The resultant speech event is very interesting for a theory of communication because the woman's speech is not attributed to her, but to the demon, and words addressed to her carry the honorifics appropriate to the possessor and not to the possessed — in short the notions of speaker and addressee are shown to be more complex than one might have thought (LEVINSON (in press)). The associated speech acts are specialized speech functions; invocations, spells, exorcisms, etc. Clearly this is exotic enough, and distinctive by virtue of the *absence* of any thing like it in our own culture. We can easily enough find the reverse case, as for example the notable absence in some cultures (as among Guugu Yimidhirr speakers of

Cape York; BROWN & LEVINSON, in prep.) of the kinds of greetings and partings that punctuate interactions in our own culture.

In short we find that tribe A has speech function F1 and tribe B has no corresponding function, but a unique function F2. F1 and F2 are quite incommensurable, but are each interesting in their own right. The study of distinctive *verbal routines* (as in LABOV's (1972b) Black American 'rules for ritual insults', or IRVINE's (1974) elaborate Wolof greeting formulae) would fall within this way of thinking. So here is another paradigm: *sociolinguistics is the study of the cultural distinctiveness of speech functions*. There is no necessity for the comparision of two or more different realizations of the same function or meaning — we are interested precisely in the unique and incomparable.

I now suggest that the Berlin study of style and register falls directly in the middle of the two horns. On the one hand, Berliners can be said to have an aggressive style by virtue of, for example, the unmitigated realization of requests (i.e. for the same speech function, requesting, there are a number of alternate possible realizations, and Berliners chose a distinctive variant). On the other hand, Berliners seem to have some distinctive speech functions, for example, they appear to pick quarrels and bluff their way through them, and then boast about them, in a way that is perhaps as culturally specific as Labov's Black American verbal routines of ritual insult.

The question is which horn to choose? It is an important choice because the two views about sociolinguistics have *quite different methodological conse-quences*. Under the first view, which focuses on the notion of the sociolin-guistic alternate, the following methodological procedures are applicable: (a) If one is to compare V1 with V2 as alternative realizations, it is essential to check for sameness of meaning or function (even in the most empirical work, this is done intuitively). It is essential to check that they are not in 'complementary distribution', i.e. it is essential that they both could have occured in the same syntagmatic slot, i.e. are not determined by collocation or syntagmatic rule.

When we move from sameness of meaning to sameness of function, intuitions of sameness are more shaky: we must then attempt to *standardize* the speech functions that we are interested in, by looking at highly constrained situations. BROUWER et al. (1979), for example, compared men's and women's relationship of the same speech functions in a railway ticket office.

(b) Ultimately, though, we have no great interest in the speech functions differentially realized, except in so far as we need to understand them in

order to be sure that they are held constant while we vary the realizations. So, for example, we would have no great interest in the underlying sequence of speech actions in the Berliner's reported quarrels: we are interested only in how the threats, insults, etc., are *realized* (in the Berlin case, realized in what we may call 'Berlin brutal style').˙

(c) If V1 and V2 realize the same speech function, we must now look for the social value of each realization (or *connotation* to use Bierwisch's terminology) by examining the contexts of use. We are therefore obliged to use techniques of *comparision* and *social distribution* (does speaker A of social category 1 use the same variant as speaker B of social category 2, etc.). Of course, it is no good comparing speakers A and B where they do not belong in some important way to the same speech system, or *speech community* viewed exactly and only in the way Labov insists, as a community united by shared speech values or *connotations* (cf. Schlobinski's (or Gumperz's) definition in terms of shared behaviour — useless in this context). For the method is strictly Saussurean: V1 and V2 may not contrast at the level of meaning, in some strict sense, but to be sociolinguistic alternates they must indeed contrast *for the body of speakers who use either V1 or V2 or both* at the level of value or connotation or social significance.

In the case of Berlin style, then, we must compare our 'brutal' realizations of requests, threats and insults, in two kinds of social populations; first, we need to know the *distribution* of these realizations throughout the Berlin community, East, West, male, female, young and old, working class and middle class, etc. Perhaps 'Berlin brutal style' is *internally distinctive*, associated with middle aged lower middle class male proprietors, and is in opposition to, say, delicate female speech, or upper middle class punctilious courtesy. Secondly, though, we need to bear in mind that the style might be contrastive in another larger speech community of values; for example, it might be in symbolic opposition to peasant taciturn politeness in the immediate rural environs, or to rival realizations in the nearest great cities. In this case; the opposition would be 'insiders' vs. 'outsiders', as in the Martha's Vineyard study (LABOV, 1972a: Ch. 1). But there is no particular point in comparing Berlin style to, say, Mannheim style (KALLMEYER & KEIM, this volume) without a theory about how these two communities might be in symbolic opposition within a speech community of shared evaluations of stylistic variants.

(d) Finally, there is no special interest, within the alternates perspective, in matters of *motivation*: it is silly to ask *why* Group A uses variant V1 and Group B uses variant V2, and not vice-versa, for in the best Saussurean sense V1 and V2 are *arbitrary* carriers of social value. This does not, of

course, mean that an interesting historical account cannot be given associating groups with variants, as has indeed been done, e.g., for the New York /r/; but this account will only make clear, by the typical oscillations that variants have as positively valued in one era and negatively in the next, how essentially arbitrary the values of each variant are (LABOV, 1972a; DOWNES, 1984: 112ff.).

Turning now to the other view, the approach from the ethnography of speaking, we can see that the methodological consequences are quite different:

(a) Instead of looking for sociolinguistic alternates, we should look for verbal routines and stylistic elements that are distinctive of, and possibly *unique* to, Berliners. We do not need to control for sameness of meaning or function: we are interested precisely in distinctive functions.

(b) By the same token, we are interested not just in surface realizations of underlying meanings or functions, but in the underlying meanings or functions themselves. Thus, studying the reported quarrels which, it is claimed, make up part of Berlin style, we would be interested not just in how the reported threats, etc., are realized, but also in the way the narrative is constructed at the level of speech acts and their chaining — perhaps there are special sequences of speech actions distinctive of the style.

(c) On this approach, there is no essential methodological reason (as there is on the alternates approach) to be especially interested in matters of *comparison* and *distribution*. For example, the description of Tamil spirit-possession does not essentially rely on a comparison of spirit-possessions in different milieu or by different practitioners; we only need to know whether some performance is more or less representative of a class of events. Nor do we absolutely need to know exactly who gets possessed or why; the social distribution of possession is a secondary question, best left to a mode of analysis that mixes psychoanalysis and the study of stress in social relationships. In fact, Tamil spirit possessions are both highly visible and distinctive affairs and highly restricted by time, place, personnel and event. Their distributional rarity is quite beside the point. In an exactly similar way, some of the extreme exemplars of 'Berlin wit' might be highly visible, stereotypical and distinctive, yet only exercised by forty year old male proprietors (as in the recorded examples)![4]

(d) Unlike on the alternates approach, on the ethnographic approach we have every reason to be interested in the social *motivation* of distinctive

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[4] Some aspects of this way in which 'high profile' speech habits may lead to the attribution of cultural 'ethos' by outside observers are discussed in BROWN & LEVINSON, 1978: 248ff.

realizations and functions. It makes perfect sense to ask why the natives have some particular verbal routine, to ask what social purpose it fulfills and how it fits into the details of the local social organization. Indeed, on this view, this is an essential series of questions. There is no assumption of arbitrariness, crucial on the alternates view.

So, which is the right approach? We had better make up our minds, as we shall go about our investigations in quite different ways depending on the line we take. I suppose most sociolinguists, like myself, will find our Labovian instincts (which after all are essentially based on the Saussurean or structuralist axiom of contrast within a paradigmatic set) in favour of the alternates approach. But it is interesting to consider what happens if we suppress them. In this regard, an abortive study of my own may be instructive.

Emulating LABOV's (1972a) ingenious study of variables in New York department stores, we set out to study whether there are any class-stratified aspects of pragmatics. In a small English city, a wired-up investigator went into twenty seven shops, all specializing in male attire, carefully class stratified on the basis of objective criteria, including price of goods, location, advertising and style of window display. It was possible also to take into account not only the sex, age and dress of the shops assistants, but also their accents, from marked hyper-RP, through RP, to local regional. The investigator attempted to use the same initial greeting and request forms in all the shops, viz, "Hello, I was looking for a pullover". We were hoping, as on the alternates approach, to hold function constant in this highly restricted setting, so that different class-stratified realizations of greetings, requests, offers of service, etc., could be studied. This method worked to some limited extent in some of the shops, and we found reliable class-stratified differences in some of the opening moves. Thus, the entrance of the investigator (potential customer) operated as a summons, to which the shop assistant responded with an answer which doubled as a greeting, and an offer to serve; in high class stores, the token was 'Good morning' (or 'good afternoon' as appropriate), in middle ranking stores it was more often 'Hello, can I help you', in lower ranking stores the greetings were more often absent as in 'Can I help you?' (even more often, there was no verbal response at all, as I shall describe). The address forms that accompanied these predictably varied from "sir" at one end of the spectrum to "love" or "dear" at the other. At this point, our investigator said his prepared line, "Hello, I was looking for a pullover". And at this point too our study foundered, for there were two quite different interpretations of this utterance: in the higher ranking stores it was taken

to request the initiation of an exclusive dyadic service interchange (one might gloss the apparent implicature as "Please help me select a pullover"), while in the lower ranking stores it was taken to be simply a request for information, receiving responses of the kind "Over there behind the jackets". And from there on, the verbal interactions in the two kinds of store diverged in incommensurable ways.

What had gone wrong of course was that, despite the restricted setting, the kinds of speech functions relevant to shops of different kinds had diverged and become irreconcilably different. For in the higher and middle ranking shops there was a quite different definition of the activity or speech event: customer and assistant expect to be paired in an intense and prolonged verbal interaction which will only cease when the customer leaves, satisfied or dissatisfied. In the lower ranking stores, there was no such expectation, for they are organized on a self-service basis; customers can enter, look through the merchandise and leave without a word having been spoken. Even when interaction is initiated by the customer, there are no greetings, and minimal help is given. From this basic distinction between service-stores and self-service stores (and there are gradations in between), all sorts of structural concomitants follow: the goods are displayed differently, access to goods is restricted or open, but above all the roles of customer and assistant are differently defined, so that in the higher ranking store the customer expects help, advice and even aesthetic judgements, while in the lower ranking store he can expect only to have goods pointed out, and to be suspiciously surveilled. From these structural facts, the quite different and incommensurable speech functions attended to in verbal interaction naturally follow.

With such divergence in function, there was no hope of studying variant realizations of the same function. And so, in the grip of the alternates approach, I abandoned the study. But I now wonder if this was not a serious error. For if we suppress the differences of speech function, and restrict ourselves to studying circumstances which are strictly commensurable, what we are doing is *divorcing sociolinguistics from the study of social practice*. For what could be a more direct and systematic relation between social class and language than the chain of connections through class, the economics of different kinds of shops, the consequent differences in store-organization, to the kinds of verbal routine appropriate in the different kinds of shop? Perhaps we could formulate a counter-manifesto to the alternates approach along these lines: the alternates view, by insisting on studying only variants of identical meanings and functions (in which it has no intrinsic interest), threatens to sanitize and sterilize sociolinguistics,

divorcing it from the study of social life and the different social worlds that construct different speech functions.[5]

I have tried to argue that there are pro's and con's to both the alternates approach and the ethnography of speaking approach. In the study of style, I think we must be open to both approaches, but given the divergent methodological consequences of each approach, we cannot afford to be carelessly eclectic. It is *essential* to be clear about whether, in a particular case, one is handling phenomena that are best treated as different realizations of the same function, or are best treated as distinct and incommensurable functions.

## 3. Application of these remarks to the Berlin study

### 3.1 Vacillation between the two views of sociolinguistics?

In the report on Berlin style and register, WACHS, SCHLOBINSKI & DITTMAR argue that Berlin 'loud-mouthed' style was especially evident in their tapes in a recurrent genre, where the speaker reports a quarrel or argument in which he defeats an opponent. (It is important here of course to distinguish reported arguments or quarrels from real ones - a matter to which I'll return.)

In this study the authors employ the following methods:

(1) Just half a dozen reported quarrels from just two speakers constitute the data. Such a qualitative rather than quantitative selection will be fine on the 'ethnography of speaking' view outlined above, but it is likely to be judged inadequate evidence on the 'alternates' view. For, on the latter perspective, we require comparative evidence for the distinctiveness of this particular realization or variant of a speech function: we want to know about what this variant contrasts with, and the distribution of all these different realizations throughout the social population for whom the various variants are in paradigmatic contrast (i.e. within the speech community in the strictly Labovian sense).

(2) The characterization of the reported quarrels employs the speech act categories of LABOV & FANSHEL (1977). If we ask what the purpose of these categorizations are, we would obtain different responses according

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[5] An example of the kind of work that would be legitimated by our counter-manifesto would be the well-known analysis by EHLICH & REHBEIN 1972 of the way in which verbal interaction in a restaurant is structured by the economic, social and ideological factors that lie behind the institution of the restaurant itself.

to which view of sociolinguistics was adopted. On the alternates view, we have no intrinsic interest in the speech acts or functions at all, for we are interested only in distinctive realizations of the same functions; the only point in assigning speech acts to utterances would be in order to hold functions constant while comparing realizations. On the ethnography of speaking viewpoint, though, we should be interested in the functions themselves, either on the grounds that they might individually be distinctive and unique to Berliners, or because they are 'chained' in distinctive and uniquely Berliner *sequences* of speech acts. The authors though are mute on the rational behind their employment of the LABOV & FANSHEL categories; they are caught, I suspect, on the horns of our dilemma.

(3) The mode of expression of certain speech acts is carefully noted. For example, one source of the impression of aggressiveness is the 'aggrevated' realization of request and threats, in contrast to the normal 'mitigation' of such speech acts (for three different kinds of account see LABOV & FANSHEL, 1977: 84ff.; BROWN & LEVINSON, 1978; LEVINSON, 1983: 332fff.). In employing this kind of methodology, comparing contrastive realizations of the same speech acts, we seem to be firmly within the alternates perspective.

(4) Finally, they relate the 'Berlin brutal style', as I have called it, to the competitiveness of the city-dweller, and the associated importance of negotiated social roles. In other words, the authors assume that the style is *not arbitrary*, but is rather motivated by the social conditions of inner city Berlin life. Here, by contrast, we seem to be equally firmly within the ethnography of speaking perspective, since it makes no sense to seek synchronic motivations for arbitrary sociolinguistic alternates.

If this critique is correct, then the authors have failed (just like the rest of us) to maintain a clear conception of the beast they are busy chasing, namely speech style. One must at least attempt to decide which aspects of Berlin style are best approached from the alternates perspective and which from the ethnography of speaking perspective, and then apply the methods which are uniquely relevant to that perspective. Meanwhile we do not know whether to castigate them for, on the one hand (assuming the alternates view), insufficient data, lack of comparative variants, lack of information about the social distribution of such styles of speech, or, on the other hand (assuming the ethnographic view), for the absence of clear claims about uniquely Berliner speech acts or sequences of speech acts, and an overly sketchy attempt to describe social motivations. Until we make up our minds, we shall not be able to recommend the direction for future research.

## 3.2 Use of the LABOV & FANSHEL speech act categories

I would like now to attend to a rather specific issue, namely the pertinence of the Labov & Fanshel speech act categories to the sociolinguistic analysis of style and discourse. I have elsewhere spelt out theoretical reservations about the whole approach (LEVINSON, 1983: 286ff.), and I want here merely to point out some practical problems in application. Recollect that the theory of speech acts defines particular illocutionary forces in terms of certain distinctive felicity conditions (henceforth, FCs); where a linguistic expression is used to perform an illocution other than that indicated by its syntactic form, we talk of 'indirect speech acts' (SEARLE, 1969, 1975; reviewed in LEVINSON, 1983: Ch. 5). The distinct contribution of the Labov & Fanshel framework is to recast this account in terms of inferential rules; *if* (i) speaker S addresses addressee A with linguistic form F, and F is sometimes used to perform illocution I, and (ii) I has the FCs 1 to n, and (iii) *the FCs 1 to n obtain* (i.e. the context satisfies the conditions), *then* A may infer that in saying F, S meant I. It is this third, italicised, condition that Labov & Fanshel emphasize: to find out what speech act an utterance performs, check to see whether certain conditions are met.

Now, if such inferential rules can be made to work, they would, needless to say, give us a powerful account of how we interpret utterances as doing things, like requesting, threatening and so forth. I believe, however, that it is almost impossible to formulate such inference rules in a way which will yield any generality of application, without begging all sorts of questions. The Berlin study indicates quite neatly the kinds of problems involved, so let me criticize some of the formulations offered therein. But let me emphasize that my point in singling these out  is not to suggest that the authors were in any way remiss or careless in their analysis, but rather to suggest that there are *intrinsic* difficulties with this kind of analysis.

First, the inference rules are phrased in ways that raise many puzzles. Consider Rule (4), which is intended I think to be equivalent to the more perspicuous reformulation:[6]

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[6] The original version, following LABOV & FANSHEL, has the form 'B does *not* believe that A believes that (a) A has the information I, (and) (b) B does not have the information I'. Whether not believing that not p is equivalent to believing that p depends on whether we want to allow for epistemic uncertainty: John may not believe that not p, because he has never entertained beliefs about p, or has doubts whether p.

If A addresses B with an utterance U requesting information I, then U is to be interpreted as a *valid* request for information if B believes that A believes that: (a) A does not know I; & (b) B knows I.

What this, for the most part, amounts to is a definition of the *validity* of an illocution, not a characterization of the illocution itself. (The LABOV & FANSHEL (1977: 89) version, more useful on the face of it, substitutes 'an imperative requesting information I' for 'an utterance requesting information I', thus linking linguistic form to iillocutionary inference.) What is validity? LABOV & FANSHEL (1977: 81) state they have substituted 'validity' for 'sincerity', to emphasize the *social objectivity* of the interpretation; thus, they say, a military request for information might be known by the enlisted addressee to be fatuous, but would nevertheless have to be treated as 'valid'. Similarly, in the Berlin study, the attraction of the Labov & Fanshel rules is said to be that they make it "possible to objectify classifications concerning the pragmatic and interactive components of speech utterances" (p. 55). In any case, the purpose, of course, of distinguishing 'validity' from 'invalidity' is to make the distinction between *direct* (valid) and *indirect* speech acts (or at least something similar to it): when must the addressee do some additional reasoning to a further illocution?[7]

But how is an interpretation to have this 'social objectivity' when the conditions in the rule above are *epistemic*, a matter of private belief? And how, to be practical, are we to do the analysis of texts, where we have no direct access to the epistemic states of the participants? If the distinction between 'valid' and 'invalid' requests is to be empirical for both participants *and* analysts, it had better be directly inferrable from the texts.

Or, to put the matter in another way, how does B know what A's epistemic state is? The answer is, in at least some cases, reasonably clear: if A asks B "What time is it?", B infers *from the utterance* that A probably doesn't know what time it is. This is by far the most likely way in which B will infer A's epistemic state. But if this is so, then the key idea of Labov & Fanshel's analysis, that we can use validity or sincerity conditions on speech acts to infer *what* act is being done, seems to need inversion: assuming we know what speech act is being done, then we can infer the probable subjective states of participants (which, I take it, was pretty much Searle's original position). The advantage of the latter analysis is that it

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[7] This formed the basis of the GORDON & LAKOFF (1972) analysis of the 'blocking' of literal forces in the derivation of indirect speech acts.

gives us an account of the otherwise ineffable knowledge we apparently have about others' mental states. Of course, it is quite possible that for some objectively ascertainable sincerity conditions (like the preparatory condition on a request to open the door, that there is a door and that it is closed) we partially infer from the conditions to the illocution, while for subjective sincerity (or validity) conditions we infer from the illocution to the conditions!

There are many detailed ways in which one could quarrel with the formulations of the inference rules. Thus, for example, we are given lists of conditions, but these are sometimes conjunctive (e.g. in Rule 1), sometimes disjunctive (e.g. Rule 3), and sometimes indeterminate. Secondly, the conditions are often much too strong: for example, a precondition for an insult is said to be that the participants are already in a conflict situation (p. 56), which would make impossible an acount of the role of insults in instigating conflicts; or, a precondition on threats is said to be that the speaker has the ability to do the threatened action (p. 57), whereas the data is full of threats like "I'll slam your head through that cement wall" (p. 79) where it is doubtful that the physical properties of heads and cement make such an action possible.

But there are not only difficulties of formulation, there are also diffficulties of application. Take the following lines (in English glosses) from example 1 (p. 60), with their assigned first-order speech act categories:

1. A. "What's going on here? (Request for Information)
2.     Hold it! Right now!" (Request)
3. B. "There he goes bitchin' again" (Request Refusal)

Does utterance 1 actually meet the conditions in Rule 5 (or my version above)? Certainly A knows the information requested (the prior part of the story goes "All of a sudden I see what's going on over there ..."); but does B know that A knows, for if so it is not in fact a valid request? How could we decide? On the ground that no response is waited for (or at least reported), intuitively B does not take it as a valid request for information, in which case the analysts have made the wrong assigment. However, if that is granted, we have brought to bear a kind of information, viz. conversational sequencing, notably absent from the speech act characterizations, and we are perhaps now involved in a different kind of analysis.

Similar uncertainties arise about utterance 2 and its categorization: does it really meet the conditions in the author's Rule 1 (p. 55)? For example, does the recipient B have the obligation to do the request thing (condition 4), in this case to cease a specified action? (Conversely, does A have the

right, as required in condition 5, to so request?) One reading of utterance 3 (and now we are appealing to sequential information again) is that it specifically repudiates these rights and obligations. If so, the conditions are not met and no request has taken place. Perhaps this should be the hub of the analysis of such conflicts: we find 'hung' speech acts where a proposed action can not even get off the ground because the interactional preconditions are contested (see 3.3 below).

Yet again, it is not at all clear how utterance 3 meets the conditions for 'Request Refusals' specified in Rule 3 (p. 56). Partly this is because the conditions themselves are unclear (and in part surely wrong - not every request for information following a request can be interpreted as a refusal; see LABOV & FANSHEL, 1977: 91). But anyway there does not seem to be a clearly specifiable delimited set of ways of refusing requests; B could for example have said just "Hell", or turned his back. Here in fact he made a metalinguistic comment to another interlocutor, and has thereby implicated derision of A; current theories of speech acts cannot handle how remarks addressed to one party can be intended as different illocutions to third parties (as pointed out by CLARK & CARLSON, 1982) nor is it clear that they should attempt to do so (LEVINSON, in press). Interestingly, it would seem on intuitive grounds that an utterance of this sort could either be a refusal to co-operate, or a mere 'bitch' accompanying acquiescence - how is the analyst to decide? In any case, the point is that the utterance is altogether more interesting than this unprincipled application of the authors' Rule 3 would allow.

Finally, we are told of this exchange that two meta-speech acts (my term) can be assigned on the following basis: utterances 1 and 2 count as 'arrogating status' because they are requests in a conflict situation where B believes A has the right to so request (Rule 9); while utterance 3 counts as a 'repudiation' of that status because it is a request-refusal following an 'arrogation of status' (Rule 10; p. 57). But if B believes A has the right to so act, then how can he be challenging that right? And surely the 'arrogation of status' can be the very thing that instigates conflict, as in this example, rather than conflict being an antecedent condition on 'arrogation', as stated in Rule 9. But the main difficulty with these meta-speech-acts is that they seem to be quite different kinds of things from, say, requests, threats and the like. From an Austinian point of view, this whole mode of analysis makes a gross conflation between illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect: illocutions are conventional and limited in number (and thus appropriately designated by rule); perlocutions are

non-conventional and unlimited in number and kind, and thus cannot be encapsulated as rules (see LEVINSON, 1983: Chapter 5).[8]

My point in going through this example is merely to draw attention to the intrinsic difficulties of applying this style of analysis to empirical materials. If the speech act categories are clear and well-defined, then they are too rigid to apply to the flexibility of actual use; and if they are not properly defined, then they merely trade on our intuitions without explicating them.

A final issue is whether this whole mode of analysis is not much too particularistic - do we need such *ad hoc* inference rules, or are there much more general processes at work, which will *pari passu* account for these specific inferences? Consider, for example, Rule 5 (p. 56), the rule for 'reinstating requests', which states that when A answers a question, which itself follows a request from A, then A should be heard as repeating the request. This rule is really quite unnecessary; the reading follows from the much more general properties of *insertion sequences* and *conditional relevance*, namely the principles that establish, for all kinds of speech acts, that when an expected response is not forthcoming what occurs in its place is heard as preliminary to providing that response. There is thus a structural symmetry between:

  (i) Request (Question - Answer) Compliance
  (ii) Question 1 (Question 2 - Answer 2) Answer 1
  (iii) Invitation (Question - Answer) Acceptance,

and so on.

In an exactly similar way, if we bring Gricean principles of inference to bear, we may not need many of the Labov & Fanshel rules. For example, Labov & Fanshel have a 'rule of narrative sequencing' (1977: 107), which already has a rival account in the Maxim of Manner (see LEVINSON, 1983: 108). Or, consider even the central rule for requests: as we noted above, instead of trying to infer the force from the conditions, we could argue that it is the force that allows the inference of the conditions. Thus, a request from A to B to do X would not even be rational, let alone Griceanly co-operative, unless (i) A wanted X done, (ii) A believed B could do it, (iii) there was a reasonable expectation that, if

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[8] Another kind of difficulty with Rules 9 and 10 is that they confuse social *status* with *interactional dominance*: social status is about the right and duties that pertain to social identities (e.g., in example I, being a custodian); interactional dominance is a potentially independent dimension. The lay phrase 'social relationship' confuses these of course, but that provides no excuse for the analyst (see e.g. GOODENOUGH, 1967).

A asks, B will do X. Hence all B has to do in order to infer (i)-(iii) is to assume A is rational, and assume that the utterance in question is a request on the basis of some features of its form and content. Even the Labov & Fanshel social conditions (to which they attach great importance), specifying A's right to ask and B's obligation to comply, would in their turn be derivative from the inferred condition (iii), and a general assumption of rationality, since such social conditions would confer such reasonable expectation.

I am not proposing these alternatives with any commitment, but merely pointing out that, given the inherent leakiness of speech act categorizations of the sort illustrated in our discussion of example 1 in the Berlin study, we would do well to search for much more general inferential principles of a more flexible sort.

## 3.3 A Genre: some properties of quarrels and reported quarrels

However, let us return to empirical issues and in particular to the nature of the speech genre that is captured in the examples. Clearly, they fall into some general category of reported quarrels or arguments. Is there something special about that category? One important issue is what the relationship is between real quarrels and reported ones. One can detect at once in reported quarrels elements of self justification and self-presentation, as the authors of the Berlin study point out (as, e.g., in example 3, where the protagonist holds that he instructed his adversary "in a nice and friendly way", p. 71). But are there, for example, features of quarrels that are not reportable? The only way to find out would be to look in detail at the relation between actual quarrels and the narratives describing them, but there have been very few empirical studies of actual quarrels as far as I can ascertain (a notable exception is the work of M. GOODWIN on Black children in Philadelphia, which I shall refer to shortly).[9] So I proffer an example in Appendix 1 (a rare example, I may add, in many hundreds of hours of taped natural talk)[10], and venture a few unsubstantiated remarks on a subject I don't pretend to understand.[11]

In this particular example, two features of vituperative argumentation stand out which also have intuitive generality. The first we may call the

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[9] There are related dimensions of confrontation discussed, inter alia, in TANNEN (1984), LABOV & FANSHEL (1977) and ATKINSON & DREW (1979).

[10] At the workshop, LABOV confirmed the rarity for his own corpus.

[11] The subject is of interest, of course, to anyone interested in politeness; and it is a matter of regret that existing theories of politeness (BROWN & LEVINSON, 1978) do not automatically predict the properties of rude quarrels! See however 3.4 below for some predictions.

'pushdown-stack' nature of quarrels, where A does speech action X, B does not respond directly but replies with the first part of an insertion sequence, A in turn refuses to respond to the insertion sequence, etc. In effect, we have a structure of the following sort, where X1, Y1, etc., are the first parts of adjacency pairs expecting X2, Y2, etc., as immediate reponses:

[X1 [Y1 [W1 [Z1 ...

with the notable absence of the responses in the reverse sequence:

...Z2] W2] Y2] X2]

A push-down stack structure, then, where the 'plates' (turns) continue to be added to the stack, but are never lifted off again in the reverse order.

Such a structure occurs at the beginning of the transcript in Appendix 1, where the request for payment for the developed photographic prints (l. 1-2) is met with an insertion-sequence request ("Can I just see them" (prior to paying), which is met with a refusal, which is in turn challenged with a question (l. 5-8), which is not directly answered, etc. In effect, then, an admittedly imperfect sequence of the sort I have characterized: [Request, [Inserted Prior Request — Refusal], [Questioning of Consequences of Refusal], Justification of basis of Refusal ... If this characterization is roughly correct, then it goes some way towards explaining one salient subjective property of quarrels, namely that it is easier to get into them than to get out of them - extrication is difficult in part because one has become embedded so deeply in insertion sequences that one can't even remember how one got into them! It might also explain another subjective property of quarrels, namely their 'jumping connectedness': in performing speech actions X1, Y1, W1, etc., without performing their immediately relevant responses, the parties to a quarrel have left open a large range of pertinent next actions, which may finally get attended to in an apparently random order.

Another property of quarrels has been better studied, namely that they are often constructed out of 'rounds' (M. GOODWIN, *in press*). A 'round' consists of a sequence of speech actions of like type — e. g. threat — counter-threat, insult — insult, assertion — counter-assertion (or denial), often carefully matched in surface form. For example, in the Appended quarrel (l. 76 ff.),

   L:   ... I am the governor (two thirty please)
                 [
   M:                  No no Cabinet is the governor
   L:   Two- No Cabinet is NOT the governor

If we now compare the reported quarrels of the Berlin study, we can see that some aspects of actual quarrels are accurately reflected in the reports, and others perhaps are not.[12] Thus, the use of 'rounds' shows through clearly, as e.g. in Example 4:

A: I'll belt ya right in your trap
B: ...I'll wipe my mouth with you, you ape!

But the 'push-down stack' character of quarrels is clearly much less reportable, due to the sheer complexity. Nevertheless, there are perhaps traces of the associated 'jumping connectedness', as for example in Example 1, where the irate custodian's instruction to the builders to "hold it!" is not directly dealt with, being met with insults, demands for reason, etc., so that when the custodian issues his Gandhian threat ("I'll sit down in a chair in front of it") it has to be understood as supporting his earlier instruction (the gloss might go 'Either you hold it, or I'll sit down in front of it').

The point in comparing reports of quarrels to the actual things is partly to assess just how the reports are being formulated to show the protagonist-reporter in the best possible light, as assessed within Berlin cannons of style. But there are other reasons to be interested in quarrels in their own right. First, they suggest one empirical way of pursuing issues raised in speech act theory: for if, as I have suggested, quarrels often have a 'push-down stack' structure generated by questioning or challenging preconditions to a prior action, then we should find 'felicity conditions' empirically exhibited in quarrels in a way that we are unlikely to find elsewhere (or at least only in agonistic settings). This method is touched upon by LABOV & FANSHEL (1977: 93ff.), ATKINSON & DREW (1979), WOOTTON (1981), but deserves full-scale study.

### 3.4 The 'strategy' analysis of style: 'face' and conversational preference

A second reason to be interested in quarrels is that, being rents in the social fabric, they indicate just what kind of cloth it is made of. In particular, to pursue one of Goffman's themes, they reveal the hidden mechanisms of *face-preserving* techniques precisely by violating them. This

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[12] KLEIN & LABOV pointed out at the workshop that an important feature that distinguishes actual quarrels from reported ones is the extreme affectual loading in the former. A special feature of the Berlin reported quarrels, only apparent from recordings, is the prosodic 'flatness' associated with low speech energy, with implications of 'damped' affectual content. Whether this prosodic 'flatness' is characteristic of the quarrels themselves, as opposed to reports of them, we are not told.

orientation suggests a rather different approach to the problem of 'Berlin wit' which I shall now pursue.

Consider the fact, which any visitor to foreign lands will attest, that interaction styles can vary culturally, from (for example) the combative to the polite, and within the latter spectrum from the saccharine sweet to the austere formal. BROWN & LEVINSON (1978) tried to relate this systematically to the notion of 'face', and its two essential components, exploiting ideas of Goffman. It is possible to give an account of distinct cultural 'ethos' (1978: 248ff.) in terms of different interactional (and specifically verbal) strategies for dealing with participants' vulnerability to loss of 'face'. We were keen to point out that 'ethos' refers to the dominant style of interaction as observed in public places, and may convey a quite inaccurate picture of whar occurs in more private settings (which raises again the issue of the representativeness of 'Berlin wit').

The Brown & Levinson study is just one example of a set of studies that emphasize *the strategic nature of style* (see e.g. LAKOFF (1975), GUMPERZ (1982), TANNEN (1984)). According to such analyses, style is NOT to be viewed as an assemblage of forms with arbitrary social or connotative valuations; for such an approach would be to analyze style within the alternates paradigm for sociolinguistic research, and would have as consequence a description of a style as a mere inventory of arbitrary formal features. Rather, on the strategic view, styles should be seen as systematically motivated, as essentially rational adaptations to certain contextual circumstances. For example, a strategic analysis of the style of legal documents would not consist just of a list of register features (cf. CRYSTAL & DAVY, 1969), but would also try to show how the forms used were designed to fall within the terms of particular statutes and legal instruments. In a similar way, the polite style of an English request form like:

> "Excuse me, sorry to bother you, would you mind awfully if by any chance I was to ask you to exchange seats, so that I can sit next to my companion?"

is not to be thought of as a basic request form with a heap of conventional 'mitigators' attached. Rather, we should note the careful ways in which a request that is basically presumptuous and imposing is so phrased as to preserve the addressee's 'face': it is preceded by apologies and announcements of reluctance to impinge, and is phrased as a question about whether the addressee would mind in the highly unlikely circumstance that the speaker had the impertinence to make an invasive request despite having good reasons for doing so! Many little details, like the polite past tense,

the recurrence of phrases like 'by any chance', the polite conditional, etc., of English requests can be seen as perfectly rational features on this account. To round it out, we need to specify the exact principles whereby these inferences about the speaker's attention to the preservation of the addressee's face are calculated or implicated (see e.g. LEECH, 1983). This approach contrasts of course with the traditional view that style is a matter of a distinctive or different way of saying exactly 'the same thing'.

Face preservation is an important element, we claim, in everyday styles of speaking.[13] If we now combine this view with some recent developments in the analysis of conversation, we shall begin to see another possible approach to the problem of 'Berlin wit'. One notion of importance to recent conversation analysis is the concept of *preference organization* (see review in LEVINSON, 1983: 332ff. and papers in ATKINSON & HERITAGE, 1984). A 'preferred' response or speech action or sequence of such actions, on this view, is one that, whatever the actual psychological preferences of participants, has a certain characterizable simple format which is statistically predominant over more complex forms. The clearest cases, perhaps, are responses to first parts of 'adjacency pairs' like questions, requests, invitations, etc., which seek immediate responses of particular kinds; here answers can be shown to be preferred (in the special sense) to non-answers, acceptances or compliances to rejections. Thus a typical acceptance of an invitation is prompt and direct, while a refusal is typically delayed by pauses, particles (like 'well'), appreciations, and accompanied by reasons, etc., as in the following (from ATKINSON & DREW, 1979: 58):

A: Uh, if you'd care to come and visit a little while this morning I'll give you a cup of coffee
B: hehh well that's awfully sweet of you, I don't think I can make it this morning. hh uhm I'm running an ad in the paper and-and uh I have to stay near the phone.

Thus preference organization imposes an ordering (as preferred vs. dispreferred) on potential responses to first parts of adjacency pairs, and dictates the likely structure of preferred vs. dispreferred responses.

In a similar way, preference organization ranks not only responses but entire sequences of certain kinds. Thus, for example, it has been shown that when a speaker makes an error of some kind, other participants tend

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[13] Thus, TANNEN (1984) attempts to show that the intense enthusiastic style associated with New York Jews is derived from attention to 'positive face', the aspect of self-esteem based on positive appreciation by others.

to wait to see if he'll correct himself (unprompted self-correction being preferred), failing which they may prompt him (other-prompted self-correction being next preferred). Least preferred, statistically at least, is for participants to correct the speaker without giving him the chance, unprompted or prompted, to correct himself (SCHEGLOFF, JEFFERSON & SACKS, 1977).

Again, by slight extension, preference organizations can be seen to hold across different possible sequences, as between sequence I and II below:

I. A:  pre-request ("Would you be in your office on Monday?")
  B:  go-ahead ("Sure")
  A:  request ("Could I come and see you?")
  B:  compliance ("Yes why not")
II. A:  pre-request ("Would you be in your office on Monday?")
  B:  offer ("Sure, come around and we'll have a cup of coffee")

Sequence II is structurally reduced, and can be shown to be specifically "fished for" on many occasions (see LEVINSON, 1983: 345ff.). These examples must suffice to illustrate what is in fact a rich and detailed area of conversational dynamics.

The relevance of these findings, which are based it must be noted on British and American English and are of uncertain cross-cultural generality, is this: these aspects of preference organization (and there are many more) can be seen in a quite direct way to be motivated by considerations of *face-saving* (a point made by BROWN & LEVINSON, *in press*, M. GOODWIN, *in press*, HERITAGE, 1985 and no doubt others). For, to refuse a request or invitation, to avoid answering a question, to disagree with a judgement, etc., could potentially implicate non-cooperation, or a lack of caring for the other or his opinions. And to correct another, might be to suggest incompetence, while to wait for a request when it was already patently in the offing might be to suggest reluctance and lack of interest in compliance.

On the basis of this, one might hazard the following prediction: if Berliners are really interactionally 'combative', then in general they ought to indulge in less 'face'-saving behaviour. So, for example, we might expect them: (a) to routinely use dispreferred responses to adjacency pair first parts *without* the normal dispreferred format (e.g. to refuse requests with a simple 'No!'); (b) to correct other speakers instead of prompting them to correct themselves; (c) to not indulge in pre-emptive offers, or other helpful truncations of conversational sequences. That is to say that a whole slew of interactional features should follow as motivated consequences of a certain lack of interest in face-preservation.

Although there is only evidence for the first of these patterns in the Berlin data, there is evidence from elsewhere that these sorts of features do tend to occur together as a package, as shown by M. Goodwin's careful work on the verbal style of pre-teenage Black children in Philadelphia (GOODWIN, 1982; in press).

Of course, the prediction may be quite wrong. Perhaps Berlin aggressiveness is mere fantasy surfacing only in reports of one's own interactional exploits. But if this account *is* on the right lines, then it would attest to the utility of (a) the strategic analysis of style, (b) the parameters of conversational organization revealed by conversation analysts (as displayed, e.g., in ATKINSON & HERITAGE, 1984).

## 4. Conclusions

The intuition that there are distinctive styles of speaking, as well as distinctive accents and dialects, associated with regional and social categories of speakers, is too strong to be entirely wrong. The difficulty, though, is to find a proper way of studying these phenomena.

That difficulty in turn, perhaps, is partly due to our vacillation between two different ways of doing sociolinguistics, what I have called the alternates view vs. the ethnography of speaking view. For, as I've indicated, the alternates view would direct one to look for contrastive realizations of the same functions, with the associated methods of controlled comparison and community-wide survey. In contrast, the ethnography of speaking view would lead one to search for distinctive functions, distinctive verbal routines and sequences, and would seek an account of why particular social groups favour such distinctive styles.

In the case of 'Berlin wit', perhaps we need both approaches, where following the alternates view we look, for example, for different kinds of realization of requests, and try to delimit the community for which each realization has its distinct value. On the other hand, we need also to consider the possibility of distinctive verbal routines, for example, boasts of argumentative exploits, where the quarrels reported might themselves have a distinctive Berlin pattern. Also, perhaps, there may be a distinctive approach to matters of face-preservation, which may be shown to directly motivate many features of Berlin style. Following this line, we ought then to attempt to find the social structural motivations for this distinctive approach to matters of face, for having done that we would have linked

style to social structure in the motivated way that the ethnography of speaking view requires.

*Appendix I*    Quarrel in a Film Processing Store

In this extract, M is a male customer who has come to pick up his developed prints, but wants to check their quality before paying for them. L is the proprietor who refuses to hand them over before receiving the money.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | l; | ... Brookland's Avenue right? 2.30 = |
| 2 | | = please |
| 3 | m; | Can I just see them? |
| 4 | l; | Uh well I'm not allowed to, to do that |
| 5 | m; | Well um if there are any in there = |
| 6 | | = which I don't think you |
| 7 | | ought to have printed, what'll I do = |
| 8 | | = then? |
| 9 | l; | Well you get a free film with your = |
| 10 | | = developing and printing |
| 11 | | uh so to |
| | |     [ |
| 12 | m; |     No, what happens if you've = |
| 13 | | = printed any that I don't think |
| 14 | | was right in focus for example |
| 15 | l; | Well if they're out of focus they're = |
| 16 | | = not our fault are they |
| 17 | m; | Ah now come off that |
| 18 | l; | No! |
| 19 | m; | It's all right, it's all right, it is = |
| 20 | | = your fault for printing |
| 21 | | them |
| 22 | l; | Oh no, we give a free film for = |
| 23 | | = developing and printing |
| 24 | m; | No, that's your trading methods, I = |
| 25 | | = mean, no no |
| | |     [ |
| 26 | l; |     No the thing is if you want to = |
| 27 | | = have just the- only |
| 28 | | the good ones you don't get the free = |

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29              = film you see
30              you see, you have your choice
                [
31     m;       Ah yes but you see that that oh yes =
32              = indeed!
33     l;       It's a choice
34     m;       I can believe that!
35     l;       Yes
36     m;       this is well, you know
37     l;       But if they're all covered-
38              if uh, wait a minute that's 2.30 that's =
39              = uh
40              look's as if they should all have come =
41              = out anyway
                        [
42     m;                  Ah yes perhaps it does, but you're =
43              = not allowing me to see
44              the qual- the quality of the prints
                        [
45     l;                  we don't do that, you never =
46              = do, um
47     m;       Well, that's not business practice, is =
48              = it, I mean
49              I ought to be able at least to ( )
                [
50     l;       Well if you send them in the (post)
51              you don't do that, do you
52     m;       I can't send them away, I still have, I =
53              = still have
54              the right to send them back, they ( )
                                                [
55     l;                                          You =
56              = have here, you have here
57     m;       I have here well it's =
58                  all right then. Well that's alright
                = [
59     l;           You have a ( ) yes, you have a, =
60                  if they're our fault
                = [
61     m;           It's like saying to somebody,
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62   l;      If it's our fault. But I mean, when you = ⌐
63           = bring the film in here
64           you bring it in for developing and =
65           = printing. And our machine
66           doesn't know if you've made a mistake =
67           = in your (    )
                         [
68   m;                     I'm sorry that is your method =
69           = of dealing (  )
                         [
70   l;                     Well look, you, you =
71           = take it somewhere
72           else in the future, all right?
                             [
73   m;                         I wi- well can =
74           = I can give your governor them in that
                         [
75   l;                         Yes, yes, yes, you =
76           = can get - I am the governor
77           2.30 please
             [
78   m;      No, no Cabinet is the governor
79   l;      Two- No Cabinet is NOT the governor =
80              2.30, 2.40, 2.50
             = [
81   m;      You're the governor eh?
                     [
82   l;                 This is my shop
83   m;      Are you the, are you the director
                         [
84   l;                     Three
85   m;      and proprietor
                     [
86   l;          four
87   m;      here
88   l;      Five. I am managing this shop (      )
                                 [
89   m;                             No, no
90   l;      And I have every right to say that if I
91   m;      Yes, are you the proprietor and =
92           = director of the firm
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 93   l;   As far as you're concerned, yes
 94   m;   No I'm not- no. You are the person who =
 95        = pays the wages
 96        and everything?
 97   l;   I have the right to say that ( )
                              [
 98   m;                             Are you =
 99        = the proprietor and owner of the shop?
100   l;   ((turns to next customer)) Can I serve =
101        = you dear?
102   p;   Yes please. heh
103   m;   Alright I can see
104   l;   Alright, you can find out, I have every =
105        = right, if you arrange
106        that you either accept our conditions =
107        = or you don't
108        You can please yourself!
```