Social Differentiation

In the early days of sociolinguistics it was not uncommon to encounter the practice, in studies by workers in other areas of sociolinguistics, of labelling research in the variationist paradigm as "correlational sociolinguistics." Whether deprecation was intended or not – and sometimes it surely was – most of us in the field reacted unfavourably to this designation, and quite rightly too. The implication was that the counting and measuring of linguistic features and the correlating of linguistic variability with different forms of social differentiation was the simple and banal goal of our work. It was as if this was where our research finished. On the contrary, it was and is of course precisely here that our research starts. It was analyses and interpretations of patterns of correlation which enabled us to learn of hitherto unknown relationships – the degree of co-variation between language and speaker-sex was one big surprise, for instance. It was correlation which revealed the degree to which apparently random variation was structured. And it was correlation which gave us insights into the mechanisms involved in the propagation and diffusion of linguistic changes.

The four major forms of social differentiation which have figured in our research from the very beginning are: social context, social class, sex and gender, and ethnicity. Natalie Schilling-Estes' chapter, "Investigating Stylistic Variation," begins with early work on the relationship between language and social context. She deals with variation within rather than between single languages, and within the speech of speakers rather than between speakers or groups of speakers. Schilling-Estes examines shifts in the level of usage of dialect features as well as register variation and variation according to formality, and she also examines the complex notion of genre. In common with the other writers in this section, she gives a more problematized and nuanced treatment to the form of variation she is discussing than was common in much early work in variationist linguistics.

The first major publication in the field of linguistic variation and change was of course William Labov's *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*. Social class has thus from the outset been a pivotal concept in sociolinguistic research, and one which has been particularly insightful for work on linguistic change. Sherry Ash in her chapter, "Social Class", describes the role this concept has played in work in linguistic variation and change, but she

also points out that, like sex, ethnic group, and social context, social class has most often been employed by workers in our field as if it were a self-evident and unproblematical notion. It seems we have so far done very well with social class treating it as an intuitive, fairly obvious social division, but doubtless a greater understanding will lead to further progress.

Similarly, sex has been one of the most widely used forms of social differentiation in linguistic variation and change studies. As Jenny Cheshire argues in "Sex and Gender in Variationist Research," this too was formerly regarded as an unproblematical category which sociolinguists took for granted, but has now like social class come to be recognized, following to a certain rather muted extent developments in feminist theory, as more complex than early workers ever realized.

In the same vein, Carmen Fought's chapter, "Ethnicity," argues that the usefulness of "race" as a category to sociolinguistics depends on the understanding that it is communities and societies which *construct* ethnicity. An analysis of the way in which this construction proceeds is in many ways even more fraught with complexities than analyses of the other three forms of social differentiation which are dealt with in this section. Many other branches of sociolinguistics – the social psychology of language, for instance – have benefited from research into ethnicity. Fought's chapter, however, shows that an understanding of this concept has, in particular, been highly informative in the variationist study of linguistic change.

Peter Trudgill

15 Investigating Stylistic Variation

NATALIE SCHILLING-ESTES

1 What is "style"?

Roughly speaking, stylistic variation involves variation in the speech of individual speakers (INTRA-SPEAKER VARIATION) rather than across groups of speakers (INTER-SPEAKER VARIATION). Intra-speaker variation encompasses a number of different types of variation, including shifts in usage levels for features associated with particular groups of speakers – i.e. DIALECTS – or with particular situations of use – i.e. REGISTERS (e.g. Crystal 1991: 295, Halliday 1978). As an example of register-based variation, a speaker may show higher usage levels for pronunciation features considered to be "formal" (e.g. [ɪŋ] rather than [ən] in words like *walking* and *swimming*) when talking with a colleague about work-related matters than when talking with a friend about entertainment or family. With regard to dialect variation, a speaker may show higher usage levels for a feature like *r*-lessness (e.g. [fɑːm] "farm"), associated with traditional Southern American speech, when talking with an older Southerner who uses this feature than when talking with a speaker who does not. In addition, intra-speaker variation can involve shifts into and out of language varieties, whether dialects, registers, or GENRES (i.e. highly ritualized, routinized varieties, often associated with performance or artistic display of some kind). For example, a lawyer might switch into a "legalese" register to discuss a case with assistants, a preacher might switch into a "sermon" genre when stepping into the pulpit on Sunday morning, or a white teenager might switch into an approximation of African-American Vernacular English to indicate affiliation with "cool" youth culture (e.g. Bucholtz 1999, Cutler 1999). Switching between different languages rather than varieties of a single language is referred to as CODE SWITCHING and will not be addressed in this chapter. (See Myers-Scotton 1998, whose Markedness Model for code switching in many ways parallels current variationist approaches to stylistic variation, particularly in its emphasis on speakers' active use of stylistic resources to help shape their surroundings and social relations.)

Style shifts – that is, shifts into and out of different language varieties, and shifts in usage levels for features associated with these varieties – may be quite deliberate and involve the self-conscious use of features of which the speaker and audience are very aware, or they may be unconscious, involving features that people do not even realize they are using. In addition, shifts may be quite short-lived, as when a speaker involved in a sociolinguistic interview moment-arily shifts into a more vernacular style during a brief phone conversation; or they may be quite extensive, even part of one's daily routine, as, for example, in the case of a Texas woman who frequently shifts into the "Southern drawl" while at work to improve her sales record (Johnstone 1999). Further, long-standing patterns of stylistic variation can come to characterize a person or group in general, so that we can speak of a person's individual style or of various group styles (e.g. Valley Girl talk, associated with white young women and teens in the San Fernando Valley area of California). Finally, intra-speaker variation may involve any level of language organization, from the phonological and morphosyntactic to the lexical, semantic, pragmatic, and discoursal. Hence, we can talk of a number of different kinds of style, ranging from a "formal style" associated with high usage levels for particular phonological and morphosyntactic features (often, but not always, those associated with a standard variety; see Trudgill 2000: 81–5), to "conversational style" – that is, the broad interactional patterns that characterize entire discourses (e.g. Tannen 1984).

Given the broad range of types of variation employed by individual speak-ers, it is not surprising that variationists have for decades debated exactly what should be subsumed under the notion "stylistic variation," as well as the best way to go about studying this all-encompassing phenomenon. However, it is agreed that intra-speaker variation should hold an important place in variation study. After all, intra-speaker variation is pervasive, perhaps even universal, and we cannot hope to achieve a full understanding of the patterning of variation in language, or of language in general, if we do not understand its patterning within individuals' speech as well as across groups of speakers. Further, since intra-speaker variation lies at the intersection of the individual and the communal, a better understanding of its patterns will lend valuable insight into how the two spheres interrelate – that is, how individuals internal-ize broad-based community language patterns and how these patterns are shaped and re-shaped by individuals in everyday conversational interaction.

2   Approaches to Intra-speaker Variation: An Overview

Traditionally, variationists have considered style shifting to involve shifts in usage levels for phonological and morphosyntactic features, typically arranged along a vernacular-standard continuum, across different speech situations, delimited either according to their relative formality (Labov 1972a) or the

composition of the speaker's audience (Bell 1984). In this, studies of intra-speaker variation parallel studies of INTER-SPEAKER VARIATION, in which the patterning of phonological and morphosyntactic variables is investigated across different speaker groups. However, variationist investigations of style shifting are quite different from investigations of speech style conducted in previous decades in other subfields of sociolinguistics. For example, the taxonomic approaches of researchers such as Ervin-Tripp (1964), Halliday (1978), and Hymes (1972) viewed stylistic variation as encompassing a much wider range of types of variation than did early variationists (e.g. variation in address forms, as reported in Ervin-Tripp 1973) and also viewed it as being conditioned by a much broader range of factors, including not only formality of the situation or audience composition but such factors as topic, setting, key (e.g. joking vs. serious), channel (e.g. spoken vs. written), and purpose, to name a few.

In recent years, the variationist study of style shifting has diverged from the tightly focused approaches of early variationists and converged, in at least some ways, with the early broad-based approaches of ethnographers, anthropologists, sociologists, and others. Variationists are no longer as concerned with investigating the patterning of stylistic variation according to just one or a handful of social factors but are considering a full range of factors in their search for influences on intra-speaker variation. In addition, rather than examining variation based on pre-imposed categorizations of the speech situation as "casual," "formal," or "careful," or on pre-imposed social categories like upper middle class/lower middle class, male/female, or black/white, they are conducting extensive ethnographic investigations in order to discover locally salient ways of categorizing language, people, and the world (e.g. Eckert 2000, Kiesling 1996, Mendoza-Denton 1997). Variationist investigations of style shifting are also becoming broader in that they are encompassing more types of features, ranging from the phonological and morphosyntactic to the lexical and pragmatic/interactional (Coupland 2001, Schilling-Estes 1999), to paralinguistic features such as intonation (Arnold et al. 1993), to non-linguistic elements of style such as hair, clothing, makeup, body positioning, and use of space (Eckert 2000, Mendoza-Denton 1997). Further, a greater range of different types of style shifts are being included – not only shifts into and out of more and less formal speech but also shifts in and out of registers, dialects (e.g. Rampton 1999b), and highly performative genres (e.g. Coupland 1985, 2001; Schilling-Estes 1998). Despite their increasingly broad scope, however, variationist studies of intra-speaker variation are not simply converging with taxonomic approaches, since the latter have tended to be qualitative in approach whereas the former retain at least some measure of quantitative analysis, the hallmark of variation study.

At the same time that variationist investigations of stylistic variation are becoming broader, they are also becoming deeper, as variationists increasingly turn toward investigating variation as it patterns in unfolding talk (e.g. Arnold et al. 1993, Bell 1999, in press, Bell and Johnson 1997, Schilling-Estes 1999) rather than relying on aggregate figures compiled from different sections of

talk, different speakers, or different speaker groups. With the increasing emphasis on style in action has come increasing focus on two key points: (1) speakers do not shift style merely, or primarily, in reaction to elements of the speech situation (whether formality or audience) but rather are quite active and highly creative in their use of stylistic resources, and (2) not only are speakers *not* bound to elements of the external situation as they shape their speech, but they use their speech to help shape and re-shape the external situation (whether the immediate interactional context or wider societal forces), as well as their interpersonal relationships and, crucially, their personal identities. In their emphasis on speaker creativity, variationists are falling into line with social psychological approaches to stylistic variation, in which speaker agency (as opposed to speaker response to external stimuli) has long been a primary focus (e.g. Giles 1973; see Audience Design, below).

In the sections to follow, I will outline three major approaches to stylistic variation, two of which are more unidimensional (Attention to Speech, Audience Design) and the third more multidimensional (the so-called "Speaker Design" approach). In the final section, I will point to some areas in need of further exploration, as well as suggest some ways in which the insights from various approaches can be integrated as we pursue our investigations of intra-speaker variation.

3   Attention to Speech

The first variationist investigations of stylistic variation were conducted by William Labov (e.g. Labov 1972a). Labov's primary interest in the topic lay in obtaining and identifying data that represented, as closely as possible, people's "casual," "natural" speech rather than speech that has been greatly altered due to the presence of an observer. In order to do this, Labov developed a sociolinguistic interview designed to yield a range of types of speech, from the casual to the highly formal, that could be fairly readily delimited by the analyst. Most of the interview was designed to be conversational and yielded two types of speech: (1) CAREFUL speech, in which the interviewee was somewhat guarded, and (2) CASUAL speech, in which the interviewee spoke in a more "natural" way. Casual speech could be delimited from careful by noting such matters as topic and addressee. For example, speech on such topics as childhood customs and dangerous situations was held to trigger casual speech, as was speech directed to a third party – for example, a spouse or child. In addition, Labov identified five PARALINGUISTIC CHANNEL CUES which seemed to correlate with casual speech: changes in tempo, pitch, volume, and breathing rate, as well as the use of laughter. Further, the interview comprised several tasks designed to elicit speech that was very self-conscious, as well as to yield tokens of phonological variants relevant to the study at hand: (1) a reading passage, (2) a word-list, and (3) a list of minimal pairs, or words that differ by only one phoneme in standard speech but may or may not differ in pro-

nunciation in vernacular varieties (e.g. *source/sauce* is a minimal pair for *r*-pronouncing speakers in New York City but not for more vernacular *r*-less ones).

Underlying the array of styles in Labov's interview was the belief that style shifts are triggered primarily by the amount of attention people pay to their speech itself as they converse – in other words, how self-conscious people are as they speak. When speech is unselfconscious, as for example when an interviewee reprimands a child who has wandered into the interview, it will be more "casual," closer to the "vernacular" – that is, the language variety first acquired by the speaker.[1] When speech is more self-conscious – for example, when reading a list of words that forces the speaker to focus attention on her *r* pronunciations, then it will be more "formal," closer to a more standard variety.

3.1   The patterning of stylistic variation across social groups

The quantitative patterns obtained by Labov and others using his basic interviewing techniques (e.g. Trudgill 1974) reveal that, for the most part, when investigating features that can be arranged along a vernacular-standard continuum, speakers show lower usage levels for vernacular features, and higher levels for their standard counterparts, as they move from casual situations, in which they are relatively unselfconscious, to more formal situations, in which they are carefully monitoring their speech. Figure 15.1 illustrates this patterning for the use of vernacular [t] for [θ] (e.g. [wɪt] for "with", [tɪŋk] for "think") in New York City, based on Labov's (1966) survey.

Figure 15.1 also reveals how closely intertwined stylistic variation is with social class variation: the same variants used in more casual styles are also used with greater frequency in lower social class groups, while those that are used in more formal styles are those associated with higher class groups. In other words, stylistic variation parallels social class variation. It was later observed, by Bell (1984), that not only are the two dimensions parallel, but stylistic variation seems to be derivative of social class variation, since the degree of stylistic variation is almost always less that the degree of differentiation by social group. This notion is encapsulated in Bell's Style Axiom:

> Variation on the style dimension within the speech of a single speaker derives from and echoes the variation which exists between speakers on the "social" dimension.   (Bell 1984: 151)[2]

3.2   Exceptions to the basic pattern

There are several classes of exceptions to this pattern. One involves STATIS-TICAL HYPERCORRECTION – that is, the use of *higher* rather than *lower* levels of standard variants by middle-status groups (usually the lower middle class) than higher-class groups in more formal styles. When hypercorrection occurs,
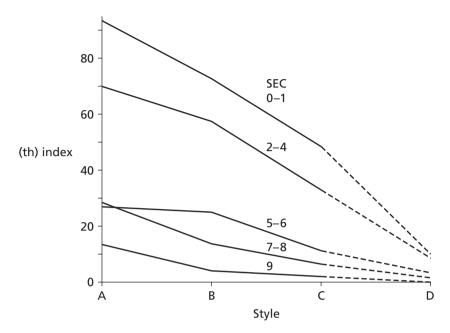
Figure 15.1   Stylistic and social class variation in [t]/[θ] usage in New York City English

Source: From *Sociolinguistic Patterns* by William Labov, copyright © University of Pennsylvania Press 1972; reprinted with permission
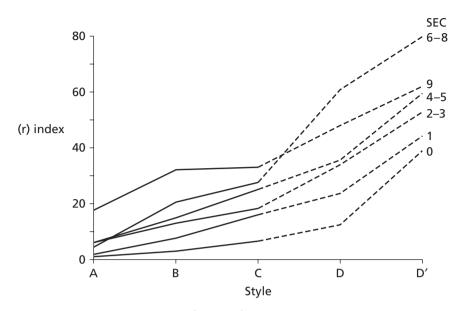
Key: Socioeconomic class scale: 0–1, lower class; 2–4, working class; 5–6, 7–8, lower middle class; 9, upper middle class.
   A: casual speech; B: careful speech; C: reading style; D: word lists.

the class exhibiting the hypercorrect behavior usually shows a greater range of variation across speech styles than across social classes, thus violating Bell's Style Axiom. Figure 15.2 illustrates this pattern for the pronunciation of *r* (a prestige feature) in New York City.

   The hypercorrect behavior of the lower middle class in such cases has been explained by such factors as the indeterminate (and insecure) position of the lower middle class, as well as the upward mobility that supposedly characterizes this group: in their efforts to enter into the higher classes, the lower middle class attempts to speak as "correctly" as possible – more "correctly," in fact, than the higher classes. However, the "cross-over" pattern in figure 15.2 does not seem to hold for all linguistic variables but chiefly those undergoing change (Eckert 2000: 26, Labov 1972a, Preston 1991, Trudgill 1974). In addition, Bell (1984: 154) and Preston (1991: 34) suggest that because hypercorrection usually involves only one social group, it is perhaps best considered a socially motivated phenomenon rather than a stylistic one.

   Another class of exceptions to the Style Axiom involves so-called "hyperstyle" variables, or variables that show far more stylistic than social class variation for *all* social groups (Bell 1984: 154–6). For example, Woods (1979) showed

Figure 15.2 Class and style stratification for postvocalic *r*

Source: From *Sociolinguistic Patterns* by William Labov, copyright © University of Pennsylvania Press 1972; reprinted with permission

Key: Socioeconomic scale: 0–1, lower class; 2–3, working class; 4–5, 6–8, lower middle class; 9, upper middle class.
A: casual speech; B: careful speech; C: reading style; D: word lists; D', minimal pairs

that the envelope of stylistic variation for medial /t/ voicing in Ottawa English is 40 percent, but the range across social groups is only 25 percent; similarly, Modaressi-Tehrani (1978) showed that the range of variation for [æᵉ] raising in Tehran Persian across different speech styles was 94 percent, compared with a social group range of only 17 percent. It may be possible to explain these patterns by considering that, in certain communities, reading may not lie on the same continuum as different types of spoken styles (i.e. speakers may have a specialized "reading style" that is quite different from even their most formal spoken variety; see Milroy 1987: 173–8). In the Persian case, we might also appeal to cultural differences, especially the greater attention to matters of deference in Iranian society vis-à-vis American (Bell 1984: 155–6). Alternatively, we might appeal to relative levels of awareness of different language features, since, as Preston (1991) notes, features of which speakers are highly conscious often show erratic behavior in style shifting, including behavior that leads not only to violations of Bell's Style Axiom, but also Preston's Status Axiom, which holds that:

> Variation on the "status" dimension derives from and echoes the variation which exists within the "linguistic" dimension. (Preston 1991: 36)

In other words, linguistic stereotypes might show unusual behavior, not only in their social class and stylistic patterning but even in their linguistic patterning.

This observation is borne out, for example, in Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999) who note unusual linguistic patterning for stereotypes but not for non-noticeable forms in Ocracoke English, a variety of American English spoken on Ocracoke Island, in the North Carolina Outer Banks, and in Smith Island English, a variety spoken in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay. In addition, Trudgill (1986: 66–78) notes that, in cases of dialect contact, highly noticeable features are often subject to HYPERDIALECTISM, or overgeneralization into environments where they are not linguistically expected.

   Despite the exceptions to Bell's Style Axiom, the fact remains that stylistic and social class variation are intimately interconnected, and Labov's early investigations of stylistic variation were instrumental in examining the nature and extent of this interconnection. Labov's studies were also important in that they demonstrated that casual, unmonitored speech seems to be more regular in its patterning than more formal speech, a finding which runs counter to popular notions regarding the "sloppiness" of casual, vernacular speech.

3.3   *Limitations of the Attention to Speech approach*

Despite the insights offered by the Attention to Speech approach, it has been criticized on a number of grounds. For example, it has been pointed out that it is extremely difficult in practice to separate casual from careful speech in the conversational portion of the sociolinguistic interview. For example, Wolfram (1969: 58–9) noted that "channel cues" are unreliable indicators of casual speech, since, for example, laughter can just as easily be associated with increased nervousness and selfconsciousness rather than increased casualness. In addition, it is quite difficult to quantify attention to speech (Bell 1984), and experiments designed to investigate the effects of differing degrees of attention to speech on variation in usage levels for standard vs. vernacular variants have yielded mixed results (e.g. Bell 1984: 147–50). Further, the approach has been criticized for being too unidimensional, and it has been pointed out that there are certain speech styles that simply do not fit into a continuum based on degree of attention paid to speech, or on formality vs. informality. For example, as noted above, reading styles may not lie on the same plane as spoken styles (e.g. Macaulay 1977, Milroy 1987: 173–8, Romaine 1978, 1980). In addition, level of formality cannot be neatly correlated with attention to speech even in spoken styles, since it is quite possible for speakers to quite consciously shift into vernacular rather than standard speech patterns (e.g. Coupland 1980, Rickford 1979: 230, Wolfram 1981), including exaggerated, highly stylized vernacular "performances" (e.g. Coupland 1985, 2001, Eckert 2000: 79, Schilling-Estes 1998). Further, researchers have noted that the notion of "vernacular" is itself too unidimensional, since speakers exhibit different types of casual, unguarded speech in different casual settings – and even in a single casual setting, depending on such matters as purpose, topic, and participant interrelations (e.g. Hindle 1979). However, Labov himself points out that the Attention to Speech

approach was never intended to capture the many different types of speech styles we are likely to find in real life, or their many conditioning factors, but merely to serve as a useful means for identifying "casual" speech in the socio-linguistic interview (Labov 1972a: 97).

One final criticism of the Attention to Speech approach is that it views speakers as passive respondents who alter their speech in response to changes in the external situation rather that crediting them with any agency in their use of stylistic resources. Such a view is perhaps inherent in a sociolinguistic theory that sees language as *reflective* of social structures and interactional norms rather than as a key element in the construction, maintenance, and alteration of these norms and structures. As we shall see, as variationists have become increasingly interested in incorporating social constructionist approaches into their investigations, they have become increasingly dissatisfied with theoretical models (and accompanying methodologies) that force them to view speakers as simply accommodating to given norms, whether of speech situation or social group, rather than taking part in shaping and re-shaping these norms (e.g. Arnold et al. 1993, Bauman and Sherzer 1989, Cameron 1990, Eckert 2000, Rampton 1995, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, Romaine 1984, Schiffrin 1996).

4   Audience Design

An approach that overcomes some of the limitations of the Attention to Speech model is the Audience Design model, initially proposed by Bell (1984). This model holds that people engage in style shifting, not in response to shifts in amount of attention paid to speech, but in response to audience members. The model has its roots in Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles 1973, Giles and Powesland 1975), a social psychological model which holds that speakers tend to adjust their speech toward that of their addressees, in order to win their approval. Less commonly, speakers may adjust away from addressees' speech, in order to create psychological distance. Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) is grounded in a number of experiments which show convergence, and sometimes divergence, of speakers to addressees in such matters as speech rate, content, pausing, and "accent" (typically not very precisely defined in SAT). The Audience Design model extends SAT by applying the insights of the theory to the patterning of specific linguistic variables and by going beyond addressee effects to consider the effects of others who might be part of a speaker's audience – namely, AUDITORS, or ratified participants in the interaction who are not being directly addressed, OVERHEARERS, or persons who are not participants but are known to be within hearing distance of the interaction, and EAVESDROPPERS, unratified persons who are not known to be present. Since their original formulations, both SAT and the Audience Design model have been significantly reworked (in fact, SAT is now called Communication

Accommodation Theory, or CAT); some aspects of newer versions of these models are discussed below.

The Audience Design model provides a fuller account of stylistic variation than the Attention to Speech model in several ways. First, it is not limited to speech styles in the sociolinguistic interview but is intended to be applicable to more naturalistic data such as conversational interaction with peers and co-workers. In addition, in attempting to link intra-speaker variation to inter-speaker relations rather than individual psychological factors such as attention to speech, the Audience Design model seeks to provide explanation for the interrelation of intra-speaker and inter-speaker variation, as well as its quantitative patterning. Bell (1984: 158) notes: "Intraspeaker variation is a *response* to interspeaker variation, chiefly as manifested in one's interlocutors. The fact that style shift falls short of social differentiation . . . reflects the fact that speakers cannot match the speech differences of all their interlocutors – but they can approach them." Finally, the Audience Design model goes part of the way toward introducing an element of speaker agency into stylistic variation. Though the model is essentially RESPONSIVE (in that speakers respond to audience members in shaping their speech), it does include an INITIATIVE dimension, to account for the fact that speakers sometimes engage in style shifts that seem to have nothing to do with the make-up of their present audience.

4.1   The responsive dimension

Bell (1984) presents findings from a number of studies that demonstrate that speakers indeed shape their speech in response to addressees. For example, Bickerton (1980), Douglas-Cowie (1978), Russell (1982), and Thelander (1982) show that speakers use higher levels of vernacular variants when talking with peer groups than with an unfamiliar interviewer. In addition, Trudgill (1981) demonstrates that interviewers as well as interviewees respond to addressees, through analyzing variation in his own speech patterns when conducing interviews with people of various social class groups in Norwich (Trudgill 1974). Further, Coupland (1980, 1981, 1984) shows that the effects of different addressees on speech style are pervasive in daily interaction, as evidenced in his analysis of the speech of an assistant in a travel agency as she converses with clients, co-workers, and fellow travel agents. Bell also presents evidence from several studies that show that auditor effects are smaller than addressee effects. For example, Bickerton (1980), Thelander (1982), and Douglas-Cowie (1978) show a greater degree of shifting between peer group speech and speech with an interviewer alone than between peer group speech and peer group speech when the interviewer is present as auditor.

Bell also notes that there are factors besides audience members that affect speech style – for example, topic and setting. However, he maintains that the effects of these factors are actually derivative of audience-related concerns: When speakers appear to shift styles based on shifts in topic (e.g. Blom and

Gumperz 1972, Coupland 1981, Douglas-Cowie 1978, Giles and Powesland 1975) or setting (e.g. Hindle 1979), they are actually shifting based on addressees associated with the various topics and settings – in other words, as if talking to these various addressees. If topic- and setting-related effects are indeed derivative of audience effects, then the former should be weaker than the latter (Bell 1984: 178–82). This prediction is borne out in quantitative studies such as Coupland (1981), whose data indicate a greater percentage of shift for certain variables across different audiences than across different topics (see Bell 1984: 179, table 6) and to some extent in Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994), who conducted a thorough quantitative study of usage levels of a number of features associated with African-American Vernacular English in the speech of an African-American teenager, "Foxy," who participates in a series of interviews with an African-American interviewer, as well as a single interview with a white fieldworker. Although Rickford and McNair-Knox show that the amount of style shifting is actually greater across topics within individual interviews than across interviews with different addressees, they maintain that audience effects are actually greater overall, since Foxy generally uses higher frequencies of vernacular variants on *every* topic when talking with the African-American interviewer than with the white fieldworker (1994: 258–62).

4.2   *The initiative dimension*

Despite their success in identifying the effects of such factors as audience, topic, setting, and even channel (Coupland 1980) on stylistic variation, researchers have determined that there is a great deal of stylistic variation that cannot be accounted by appealing to situational factors, since speakers often creatively initiate style shifts, in order to alter the situation in some way. For example, Blom and Gumperz (1972) noted that, while switches from the local dialect to the standard variety (and vice versa) were indeed often conditioned by changes in the external situation (e.g. a person entering the room during a conversation), switching also frequently took place in the absence of such situational changes. For example, people might suddenly switch to the standard variety during a casual conversation with vernacular-speaking friends in order to clinch an argument. Similarly, Coupland (1980) noted that the travel assistant he studied engaged in style shifting, not only based on who she was talking to or what she was talking about, but also when she changed the purpose of her conversation. For example, she once shifted into more vernacular style when talking with a difficult client in order to indicate increasing desire to be helpful rather than aloof.

   In order to account for such shifts, Bell added an initiative component to his essentially responsive model. However, initiative shifts were considered to represent a small part of the Audience Design model, since, Bell maintained, "People do, after all, spend more time responding to others than taking the initiative" (1984: 184). In addition, initiative shifts were seen to be derivative of

audience-designed shifts, in that speakers who engage in such shifts are actually responding to non-present audience members (whom Bell calls REFEREES) who are so important to the speaker that they influence speech even when not immediately present (Bell 1984: 186–7). Finally, initiative shifts can be seen as reactive in that, even though speakers rely on styles associated with other situations when engaging in initiative shift, they nonetheless do so in response to the current situation, in order to affect their relations with present audience members. For example, a speaker who switches into a standard dialect in order to win an argument with a vernacular-speaking co-conversationalist does so in order to affect the current interaction, not a distant interaction he once had with a standard-speaking audience (Bell 1984: 184–5).

4.3   *Limitations of the Audience Design model*

Since its inception, the Audience Design model has been well received by variationists, for such reasons as its explanatory power, its applicability to speech events besides the sociolinguistic interview, and for the strong, testable predictions it makes regarding such matters as the ratio of addressee effects to auditor and overhearer effects and the ratio of audience effects to the effects of setting and topic (e.g. Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994: 241). However, the model is not without its limitations.

One limitation is the model's reliance on the responsive dimension of stylistic variation. Since the model was proposed, researchers have increasingly come to realize that speakers engage in initiative shifting far more often than originally conceived. Indeed, Bell himself has noted that the initiative component of his model is "in need of serious rethinking" (Bell 2001), and he has reworked his model considerably in order to give more prominence to initiative shifts. In fact, he now maintains that not only is initiative shift just as pervasive as responsive, but both are always in simultaneous operation in conversation (Bell 1999: 525, 2001). However, Bell still maintains that initiative shifts are essentially reactive, in that they involve utilizing styles normally associated with one group or setting ("responsive" styles) in contexts in which their use is non-normative ("marked"), thereby "infusing the flavour of one setting into a different context" (1999: 524). Although certainly, speech styles do conjure up "flavours" – that is, meanings associated with particular people and situations – this conceptualization may still be in need of some reworking, since it is not clear how to go about identifying marked vs. unmarked styles in all speech situations. In addition, both marked and unmarked styles may be used to infuse meaning into a situation. For example, Kiesling (1998), in his study of fraternity men's speech, shows that the men use both standard and nonstandard variants of the (ing) variable (e.g. *walking* vs. *walkin'*) in formal meetings in order to inject certain meanings (e.g. authoritativeness, hard-workingness) into the meeting (Kiesling and Schilling-Estes 1998). Indeed, researchers in stylistic variation are increasingly taking into consideration the

social constructionist view that *all* speech styles play a role in shaping *all* situations (e.g. Arnold et al. 1993, Bauman and Sherzer 1989, Cameron 1990, Eckert 2000, Rampton 1995, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, Romaine 1984; Schiffrin 1996). Under this view, it is very difficult indeed to correlate styles with situations, since both work together to define (and re-define) one another.

Even if we concede that style shifting is essentially responsive, we are left with the question of exactly what it is about addressees and other audience members that speakers are responding to. As Bell (1984: 167) notes, there are three "increasingly specific" possibilities:

1 Speakers assess the personal characteristics of their addresses, and design their style to suit.
2 Speakers assess the general style level of their addressees' speech, and shift relative to it.
3 Speakers assess their addressees' levels for specific linguistic variables, and shift relative to those levels.

It has been demonstrated that speakers do indeed respond on level 1. For example, in a study of AAVE speakers in Washington, DC, Fasold (1972) notes that informants showed higher usage levels for vernacular variants when talking with *standard*-speaking black interviewers than with white interviewers. However, studies such as this still do not show exactly which personal characteristics of the addressee speakers are responding to – is it ethnicity or some other factor, such as familiarity, age, gender, or even individual personality? In addition, Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) demonstrated that speakers also respond on level 2, though they do not seem to be capable of level 3. However, given that "the general speech impression of level (2) largely derives from the combined assessment of many individual variables" (Bell 1984: 168), we cannot discount the possibility that, at least at some level, speakers may indeed respond to specific levels for specific variables, as well as more general speech patterns.

A final concern regarding the Audience Design model is that, even though it provides a better model for stylistic variation outside the sociolinguistic interview than the Attention to Speech framework, it too is unidimensional, in that all style shifts, even those seemingly related to non-audience effects, are held to be derivative of audience-related concerns. Hence, it may be inadequate to capture the genuine complexity of stylistic variation in everyday speech. Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) point out that it is difficult to investigate empirically whether topic effects actually *derive* from audience effects, even if topic effects can be shown to be weaker than audience-related effects. In addition, their data indicate that people do not always behave as if talking to different audience members when talking about different topics. For example, their informant, Foxy, does not talk as if talking *to* her teenage friends when quoting them on the subject of male–female relations; rather, she talks as if she *were* these friends – in other words, she takes on the role of these friends through performing their speech (1994: 258–62).

In more recent formulations of the Audience Design model, the derivative nature of non-audience effects is given much less emphasis, in recognition of the difficulty of empirically demonstrating such derivation. In addition, the model is becoming more multidimensional in that it is taking greater account of factors besides demographic characteristics of audience members in shaping speech style. For example, Bell and Johnson (1997; see also Bell 2001) recently conducted a study in New Zealand in which interviewers and interviewees were paired based on like and unlike gender and ethnicity (Maori and Pakeha [white]). Other demographic and non-demographic factors (e.g. age, familiarity, setting) were kept as constant as possible. Despite these controls, Bell and Johnson found that speakers sometimes used features "against the demographic associations of the feature" (Bell and Johnson 1997: 15). For example, the interviewers used the second highest level of *eh*, a discourse particle associated with Maori men, with the inteviewee who was most distant in terms of demographic associations – the Pakeha woman. Bell and Johnson suggest that the reason for this is not that the interviewers were trying to distance themselves from the interviewee through their linguistic divergence but rather trying bring themselves closer, since *eh* serves as a device for creating solidarity as well as a marker of Maori ethnicity and male gender.

In recognizing that solidarity with one's audience is not always best achieved by using speech features associated with one's addressee, Bell and Johnson bring the Audience Design model closer to newer versions of Communication Accommodation Theory, which hold that there are many communicative strategies for achieving psychological convergence besides linguistic convergence (e.g. Giles et al. 1991). In addition, in recognizing that immediate conversational purpose is just as important as more permanent speaker characteristics in shaping speech style (as well as recognizing the importance of initiative style shift), they are moving the Audience Design framework in the direction of what we might call "speaker design" approaches, following Coupland (1996). Like CAT, "speaker design" approaches also have roots in SAT, in which speaker motivation, both immediate and in terms of more long-range goals, has long been considered of central importance in stylistic variation (e.g. Giles 1973).

5   Speaker Design Approaches

Under speaker design approaches, stylistic variation is viewed not as a reactive phenomenon but as a resource in the active creation, presentation, and recreation of speaker identity (e.g. Arnold et al. 1993, Campbell-Kibler et al. 2000, Coupland 1985, 2001, Eckert 2000, Kiesling 1996, 1998, Kiesling and Schilling-Estes 1998, Mendoza-Denton 1997, Rose 2000, Schilling-Estes 1999, Traugott and Romaine 1985, Wong and Zhang 2000). Crucially, identity is understood to encompass both personal and interpersonal dimensions, since people necessarily define themselves in relation to others, while engaged in

social interaction (e.g. Barth 1969, Coupland, in press, Scollon 1997, Wong and Zhang, in press).

   Speaker design models are firmly rooted in social constructionist approaches, in that language and society are viewed as co-constitutive: the linguistic features and patterns speakers use are not mere reflections of static identity, as defined by one's positions in an existent social order (e.g. white middle class male, older Native American female), but rather are resources speakers use to shape and re-shape social structures such as class and gender groups, as well as their positioning with respect to these structures and with respect to one another. In addition, speakers use linguistic resources to position themselves with respect to the talk itself, whether its subject matter or its entire "frame" – that is, the interactants' sense of what sort of speech activity is taking place (e.g. Bateson 1972, Goffman 1974, 1981, Hymes 1974, Tannen 1993). Thus, under speaker design approaches, reified *structures* fade in importance, while *social practice* and speaker agency move to the forefront (e.g. Eckert 2000). Even seemingly reactive linguistic choices (i.e. responsive style shifts) are seen as inevitably involving agency. As Coupland (2001) notes: "From a self-identity perspective, shifts that are "appropriate" [i.e. normative in a given situation] are neverthe-less creative in the sense that speakers opt to operate communicatively within normative bounds."

5.1   *Investigating speaker agency*

To achieve some understanding of speaker agency – i.e. *why* people make the stylistic choices they do rather than simply which choices correlate with which situations – researchers are considering a broad range of factors that might influence language choice, including not only factors external to the speaker such as audience, topic, and setting but also speaker-internal factors like pur-pose, key, and frame. For example, Coupland (1985, 2001) examines how a Cardiff radio announcer uses various stylistic resources to accomplish differ-ent purposes and establish different types of joking keys. For example, the announcer uses broad Cardiff dialect to forge connection with Cardiff-related themes and more standard speech to accomplish organizational tasks, such as announcing upcoming events on his show. In addition, he uses Cardiff dialect to poke fun at himself when he stumbles over his words, as well as a fake American accent to parody American radio programs. Similarly, Schilling-Estes (1998) shows how a speaker of Ocracoke English shifts into exaggeratedly broad dialect in order bring to the forefront the fact that what seems to be a casual conversation with a relative stranger is really a sociolinguistic interview – in essence, a "dialect performance."

   The study of stylistic variation is also becoming broader in that researchers are increasingly grounding their investigations in long-term, broad-based eth-nographic studies, in order to discover how various elements of style are used in the local setting, as well as what these elements actually mean to the people

who use them (e.g. Eckert 2000, Kiesling 1996, Mendoza-Denton 1997). In addition, they are looking at a broader range of types of features, not only the phonological and morphosyntactic features associated with classic variationist studies but also lexical, pragmatic, and discourse-level features, as well as paralinguistic features such as intonational contours, and even non-linguistic features. For example, Mendoza-Denton (1997) shows how a group of Latina adolescents (in this case, immigrant Mexicans and Mexican-Americans) use linguistic features such as discourse markers and non-linguistic resources like make-up and clothing style to forge and indicate subtle distinctions in social network and gang affiliation. Similarly, Arnold et al. (1993) show how a California adolescent, "Trendy," uses phonological, lexical, discoursal, and intonational resources in crafting her individual style, as well as that of her "trendy" social group at school.

Examining as many types of features as possible is crucial in any research enterprise concerned with speaker meaning: phonological variants may provide some clue, since they may carry connotations of group belonging, through their association with the groups who use them. However, variants may be associated with more than one group (e.g. Brown and Levinson 1979, Eckert 2000: 114, Schilling-Estes 1999), and in addition, they may carry associations besides group membership. For example, they may be associated with particular *attributes* of a group rather than the group as a whole, with individuals, or with idealizations – whether ideal individuals such as "the ideal man" or ideal qualities such as "honesty" or "toughness" (e.g. Eastman and Stein 1993: 188, quoted in Coupland 2001; Giles et al. 1991: 15–16; Kiesling and Schilling-Estes 1998). In order to discover which attributes and associations are being called forth at any given moment, it is helpful to look beyond variants whose meanings derive solely from their association with groups and individuals to features with inherent semantic meaning. For example, speakers' pronoun choices (e.g. "we" vs. "they") can help indicate whether they are positioning themselves as members of particular groups or not. In addition, we can look to features with pragmatic/interactional to gain information about what sorts of personal and interpersonal meanings are being called forth in interaction. For example, Schilling-Estes (1999) shows how usage patterns for discourse markers indicative of high inter-speaker involvement (e.g. *y'know* and *I mean*; see Schiffrin 1987) help indicate that two interlocutors, an African American and a Native American, sometimes position themselves as good friends whose personal relationship is paramount but at other times as representatives of two distinct, and distant, ethnic groups.

The consideration of pragmatic/interactional features also reminds us that meaning is always situated and that people utilize stylistic resources, not only to indicate relatively longstanding group affiliations and personal attributes but also to make temporary meanings in ongoing interaction – in other words, to accomplish various conversational purposes. Thus, for example, as noted earlier, Bell (2001) and Bell and Johnson (1997) show how the pragmatic marker *eh* sometimes serve as markers of group affiliation but at other times is used in

an attempt to "win over" a reticent interviewee. Similarly, Campbell-Kibler et al. (2000) show how a gay activist and lawyer, rather than always using a set "gay" style, constructs a style that is "not too gay" in order to demonstrate professional competence while participating in a radio debate. Given the importance of the discourse contexts in which features occur in shaping their meanings, researchers are increasingly complementing investigations of aggregate levels for features (whether across conversations and speakers or in different sections of a single conversation) with investigations of *where* in discourse stylistic resources are used (e.g. Arnold et al. 1993, Bell in press, Bell and Johnson 1997, Schilling-Estes 1999). For example, Bell and Johnson (1997) note that whereas certain features tend to be fairly evenly distributed in the interviews they analyze (e.g. the discourse marker *y'know*), the pragmatic particle *eh*, which is associated with Maori men, tends to cluster in discussions of Maori-related topics.

Researchers are also concerned with how features co-occur in discourse, whether on a short-term basis, in particular conversations, or on a more long-standing basis, in the creation, maintenance, and re-creation of individual and group styles – for example, the individual style created by "Trendy" (Arnold et al. 1993) or the group styles of school-oriented "jocks" vs. urban-oriented "burnouts" in Detroit-area high schools (Eckert 2000). Individual and group styles can become objectified, or "reified" (Eckert 2000: 42–3), and hence may join the ranks of the various abstractions to which people orient as they engage in conversational interaction. Reified styles may include not only styles associated with relatively small social groups (e.g. the burnouts in suburban Detroit) but also larger groups (e.g. US Southerners or Midwesterners). In addition, they may be associated with particular situations of use (and so termed "registers") or with particular speech events or text types, including performative and artistic ones (so-called "genres"). When speakers engage in conversational interaction, they draw on features, and groups of features, from all these different types of reifications, hence drawing on the meanings associated with each. Thus, for all their emphasis on speaker agency, speaker design approaches do not really maintain that speakers are completely free to invent and re-invent new styles (or new identities) at will. However, speaker agency is still paramount, since it is through combining existing elements in new ways and interjecting these combinations into new contexts that speakers effect change, not only in the current situation but in the meanings of features and styles as well. As noted by the literary theorist Bakhtin, whose ideas figure prominently in speaker design approaches, "Our speech, that is, all our utterances (including creative works), is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of 'our-own-ness', varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate" (Bakhtin 1981b: 89 [originally written in 1952–3]).

Central to the creation of new meanings in stylistic variation is the notion of conflict – conflict between the various styles speakers pull together in creating

a new style and between this new style and the other styles with which it is juxtaposed (Bakhtin 1981a: 291 [originally written in 1934–5]; Campbell-Kibler et al. 2000, Irvine 2001). For example, Wong and Zhang (2000) show how the meanings of lexical items associated with various discourses (e.g. feminist discourse, Chinese Revolutionary discourse, gay and lesbian discourse in the Western world) are altered when brought into juxtaposition with one another and placed in a new context, a Chinese gay and lesbian magazine, and hence made available for use in the creation of a new non-Western gay and lesbian style. Similarly, Campbell-Kibler et al. (2000) show how a speech style that is designed to contrast with both flamboyantly gay speech and straight speech (i.e. "not too gay" speech) serves as a challenge to the existing social order, which holds that gay and other non-mainstream populations are monolithic. Hence, stylistic variation is a powerful tool for social change. The view that change can be effected through injecting styles from one situation into another echoes recent views of how initiative style shifting operates within the Audience Design framework (Bell 1999). One crucial difference, however, is that under speaker design approaches, styles do not derive their meanings through association to pre-existing situations or groups, nor do speakers simply use pre-existing styles in effecting change. Rather styles play a key role in defining situations and groups, while groups and individuals shape styles as they use them.

5.2   Limitations of speaker design approaches

Although speaker design approaches help address some of the limitations of Attention to Speech- and Audience Design-based approaches to stylistic variation, especially their unidimensionality and their focus on speakers as respondents rather than agents, they also raise new issues. For example, the inclusion of a host of factors that might affect stylistic choices, especially those internal to speakers and hence not readily observable, leads to a loss of the predictive power of unidimensional approaches like Labov's and Bell's (e.g. Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994: 241, 266–7). However, as Bell (1984: 185) notes, "Initiative style shifts [i.e. style shifts that cannot be neatly correlated with changes in the external situation] are not predicable, but they are interpretable." And, as Coupland points out, such shifts are only interpretable when we analyze a wide range of factors, including not only audience-related or attention-related considerations but such matters as "the interplay of message content, status and role relationships among participants, linguistic function and linguistic form" (1980: 11).

   A second question raised by speaker design approaches is whether the interpretations gleaned through close-up analysis of individual initiative shifts can be generalized in any way to the larger community. However, it should be pointed out that the micro-level studies of stylistic variation that lie at the heart of speaker design are almost always complemented by macro-level ethnographic

and sociolinguistic analyses, since (1) we would be hard pressed to get at speaker meaning without a thorough ethnographic understanding of individual and group meanings in the community under study, and (2) individual stylistic choices are never made in a social vacuum but are always being measured against group styles (and group patterns of stylistic variation), at the same time that groups styles are being shaped by individual language use (Eckert 2000).

Further, despite assertions that it is only through generalizing data from individual speakers that meaningful patterns will emerge (e.g. Bell 1984: 180, Labov 1972a: 101–3, 109, Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994: 258–60), some researchers maintain that such generalization is inappropriate when applied to stylistic variation, which is, after all, chiefly concerned with *intra*-speaker variation – not patterns of variation as they exist across social groups. For example, Coupland (2001) notes, "[W]hen we come to the analysis of style, we see the individual interacting within her/his own space, time and relational contexts. We can of course seek to generalise about 'what most people stylistically do', and the results are informative and important. But this exercise is reductionist in that it rules out any possible interpretation of the *local* intra- and inter-personal processes which are style's domain" (7). The issue of whether intra-speaker variation can ultimately be linked to inter-speaker variation via the aggregation of individual data is an open question; however, the fact remains that the link between the two is inextricable and that learning more about the nature of this link is crucial to continued theory-building in sociolinguistics. Eckert (2000: 69) notes, "The challenge in the study of the social meaning of variation is to find the relation between the local and the global – to find the link between speakers' linguistic ways of negotiating identity and relations in their day-to-day lives, and their place in the social stratification of linguistic variation that transcends local boundaries."

One final concern for speaker design models is that, in their inclusion of features beyond the level of the phonological and morphosyntactic, these approaches move beyond the range of what can comfortably be analyzed using current quantitative variationist techniques. It is relatively unproblematic to investigate usage levels for phonological features, which carry no inherent semantic meaning, as expressed in ratios of actual over potential occurrences of the form. For example, a speaker is said to have 50 percent *r*-lessness if she pronounces *r*'s in half the places where she could potentially either pronounce or drop them. However, it is much more difficult to determine potential environments for the production of features with inherent grammatical, interactional, or referential meaning. One notorious case is that of habitual *be* – that is, the use of uninflected *be* in contexts denoting habitual activity (e.g. *He always be late to school*). In determining where this feature might occur, analysts have wrestled with the question of whether they should count as potential cases all places where standard English *am*, *is*, or *are* could occur or all places where habitual meaning is intended (e.g. Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994: 254–5). Even more problematic is the determination of potential environments

for a discourse particle like *eh*: should one assume that it could occur on the end of any declarative sentence, or only in places where the speaker is seeking to draw interlocutors into conversation (Bell and Johnson 1997: 10)? Hence, in attempting to quantify occurrence levels for discoursal, pragmatic, and even some morphosyntactic features, we are often reduced to simple token counts, thereby neglecting the crucial question of whether different levels for particular features in different contexts (e.g. with different audience members or across different topics) genuinely reflect stylistic choices, or simply differing levels of potential environments for their occurrence. (See Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994, and Kiesling 1998, who carefully consider possible internal effects on intra-speaker variation.) Again, this matter is an open question; indeed, it is one that has plagued variationists since the inception of the field (e.g. Lavandera 1978). However, it is important to bear in mind that it is not always frequency levels for features that are of primary importance in considering questions of speaker meaning (and how listeners interpret meaning), since even a single occurrence of a highly salient feature can carry strong social connotations – for example, a single use of a stigmatized feature such as *ain't* (e.g. Trudgill 1986, Rampton 1999c: 423–4).

6   Future Directions for the Study of Stylistic Variation

As variationists continue to approach stylistic variation as a resource in the creation and re-creation of individual and interpersonal identity, it will be necessary to continue to search for answers to the unresolved issues above. For example, in order to increase our understanding of how speakers internalize large-scale patterns in stylistic variation, while at the same time shaping these patterns through their individualized usage in local interaction, it will be necessary to continue to link micro-level analyses with broad-scale ethnographic investigations. In addition, variationist surveys of the patterning of linguistic variation across social groups will be needed as well, in order to provide a backdrop against which to measure individual patterns. However, it remains unclear as to whether data on intra-speaker variation should be aggregated in attempting to link it with data on the inter-speaker patterning of variation.

Another issue for further study is the role of internal linguistic factors in individual and social group variation. Does Preston's (1991: 36) Status Axiom genuinely hold for most communities – that is, is it typically the case that the amount of variation due to internal linguistic factors is greater than the amount of variation by social group, which in turn is greater than the amount of variation by speech style? Or will exceptional cases (e.g. the case of Tehran Persian, as reported in Modaressi-Tehrani 1978) prove to be more widespread than originally thought, especially as researchers glean more information about the patterning of variation in speech communities throughout the world? In

addition, what sorts of factors will be shown to underlie exceptional cases, and will these "exceptional" findings prove to be generalizable in any way? For example, will "unusual" patterns turn out to be mostly a matter of cultural difference, as suggested, for example, by Bell (1984: 155–6)? Or will they have more to do with the characteristics of specific features – for example, whether the features serve as indicators, markers, or stereotypes in a given community (e.g. Preston 1991)?

A related question is exactly how different types of features figure in stylistic variation. For example, Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) suggest that more frequently occurring features may be more likely to be used in stylistic variation than rare ones, while other researchers have suggested such factors as salience, linguistic level (e.g. phonological vs. morphosyntactic), and implication in linguistic systemic considerations as likely to play a role. For example, Eckert (2000) suggests that raised /ai/ figures prominently in individual and group style in Detroit-area high schools because it is not involved in the Northern Cities Chain Shift, a systematic shift in the pronunciations of several vowels in urbanized areas of the Northern USA, in which a change in one vowel affects the pronunciation of others (see Gordon, this volume). On the other hand, negative concord plays a large role because speakers are very aware of it, since it is so highly stigmatized (2000: 170, 216–17). Interestingly, in order to investigate the issue of speaker awareness, it may be that considerations of attention to speech will once again come to the forefront (Rampton 1999c: 423–4). This time, however, the focus would be on the selfconscious speech that variationists once sought to avoid. Further, the investigation of selfconscious speech, even overtly performative speech, seems essential in a research program in which stylistic variation is viewed as a resource for creating and projecting one's persona – that is, with performing an identity. In considering the role of speech performance in stylistic variation, variationists have benefited from the insights offered by anthropological investigations of performative speech events (e.g. Bauman 1975, Bauman and Briggs 1990). More cross-disciplinary research along these lines will likely yield fruitful results.

Given that salience seems to figure so prominently in stylistic variation, a final area for further investigation is that of listener perception: how do listeners determine when style shifting has occurred, and how do they interpret patterns of stylistic variation – and individual instances of particularly noticeable forms? In seeking answers to these questions, it may be useful to pursue a line of inquiry introduced by Coupland (1980), who complemented his own analysis of stylistic variation with a perception test in which listeners were asked to indicate when, in their judgment, style shifts had occurred. In addition, it will be useful to continue to investigate types of features of which listeners are more consciously aware than they typically are of non-stereotypic phonological and morphosyntactic variants – for example, lexical, intonational, and discourse-level features. Finally, it should prove fruitful to continue to pursue the question of how popular notions of "style" relate to variationist conceptualizations of stylistic variation. Non-specialists can readily point to group styles, both

linguistic and non-linguistic (e.g. Valley Girl style, punk style), as well as individual styles (e.g. "He's got a certain style"; "She's always so in style"). However, researchers are only just beginning to explore how linguistic and non-linguistic resources are marshaled in the creation of distinctive styles (e.g. Arnold et al. 1993, Campbell-Kibler et al. 2000, Eckert 2000, Mendoza-Denton 1997, Wong and Zhang 2001). In the end, then, we are left with the question with which the exploration of stylistic variation begins: "What is style?"

NOTES

1   This is only one definition of "vernacular," a term which has been plagued by definitional ambiguity since its first uses in sociolinguistics. For example, Milroy (1987: 57–60) points out that the term may be variously used to refer to unmonitored speech, the community lect farthest from the standard, or the variety first acquired. Further discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this chapter.

2   But cf. Finegan and Biber (1994, 2001), who maintain that social group variation derives from stylistic (actually "register") variation: different social groups have access to different types of registers, characterized by different types of linguistic features, and so show different usage levels for the different types of forms (namely, "economical" vs. "elaborated" forms, such as contractions vs. full forms). Though Finegan and Biber's findings are based on quantitative investigation of the co-occurrence patterns of features across different registers and different social groups, they do not really fit into the "variationist" paradigm, since they do not report on frequency of occurrence, as expressed in the ratio of actual over potential occurrences, but simply present absolute counts of forms (Preston 2001). Further, as Preston (2000) points out, the features they examine are usually ones which carry functional meaning(s) of some sort rather than the features typically examined in variation study (e.g. vowel pronunciations), whose meanings derive solely from their association with social groups. Hence, it is not surprising that Finegan and Biber's findings differ from those of the classic variationist investigations reported in Bell (1984). For in-depth discussion (and critique) of their findings and interpretations, the reader is referred to Preston (1991, 2001) and Rose (2000). See also Chambers (1995: 230–42) on the difficulty of defining linguistic "economy" and of relegating "economical" features to certain social groups.

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