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## Linguistic Performance and Social Evaluation: A Sociolinguistic Attitude Test

The present paper provides an account of part of an experiment aimed at elucidating the relationship between **SPEAKER**, **SPEECH ACT** and **LISTENER** from a sociolinguistic and sociopsychological perspective. It is therefore a contribution to the description of social variation in spoken language. The main part of the experiment comprises a study of the language used by separate individuals who can be grouped together according to certain social criteria; the purpose is principally to see to what degree variation in linguistic behavior correlates with the social structure of a community as seen in terms of social classes. But there is another side to the question: How do we, as users of language, react when we hear a segment of speech? What does it tell us about the speaker? Can a listener, just by listening to a segment of anonymous speech, be rather certain of the social status of the speaker? And on what factors in the speaker's linguistic behavior does the listener base his judgment of the speaker's social identity?

Studies of social variation in language have hitherto dealt principally with the first aspect, studying particularly the frequency and distribution of linguistic phenomena among different social classes. The other aspect is, however, an important complement – partly because it can confirm whether the variation measured by linguistic analysis really corresponds to spontaneous impressions in an authentic linguistic environment (and is therefore socially relevant) and partly because it can give an indication of those areas in language which can be regarded as socially distinctive within a speech community. Much work remains to be done before these questions are answered satisfactorily, even within such a small society as the Swedish one.

This paper provides an account of only a part of a relatively limited investigation. The aim here is mainly to give a report of a method of investigation – a way of looking at, measuring and describing the link between the speaker, his language, and his listener. The method is