CONTENTS

Maps ix
Figures xi
Tables xii
Preface to the second edition xiii
The international phonetic alphabet xiv

background

1 Dialect and language 3
1.1 Mutual intelligibility 3
1.2 Language, dialect and accent 4
1.3 Geographical dialect continua 5
1.4 Social dialect continua 7
1.5 Autonomy and heteronomy 9
1.6 Discreteness and continuity 12
   Further information 12

2 Dialect geography 13
2.1 The impetus for dialect geography 13
2.2 An outline history of dialect geography 15
2.3 The methods of dialect geography 21
   2.3.1 The questionnaire 21
   2.3.2 Linguistic maps 25
   2.3.3 The selection of informants 29
   Further information 31

3 Dialectology and linguistics 32
3.1 Dialectology and philology 32
3.2 Structural dialectology 33
   3.2.1 Inventory, distribution and incidence 36
   3.2.2 Lexical correspondences 37

Further information 31
Contents

3 3 Generative dialectology 39
3 4 Polylectal grammars 42

Further information 44

4 Urban dialectology 45
4 1 Social dialects 45
4 2 Urban dialects 45
4 3 Representativeness 47
4 4 Obtaining data 48
4 5 Classifying informants 49
4 6 The linguistic variable 49

Further information 53

Social variation

5 Social differentiation and language 57
5 1 Language and social class 57
5 2 Stylistic differentiation 59
5 3 Sex differentiation 61
5 4 Other aspects of social differentiation in language 63
5 4 1 Language and ethnic group 63
5 4 2 Social networks 64
5 4 3 Individual characteristics 67

Further information 68

6 Sociolinguistic structure and linguistic innovation 70
6 1 Indicators and markers 70
6 1 1 Overt stigmatisation 72
6 1 2 Linguistic change 72
6 1 3 Phonological contrast 73
6 1 4 Stereotypes 75
6 2 The study of linguistic change 76
6 2 1 Patterns of age differentiation 78
6 3 Mechanisms of linguistic change 81
6 3 1 Stylistic variation 82
6 3 2 The role of sex 83
6 3 3 Covert prestige 85

Further information 86
### Contents

**spatial variation**

7 **Boundaries** 89  
7.1 Isoglosses 89  
7.2 Patterns of isoglosses 91  
7.2.1 Criss-cross 91  
7.2.2 Transitions 93  
7.2.3 Relic areas 94  
7.3 Bundles 94  
7.4 Grading of isoglosses 96  
7.5 Cultural correlates of isoglosses 100  
7.6 Isoglosses and dialect variation 103  
Further information 103  

8 **Transitions** 104  
8.1 Gradual and abrupt transition 104  
8.2 Introduction to the variables 105  
8.3 The transition zone for (u) 106  
8.4 Mixed and fudged lects 110  
8.5 The variable (a) 113  
8.6 Transitions in general 118  
8.7 Dialect variation and mapping 118  
8.7.1 A relic feature in the west midlands 119  
8.7.2 The interplay of social and geographical variation 120  
8.7.3 Mapping social variation directly 121  
Further information 123  

**mechanisms of variation**

9 **Variability** 127  
9.1 The variable as a structural unit 127  
9.1.1 Variability as accidental 128  
9.1.2 Variability as essential 128  
9.1.3 Variable constraints 130  
9.2 Implicational scales 131  
9.2.1 Default singulars in Alabama 132  
9.2.2 (CC) in northern England 133
Contents

9.3 Handling quantitative data 135
9.4 Quantifying geographic variables 136
9.4.1 Dialectometry 137
9.4.2 Multidimensional scaling 140
9.4.3 A transition zone in Ohio 142
9.4.4 Correspondence analysis of the matrix 144
9.4.5 Linguistic distance and geographic distance 147
Further information 148

10 Diffusion: sociolinguistic and lexical 149
10.1 Real time and apparent time 149
10.1.1 Age-graded changes 151
10.2 Innovators of change 153
10.2.1 A class-based innovation in Norwich 153
10.2.2 A sex-based innovation in Belfast 155
10.2.3 An age-based innovation in the Golden Horseshoe 157
10.3 Lexical diffusion 159
Further information 165

11 Diffusion: geographical 166
11.1 Spatial diffusion of language 167
11.2 Spatial linguistics 167
11.3 Linguistic areas 168
11.4 Uvular /r/ in Europe 170
11.5 Diffusion down the urban hierarchy 172
11.6 Cartographical representation of spatial diffusion 176
11.6.1 The Norwegian study 177
11.7 Explanations in sociolinguistic dialect geography 178
11.8 Further refinements to the model 185
Further information 186

12 Cohesion in dialectology 187
Further information 189

References 190
Index 198
MAPS

1-1 European dialect continua 6
1-2 Sweden and Denmark 10
2-1 Display map for 'newt' 26
2-2 Interpretive map for 'newt' 28
6-1 /j/-dropping in eastern England 74
7-1 Single-line isoglosses 90
7-2 Double-line heteroglosses 90
7-3 Features separating Low German and High German 92
7-4 Isoglosses around the German villages of Bubsheim, Denkingen and Böttingen 93
7-5 Rhotic dialects in England 95
7-6 Bundles of isoglosses in France 96
7-7 Isoglosses and place-names in Massachusetts 101
8-1 England, showing the southern limit of [u] in some and [a] in chaff 107
8-2 East Anglia and the east midlands, showing occurrences of (u) 108
8-3 The distribution of mixed lects in the transition zone 111
8-4 Distribution of fudged lects 112
8-5 The elements of a transition zone 114
8-6 Variable (a) in East Anglia and the east midlands 116
8-7 The transition zone for (a) in East Anglia and the east midlands 117
8-8 Final velar stops in the west midlands of England 120
8-9 Lexical choices at the Canada–US border at Niagara 122
9-1 Southwest Gascony showing linguistic distances 139
9-2 Northwestern Ohio 142
11-1 Front rounded vowels in northwestern Europe 169
11-2 Uvular /r/ in Europe 171
11-3 Uvular /r/ in southern Sweden 172
11-4 Uvular /r/ in Norway, older speakers 173
Maps

11-5 Uvular /r/ in Norway, younger speakers 174
11-6 Uvular /r/ in greater social detail 175
11-7 /æ/-raising in northern Illinois 176
11-8 Brunlanes, Norway 177
11-9 (sj) in Brunlanes, speakers aged over 70 179
11-10 (sj) in Brunlanes, speakers aged 25–69 180
11-11 (sj) in Brunlanes, speakers aged under 24 181
11-12 East Anglian centres 182
FIGURES

1-1 The initial linguistic situation in Jamaica  page 8
1-2 The situation after contact between English and Creole speakers 8
1-3 West Germanic dialect continuum 10
1-4 Scandinavian dialect continuum 11
5-1 The (æ) variable in Ballymacarrett, The Hammer and Clonard, Belfast 67
6-1 Norwich (ng) by class and style 71
6-2 Norwich (a:t) by class and style 71
6-3 Norwich (o) by class and style 73
6-4 Norwich (ng) by age and style 78
6-5 Norwich (e) by age and style 80
6-6 Norwich (ir) by age and style 81
6-7 New York City (r) by class and style 83
9-1 Multidimensional scaling of northwestern Ohio informants 146
10-1 Representation of a typical variable 154
10-2 Class differences for the variable (e) in Norwich 155
10-3 Sex and age differences for two variables in Ballymacarrett, Belfast 156
10-4 Use of couch and chesterfield by different age groups 159
10-5 Progress of lexical diffusion on the assumption that diffusion proceeds at a uniform rate 162
10-6 Progress of lexical diffusion in the S-curve model 163
10-7 Speakers in the transition zone for variable (u) 164
11-1 /æ/-raising in northern Illinois by size of town 176
TABLES

6-1 Endings of selected infinitives in Tønsberg Norwegian  
   page 77
6-2 Age group differentiation in Eskilstuna  
   78
6-3 Age differentiation in Washington, DC  
   80
6-4 Stress assignment in Trondheim Norwegian  
   86
8-1 Summary of lectal types for (u)  
   113
8-2 The lectal continuum for (a) in East Anglia and the  
   east midlands  
   118
9-1 The possible lects in a speech community in which (X)  
   implies (Y)  
   131
9-2 Default singulars in Anniston, Alabama, shown as a  
   scalogram  
   133
9-3 A scalogram of the variable constraints on (CC)  
   in northern England  
   134
9-4 Nine variables used by ten informants in northwestern Ohio  
   143
10-1 Pre-adult groups in New York City  
   152
10-2 Occurrences of the words couch, chesterfield and  
   sofa in the Golden Horseshoe  
   158
10-3 Lexical variants among speakers in the transition zone  
   for the variable (u)  
   161
11-1 Influence index scores of London and East Anglian centres  
   182
11-2 Influence index scores of northern Illinois centres  
   184
Dialectology, obviously, is the study of dialect and dialects. But what exactly is a dialect? In common usage, of course, a dialect is a substandard, low-status, often rustic form of language, generally associated with the peasantry, the working class, or other groups lacking in prestige. *Dialect* is also a term which is often applied to forms of language, particularly those spoken in more isolated parts of the world, which have no written form. And dialects are also often regarded as some kind of (often erroneous) deviation from a norm – as aberrations of a correct or standard form of language.

In this book we shall not be adopting any of these points of view. We will, on the contrary, accept the notion that all speakers are speakers of at least one dialect – that standard English, for example, is just as much a dialect as any other form of English – and that it does not make any kind of sense to suppose that any one dialect is in any way linguistically superior to any other.

1.1 **Mutual intelligibility**

It is very often useful to regard dialects as *dialects of a language*. Dialects, that is, can be regarded as subdivisions of a particular language. In this way we may talk of the Parisian dialect of French, the Lancashire dialect of English, the Bavarian dialect of German, and so on.

This distinction, however, presents us with a number of difficulties. In particular, we are faced with the problem of how we can distinguish between a *language* and a *dialect*, and the related problem of how we can decide what a language is. One way of looking at this has often been to say that ‘a language is a collection of mutually intelligible dialects’. This definition has the benefit of characterising dialects as subparts of a language and of providing a criterion for distinguishing between one language and another.

This characterisation of ‘language’ and ‘dialect’, however, is not entirely successful, and it is relatively simple to think of two types of apparent counterexample. If we consider, first, the Scandinavian languages, we observe that Norwegian, Swedish and Danish are usually considered to be different languages. Unfortunately for our
Dialect and language

definition, though, they are mutually intelligible. Speakers of these three languages can readily understand and communicate with one another. Secondly, while we would normally consider German to be a single language, there are some types of German which are not intelligible to speakers of other types. Our definition, therefore, would have it that Danish is less than a language, while German is more than a language.

There are also other difficulties with the criterion of mutual intelligibility. The main problem is that it is a criterion which admits of degrees of more or less. While it is true, for example, that many Swedes can very readily understand many Norwegians, it is also clear that they often do not understand them so well as they do other Swedes. For this reason, inter-Scandinavian mutual intelligibility can be less than perfect, and allowances do have to be made: speakers may speak more slowly, and omit certain words and pronunciations that they suspect may cause difficulties.

Mutual intelligibility may also not be equal in both directions. It is often said, for instance, that Danes understand Norwegians better than Norwegians understand Danes. (If this is true it may be because, as Scandinavians sometimes say, ‘Norwegian is pronounced like Danish is spelt’, while Danish pronunciation bears a rather more complex relationship to its own orthography. It may be due, alternatively or additionally, to more specifically linguistic factors.) Mutual intelligibility will also depend, it appears, on other factors such as listeners’ degree of exposure to the other language, their degree of education and, interestingly enough, their willingness to understand. People, it seems, sometimes do not understand because, at some level of consciousness, they do not want to. A study carried out in Africa, for example, demonstrated that, while one ethnic group A claimed to be able to understand the language of another ethnic group B, ethnic group B claimed not to be able to understand language A. It then emerged that group A, a larger and more powerful group, wanted to incorporate group B’s territory into their own on the grounds that they were really the same people and spoke the same language. Clearly, group B’s failure to comprehend group A’s language was part of their resistance to this attempted takeover.

1.2 Language, dialect and accent

It seems, then, that while the criterion of mutual intelligibility may have some relevance, it is not especially useful in helping us to decide what is and is not a language. In fact, our discussion of the Scandinavian languages and German suggests that (unless we want to change radically our everyday assumptions about what a language is) we have to recognise that, paradoxically enough, a ‘language’ is not a particularly linguistic notion at all. Linguistic features obviously come into it, but it is clear that we consider Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and German to be single languages for reasons that are as much political, geographical, historical, sociological and cultural as linguistic. It is of course relevant that all three Scandinavian languages have distinct, codified, standardised forms, with their own orthographies, grammar
books, and literatures; that they correspond to three separate nation states; and that their speakers consider that they speak different languages.

The term ‘language’, then, if from a linguistic point of view a relatively nontechnical term. If therefore we wish to be more rigorous in our use of descriptive labels we have to employ other terminology. One term we shall be using in this book is *variety*. We shall use ‘variety’ as a neutral term to apply to any particular kind of language which we wish, for some purpose, to consider as a single entity. The term will be used in an ad hoc manner in order to be as specific as we wish for a particular purpose. We can, for example, refer to the variety ‘Yorkshire English’, but we can equally well refer to ‘Leeds English’ as a variety, or ‘middle-class Leeds English’ – and so on. More particular terms will be *accent* and *dialect*. ‘Accent’ refers to the way in which a speaker pronounces, and therefore refers to a variety which is phonetically and/or phonologically different from other varieties. ‘Dialect’, on the other hand, refers to varieties which are grammatically (and perhaps lexically) as well as phonologically different from other varieties. If two speakers say, respectively, *I done it last night* and *I did it last night*, we can say that they are speaking different dialects.

The labels ‘dialect’ and ‘accent’, too, are used by linguists in an essentially ad hoc manner. This may be rather surprising to many people, since we are used to talking of accents and dialects as if they were well-defined, separate entities: ‘a southern accent’, ‘the Somerset dialect’. Usually, however, this is actually not the case. Dialects and accents frequently merge into one another without any discrete break.

### 1.3 Geographical dialect continua

There are many parts of the world where, if we examine dialects spoken by people in rural areas, we find the following type of situation. If we travel from village to village, in a particular direction, we notice linguistic differences which distinguish one village from another. Sometimes these differences will be larger, sometimes smaller, but they will be cumulative. The further we get from our starting point, the larger the differences will become. The effect of this may therefore be, if the distance involved is large enough, that (if we arrange villages along our route in geographical order) while speakers from village A understand people from village B very well and those from village F quite well, they may understand village M speech only with considerable difficulty, and that of village Z not at all. Villagers from M, on the other hand, will probably understand village F speech quite well, and villagers from A and Z only with difficulty. In other words, dialects on the outer edges of the geographical area may not be mutually intelligible, but they will be linked by a chain of mutual intelligibility. At no point is there a complete break such that geographically adjacent dialects are not mutually intelligible, but the cumulative effect of the linguistic differences will be such that the greater the geographical separation, the greater the difficulty of comprehension.
This type of situation is known as a geographical dialect continuum. There are many such continua. In Europe, for example, the standard varieties of French, Italian, Catalan, Spanish and Portuguese are not really mutually intelligible. The rural dialects of these languages, however, form part of the West Romance dialect continuum which stretches from the coast of Portugal to the centre of Belgium (with speakers immediately on either side of the Portuguese–Spanish border, for instance, having no problems in understanding each other) and from there to the south of Italy, as shown in Map 1-1. Other European dialect continua include the West Germanic continuum, which includes all dialects of what are normally referred to as German, Dutch and Flemish (varieties spoken in Vienna and Ostend are not mutually intelligible, but they are linked by a chain of mutual intelligibility); the Scandinavian dialect continuum, comprising dialects of Norwegian, Swedish and Danish; the North Slavic dialect continuum, including Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech and Slovak; and the South Slavic continuum, which includes Slovenian, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian and Bulgarian.

The notion of the dialect continuum is perhaps a little difficult to grasp because, as has already been noted, we are used to thinking of linguistic varieties as discrete entities,
but the fact that such continua exist stresses the legitimacy of using labels for varieties in an ad hoc manner. Given that we have dialect continua, then the way we divide up and label particular bits of a continuum may often be, from a purely linguistic point of view, arbitrary. Note the following forms from the Scandinavian dialect continuum:

(1) /hemːa ˌhur ˈjaː ɪntʊ ˈsoʊ meɪd ːsʊm ət ˈgʌmtəlt ˈgauːsabain/
(2) /hemːa ˌhur ˈjaː ɪntʊ ˈsoʊ mykˌiːət ːsʊm ət ˈgʌmtəlt ˈɡɔːsˌbeɪn/
(3) /jɛmːə ˌhur ˈjaː ˈɪkˌiːə ˈsoʊ mykˌiːət ːsʊm ət ˈgʌmtəlt ˈɡɔːsˌbeɪn/
(4) /ˈheɪmə ˌhur ˌeg ɪˌsæˌtʊ ˈsoʊ mykˌiːət ːsʊm ət ˈgʌmtəlt ˈɡɔːsˌbeɪn/

At home have I not so much as an old goose-leg

Some of these forms we label ‘Swedish’ and some ‘Norwegian’. As it happens, (1) and (2) are southern and central Swedish respectively, (3) and (4) eastern and western Norwegian respectively. But there seems to be no particular linguistic reason for making this distinction, or for making it where we do. The motivation is mainly that we have a linguistically arbitrary but politically and culturally relevant dividing line in the form of the national frontier between Sweden and Norway.

In some cases, where national frontiers are less well established, dialect continua can cause political difficulties – precisely because people are used to thinking in terms of discrete categories rather than in ad hoc or continuum-type terms. The South Slavic dialect continuum, as we have seen, incorporates the standard languages, Slovenian, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian and Bulgarian. This description, however, conceals a number of problems to do with autonomy and heteronomy. Until recently, for example, Serbian and Croatian were thought of in Yugoslavia as a single language. Since the break-up of that country, however, many politicians have wanted to stress their separateness, while the government of Bosnia has argued that Bosnian constitutes a third language distinct from the other two. Similarly, Bulgarian politicians often argue that Macedonian is simply a dialect of Bulgarian – which is really a way of saying, of course, that they feel Macedonia ought to be part of Bulgaria. From a purely linguistic point of view, however, such arguments are not resolvable, since dialect continua admit of more-or-less but not either-or judgements.

1.4 Social dialect continua

Dialect continua can also be social rather than geographical, and continua of this type can also pose problems. A good example of this is provided by Jamaica. The linguistic history of Jamaica, as of many other areas of the Caribbean, is very complex. One (simplified) interpretation of what happened is that at one time the situation was such that those at the top of the social scale, the British, spoke English, while those at the bottom of the social scale, the African slaves, spoke Jamaican Creole. This was a language historically related to English but very different from it, and in its earlier stages probably was not too unlike modern Sranan (another English-based
Dialect and language

Creole spoken in Surinam). The following extract from a poem in Sranan demonstrates that it is a language clearly related to English (most words appear to be derived from English) but nevertheless distinct from it and not mutually intelligible with it:

\[
\begin{align*}
m\text{i go} & - m\text{e kon}, \quad \text{I've gone - I come}, \\
\text{sootwatra bradi} & , \quad \text{the sea is wide}. \\
tak wan mofo & , \quad \text{Say the words}, \\
ala mi mati & , \quad \text{you all my friends}, \\
tak wan mofo & , \quad \text{say the words}. \\
m'go, & \quad \text{I've gone}, \\
m'e kon \ldots & \quad \text{I come \ldots}
\end{align*}
\]

The initial linguistic situation in Jamaica, therefore, can be diagrammatically represented as in Fig. 1-1. Over the centuries, however, English, the international and prestigious language of the upper social strata, exerted a considerable influence on Jamaican Creole. (Jamaican Creole was recognised as being similar to English, and was therefore often (erroneously) regarded, because of the social situation, as an inferior or debased form of it.) The result is the situation shown in Fig. 1-2. Two things have happened. First, the ‘deepest’ Creole is now a good deal closer to English than it was (and than Sranan is). Secondly, the gap between English and Jamaican Creole has been filled in. The result is that, while people at the top of the social scale speak something which is clearly English, and those at the bottom speak something which clearly is not, those in between speak something in between. The range of varieties from ‘pure’ English to ‘deepest’ Creole forms the social dialect continuum. Most speakers command quite a wide range of the continuum and ‘slide’ up and down it depending on stylistic context. The following examples from different points on West Indian dialect continua illustrate the nature of the phenomenon:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{It's my book} & \quad \text{I didn't get any} \quad \text{Do you want to cut it?} \\
\text{its mai buk} & \quad \text{ai didn't get eni} \quad \text{du ju want tu k’it} \\
\text{iz mai buk} & \quad \text{ai didn get non} \quad \text{du ju want tu kot it} \\
\text{iz mi buk} & \quad \text{a din get non} \quad \text{ju want kot it} \\
\text{a mi buk dat} & \quad \text{a in get non} \quad \text{iz kot ju want kot it} \\
\text{a fi mi buk dat} & \quad \text{mi na bin get non} \quad \text{a kot ju want fu kot it}
\end{align*}
\]
1.5 Autonomy and heteronomy

The problem with the Jamaican social dialect continuum is that, while any division of it into two parts would be linguistically as arbitrary as the division of the northern part of the Scandinavian continuum into Norwegian and Swedish, there is no social equivalent of the political geographical dividing line between Norway and Sweden. There is no well-motivated reason for saying, of some point on the continuum, that ‘English stops here’ or ‘Jamaican Creole starts here’. The result is that, whether in Jamaica or in, say, Britain, Jamaicans are considered to speak English. In fact, some Jamaicans do speak English, some do not, and some speak a variety or varieties about which it is not really possible to adjudicate. Clearly, the varieties spoken by most Jamaicans are not foreign to, say, British English speakers in the same way that French is, but they do constitute in many cases a semi-foreign language. Again this is a difficult notion for many people to grasp, since we are used to thinking of languages as being well-defined and clearly separated entities: either it is English or it is not. The facts, however, are often somewhat different. The most obvious difficulty to arise out of the Jamaican situation (and that in many other parts of the West Indies) is educational. West Indian children are considered to be speakers of English, and this is therefore the language which they are taught to read and write in and are examined in. Educationists have only recently come to begin to realise, however, that the relative educational failure of certain West Indian children may be due to a failure by educational authorities to recognise this semi-foreign language problem for what it is.

1.5 Autonomy and heteronomy

A useful concept in looking at the relationship between the notions of a ‘language’ and ‘dialect continuum’ is the concept of heteronomy. Heteronomy is simply the opposite of autonomy, and thus refers to dependence rather than independence. We say, for example, that certain varieties on the West Germanic dialect continuum are dialects of Dutch while others are dialects of German because of the relationship these dialects bear to the respective standard languages. The Dutch dialects are heteronomous with respect to standard Dutch, and the German dialects to standard German. This means, simply, that speakers of the Dutch dialects consider that they are speaking Dutch, that they read and write in Dutch, that any standardising changes in their dialects will be towards Dutch, and that they in general look to Dutch as the standard language which naturally corresponds to their vernacular varieties. Fig. 1-3 is an attempt to represent this diagrammatically by showing how the superposed autonomous varieties, standard Dutch and German, have been imposed over the dialect continuum.

Since heteronomy and autonomy are the result of political and cultural rather than purely linguistic factors, they are subject to change. A useful example of this is provided by the history of what is now southern Sweden. Until 1658 this area was part of Denmark (see Map 1-2), and the dialects spoken on that part of the Scandinavian
Dialect and language

Fig. 1-3. West Germanic dialect continuum

Map 1-2. Sweden and Denmark, showing the southern region of Sweden which was formerly Danish territory
1.5 Autonomy and heteronomy

dialect continuum were considered to be dialects of Danish. As the result of war and conquest, however, the territory became part of Sweden, and it is reported that it was a matter of only forty years or so before those same dialects were, by general consent as it were, dialects of Swedish. The dialects themselves, of course, had not changed at all linguistically. But they had become heteronomous with respect to standard Swedish rather than Danish (see Fig. 1-4).

We can now, therefore, expand a little on our earlier discussion of the term ‘language’. Normally, it seems, we employ this term for a variety which is autonomous together with all those varieties which are dependent (heteronomous) upon it. And just as the direction of heteronomy can change (e.g., Danish to Swedish), so formerly heteronomous varieties can achieve autonomy, often as the result of political developments, and ‘new’ languages can develop. (The linguistic forms will not be new, of course, simply their characterisation as forming an independent language.) Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, for instance, the standard language used in Norway was actually Danish, and it was only with the re-emergence of Norway as an independent nation that a distinct, autonomous standard Norwegian was developed. Similarly, what we now call Afrikaans became regarded as an independent language (and acquired a name, and an orthography and standardised grammar of its own) only in the 1920s. Prior to that it had been regarded as a form of Dutch.

In other cases, political separation may lead not to autonomy but to semi-autonomy (as in the case of Swiss German) or to a kind of double or shared autonomy. North American English, for example, used to look to British English as its norm, but now the autonomous standard English variety comes in a number of different forms, with British, American and Canadian English all being regarded as equally legitimate.

The same cannot be said of Canadian French, which still looks to European French as the norm (with the bizarre result that English-speaking Canadians are often still taught European French rather than Canadian French – rather as if Mexican Americans were taught British rather than American English). And Jamaican Creole is still to a very considerable extent heteronomous with respect to standard English. It has been
Dialect and language

said that ‘a language is a dialect with an army and a navy’. There is considerable truth in this claim, which stresses the political factors that lie behind linguistic autonomy. Nevertheless, the Jamaican situation shows that it is not the whole truth. Perhaps a time will come when Jamaican Creole will achieve complete autonomy, like Norwegian, or shared autonomy, like American English. Certainly there are educational grounds for suggesting that such a development in Jamaica would be desirable.

It is also possible for autonomy to be lost, and for formerly independent varieties to become heteronomous with respect to other varieties. This is what has happened to those varieties of the English dialect continuum spoken in Scotland. Scots was formerly an autonomous variety, but has been regarded for most purposes as a variety of English for the last two hundred years or so. Movements are currently afoot, however, linked to the rise of Scottish nationalism, for the reassertion of Scottish English/Scots as a linguistic variety in its own right, and it is possible that some form of Scots will achieve at least semi-autonomy at some future date.

1.6 Discreteness and continuity

We shall be looking frequently at dialect continua in the rest of this book, and observing that traditional work in dialectology has not always been very successful in handling linguistic phenomena such as variability, gradience and fuzziness that result from the fact that such continua exist. We shall, it is true, be using labels for linguistic varieties that may suggest that we regard them as discrete entities. It will be as well, nevertheless, to bear in mind that this will in most cases be simply an ad hoc device and that the use of labels such as ‘language’, ‘dialect’ and ‘variety’ does not imply that continua are not involved.

Further information

A useful discussion of the problem of ‘language’ and ‘dialect’ can be found in Hockett 1958: chapter 38. The problem of mutual intelligibility in Scandinavia is interestingly dealt with in Haugen 1966b. The African intelligibility study referred to is Wolff 1959. Further discussion on dialect, accent and speech can be found in Trudgill 1955. For a more theoretical discussion of dialectologists’ approaches to variability, gradience and fuzziness, see Chambers 1993. Information on Scandinavian dialects is provided by Walshe 1965. Information on creoles, including Jamaican Creole and Sranan, can be found in Todd 1974 and in Hymes 1971, from which the Caribbean examples in this chapter are taken, as well as in Mühlhäusler 1986; Romaine 1988; and Holm 1988. Haugen’s writings are also informative on the switch of some dialects from Danish to Swedish and on the rise of Norwegian; see, respectively, Haugen 1968 and 1966a. On the achievement of autonomy by Afrikaans, see Combrink 1978.