

Domains

In the previous section we looked at forms of social differentiation which, although they have come to be recognized even by linguists to be to a certain extent constructs rather than givens, are nevertheless conceptually reasonably straightforward. In this section we turn to aspects of human societies, and ways of considering human societies, relationships and behaviors, which are inherently more complex and interactional. Everyone knows what a family is, it is true, but how exactly can it affect linguistic behavior? And how are we as linguists to come to grips with the notion of identity? The term *domain* in sociolinguistics is most usually associated with the work of Joshua Fishman in the sociology of language. Here we are using it in a related sense but one which is more applicable to work in linguistic variation and change: we take it to refer here to, as it were, relational arenas within which variable linguistic behavior takes place.

Norma Mendoza-Denton, in her chapter “Personal and Interpersonal Identity”, characterizes the concept of identity as having to do with the negotiation of a speaker’s relationships with the social groups to which they belong. The point of this for our science is that such relationships, because they are negotiated, are variable, changing, and complex, and thus are highly suitable for consideration in quantitative variationist linguistic studies.

One of the social groups relative to which speakers presumably have to negotiate their identities is the family. Kirk Hazen, in his chapter on “The Family”, suggests that we, as linguists, should be able to describe and account for the effects of the family on linguistic variation. The family has not figured very largely in sociolinguistic work, but Hazen seeks out a number of revealing studies which have yielded information on language variation as this relates to families. It will be no surprise, in the context of this section generally, that the relationship between linguistic variation and the family emerges as a complex one.

Miriam Meyerhoff in “Communities of Practice” introduces a relatively new domain to sociolinguistics which, however, is clearly related in different ways to the other domains covered in this section. She explains that a Community of Practice has to do with speakers’ subjective experiences of the boundaries between their community and others, and the activities that speakers carry out which lead to the formation of such boundaries. The potential of this domain

for sociolinguistics lies in the fact that it can provide an overall framework within which social and linguistic aspects of sociolinguistic variation can be viewed.

In her chapter on "Social Networks", Lesley Milroy indicates that speakers' social networks are the "aggregate of relationships contracted with others". A particular strength of the social network approach lies in its recognition that these interpersonal relationships can be of different strengths, something which turns out to be very important for the diffusion (at least) of linguistic changes. Milroy's presentation of work employing this concept shows that it has much in common with the approaches of scholars cited in the chapters by Mendoza-Denton and Meyerhoff, in particular: they all have a focus on the dynamic nature of social interactions and relationships. Social networks are not fixed categories but, like identities, are changeable and variable.

In contrast, the term "Speech Community", the subject of Peter Patrick's chapter, appears to be much more static in its conception for most sociolinguists. As with many of the concepts discussed in this section, the term has typically been used as if it were unproblematic. It is a concept which has been used, as Patrick shows, very frequently indeed in sociolinguistics, but it is also one which has not been well-defined, and about which there has been very little consensus in the field. Patrick's very interesting conclusion is that Speech Communities, unlike many of the other categories dealt with here, are constructs not of speakers or communities but of sociolinguists themselves.

PETER TRUDGILL

19 Language and Identity

NORMA MENDOZA-DENTON

This chapter will sketch some current findings, questions, and trends in approaches to the study of language variation and identity. The term “identity” functions outside of linguistics to cover a variety of concepts; for our purposes, we will understand identity to mean the active negotiation of an individual’s relationship with larger social constructs, in so far as this negotiation is signaled through language and other semiotic means. Identity, then, is neither attribute nor possession, but an individual and collective-level process of semiosis. We shall be concerned with its emblematic sites, its codes and its channels (Silverstein 1998), and, crucially for variation theory, with its richly patterned, multivariate nature. The scope of this particular review will be limited to works that are broadly representative of or that stand in dialogue with the Labovian quantitative sociolinguistic tradition, and will of necessity exclude significant qualitative research on linguistic identity that falls under the rubric of sociology of language and discourse analysis. (For a review of the literature within this field, see Tabouret-Keller 1998.) Though much-debated in identity theory, psychological processes internal to the individual, such as (Freudian prelinguistic) identification, sublimation, fantasy and desire, and their role in identity formation (Zizek 1993, Salecl 1994, Lacan 1977) are, to say the least, difficult to study under the standard empiricist lens of variationist inquiry unless they are overtly signaled in interaction (but see Kulick 2000 for an exhortation to undertake exactly such studies in the area of language and sexuality).

Although this review will incorporate selected developments in anthropology, psychology, social theory, and literary theory, for more in-depth analysis in these areas I refer the reader to other works dealing with field-specific perspectives on identity and identity politics (Appiah and Gates 1995, Butler 1990, Hale 1997, Cerulo 1997, Said 1993, Michaels 1992, 1994, Williams 1994, Bhabha 1990).

1 Identities as multivalent

One of the great challenges in the variationist study of identity over the past 15 years arises in conjunction with related developments in social constructionist approaches in anthropology and social theory: it is the challenge against essentialism in analytic explanation (Cameron 1990, Romaine 1984, Fuss 1989, Potter 1996, Janicki 1990, 1999). Essentialism as conceptualized by these researchers refers to the (Aristotelian) reductive tendency by analysts to designate a particular aspect of a person or group as explanations for their behavior: the "essence" of what it means, for instance, to be Asian, or Indian, or female, etc. (Said 1993), despite the recognition that agents stand in complex relationships to a variety of larger social constructs. Can we think about identity in a way that does not reduce or simplify individuals to a single dimension? Collins (1990), argues for a "fundamental paradigmatic shift that rejects additive approaches. . . . Instead of starting with gender and then adding in other variables such as age, sexual orientation, social class, . . . these distinctive systems . . . [interlock and are] part of one overarching structure" (1990: 347). Janicki argues that the proliferation of definitions is useless, and similarly, Butler (1995: 440–1) proffers: "We know that identities, however they are defined, do not belong to a horizontal sequence, separated and joined by a kind of conceptual neighborliness. But the problem of interrelation is almost impossible to think outside the frame of sequence and multiplication once we begin with "identity" as the necessary presupposition." (In all fairness, Butler later advocates throwing out the investigation of identity altogether.)

The growing awareness in philosophy and postcolonial studies that identities are not univalent has resulted in their conceptualization as historically-situated (Said 1993, Tsitsipis 1998), fractured and strategic (Spivak 1992), intersecting (Williams 1994) pluralities. Nonetheless, there still reigns confusion as to how one should model these multiple identities. Anxious substitution of the plural for the singular (note the number of recent volumes that purport to uncover "identities", "masculinities", etc.) does not solve the problem of modeling identity at all (Butler 1995), since the wages of essentialism continue to apply, only now compounded.

By theorizing the inextricability of race/gender/class and the necessity to view them holistically and simultaneously, Collins is in fact partially aligned with prevailing sociolinguistic practice. It would appear that sociolinguistic variation is enviably poised to contribute to this debate, equipped with (1) many studies solely devoted to disentangling the intricacies of linguistic and social relationships within and among groups and individuals (Payne 1980, Guy 1981, Lane 1999); and (2) copious speech archives and replicable methodologies for the diachronic testing of putative relationships. Multivariate studies of linguistic phenomena that recognize and track the complex influence and interaction of various social (external) factors as well as linguistic (internal) factors have been the gold standard since the inception of the field. Statistical

techniques allow researchers to calculate the probability weights of gender versus class in the prediction of speakers' linguistic behavior, and to debate issues such as whether our model for social and linguistic variables should be additive, multiplicative, or logarithmic – surely exceeding the wildest dreams of philosophers like Collins or Butler. So what then, can a charge of essentialism mean in the realm of sociolinguistics, with its tradition of multivariate coding and holistic thinking?

Essentialism in sociolinguistics includes the analytic practice of using categories to divide up subjects and sort their linguistic behavior, and then linking the quantitative differences in linguistic production to explanations based on those very same categories provided by the analyst.

We will define the problem of essentialism as roughly coextensive with the difference between analysts' categories and participants' categories, between "etic" and "emic" categorizations of the social world. Consider a simple example: if we were to study the stratification of the laxing of high vowels in a randomly sampled population in Mexico City, utilizing age categories divided in 5-year intervals, we might find that there is an apparent-time effect: a relative increase in the use of laxed variants among those subjects in their teenage years, ages 15–20. One possible interpretation would be that Mexican teenagers are using vowel laxing to index their youthful identity, rejecting older adult norms (they are teenagers, after all), and that younger children are not participating in this change because they are under greater adult supervision and influence. The problem with this type of explanation, as Cameron (1990) and Romaine (1984) argue, is that it is in fact not an explanation at all, but a statistically motivated observation-cum-speculative-description that does not rely on any principled social theory. It is not possible, for instance, to know whether the statistical spike in that age group is due to other factors (we might find interactions if we were wise enough to code them), or whether the explanation that we gave is one that is *oriented to* by speakers of the group in question. Is it the case, for instance, that Mexico City teenagers recognize a boundary that the researcher has introduced between children of age 10–15 and those of age 15–20? Does this analyst's boundary correspond to the structuring of local speech communities? It may well be that local children and teens follow a ternary division between *primaria*, *secundaria*, and *preparatoria* school cohorts, but then how could the analyst explain the complicated age-mixing this introduces? Moreover, how could we then compare this study with that of "equivalent" age-groups in other societies? Frighteningly, what if there were no equivalencies to be found at all? And what if there were little social evidence for the "teenage rebellion" assumed in our explanation, and the teens interviewed did not intend to express rejection of adult norms? How can we factor into our analysis their subject positioning, their intentions, and their agency? (For similar concerns, see Cameron 1990, Janicki 1990, 1999, Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985.)

The problem of agency in variation is intimately woven into that of analysts' vs. participants' distinctions, and is aggravated as we take Euro/American

folk analyses of identity categories in the domains of age, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. (social constructions such as “teenager,” “woman,” “working class,” or “gay”) and apply them to invoke identity in disparate contexts (Haeri 1998, Rickford 1986, Gaudio 2001).

Potter (2000: 22) concurs with Schegloff (1997) in the opinion that “Given that the relevant contextual particulars of some text or interaction can be variably and flexibly formulated, who is to judge what is actually relevant?” They offer the suggestion that the analyst look to participants’ own explicitly signaled orientations and formulations, and their relevance in the sequencing of interaction. That is, they exhort us to look to situated practices rather than analysts’ formal categories for explication.

This critique has not only great impact on what the study of linguistic variation might have to say about identity, but in fact poses a theoretical and methodological challenge, one that may potentially lead to a deep reworking of the frameworks and strategies through which variationist sociolinguists conceptualize and investigate identity. The gauntlet has been thrown down, as certain strands of scholarship doubt that quantitative study is up to this task: a recent proposal by Carter and Sealy (2000) for a unified social theory of sociolinguistics states that a large-scale, quantitative sociolinguistic study would “fail to identify” evidence that “competent social actors . . . reveal creative, inventive uses of language in pursuit of their own interests” (2000: 18). Sociolinguistics in this view can only be infused with social theory by setting aside the project of understanding quantitative aspects of variation.

One of the ways in which variation scholars have chosen to resolve the conflict between analysts’ and participants’ categories can be seen in a strengthening trend toward ethnographic studies which look at situated practices and at participants’ explicit interactional orientations. Ethnography, a methodology that involves the researcher in the community for extended periods as a participant-observer, has allowed variation studies a focus at the level of participant-defined activity systems, and has given rise to research that orients to *local* categories of practice, whether they be poker playing on the Outer Banks of North Carolina (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1994), cruising in a car on a Saturday night in Detroit (Eckert 1999), signifying gay identity in Chinese magazines (Wong and Zhang 2001), or participating in street gang activities in New York or California (Labov 1972c, Mendoza-Denton 1997).

A caveat: trading in one methodology for another (ethnography for sociological survey or psycholinguistic experiment) does not allow the object of investigation to remain constant, especially when dealing with a process such as identity which is fluid and multidimensional, and most especially when one works in a field such as sociolinguistics with its well-known observer’s paradox (Labov 1972a: 69, Wolfram and Fasold 1974). Ethnographies are understood in anthropology to be the unique products of the personal histories of the ethnographers themselves and of their interactions within particular communities (Agar 1996). This throws into question the notion of replicability of an ethnography by another researcher, or even by the same researcher at another

time. This awareness of research product as radically affected by the researcher (simultaneous agent and instrument) is inherent in the foundational notion of the observer's paradox, and has been observed to hold the potential for circularity in sociolinguistic research: for instance, the researcher may linguistically accommodate perceived social class characteristics of the interlocutor who in turn accommodates to the researcher (Giles 1973). Jahr (1979) (cited in Trudgill 1986) carried out a self-analysis of his interview data from Oslo, and noted that his syntax was influenced not only by informants' sex but also by their syntactic usage. Trudgill (1986), however, observes that in an analysis of his own speech and that of his informants in the Norwich study (Trudgill 1974), interviewer usage is stylistically stratified in the general direction of informants' usage but does not actually match or overshoot it.

The full implications of accommodation studies are only beginning to take hold with regard to data collected in the sociolinguistic interview (Briggs 1989, Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994). The idea that the *researcher's* identity and ideological positioning vis-à-vis the interviewee crucially contribute to the patterning of data deserves more systematic exploration. In their study, Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) found that two radically different data sets with quantitative and qualitative disparities at multiple levels of the grammar were elicited from the same African-American participant in two separate controlled-topic interviews, with the crucial difference being that one interview was conducted by a Euro-American researcher and the other by an African-American researcher. As might be predicted from prior research in the frameworks of speech accommodation (Giles 1980), audience design (Bell 1984), and acts of identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985), the African-American participant used African-American English variables more frequently when speaking to the African-American interviewer. The mutual co-construction of participants' and researchers' identities has profound implications, as variationist scholars widely accept the notion of replicability and re-study, and routinely compare data gathered by different interviewers to build on prior results and to investigate issues of performance that could be strongly affected by differences in the interviewers. One interesting line of study that would carry the insights of accommodation theorists further might be to measure the degree of style shifting or convergence over time in the speech of an ethnographer. It is possible that long-term convergence on the part of the researcher might lead to a reinforcement of norms, and limit our ability to compare data gathered ethnographically with data gathered in stratified rapid-survey samples.

In this introduction I have outlined some of the issues facing variationist research on identity, including questions of essentialism, of analysts' vs. participants' categories, of individual agency, and of replicability of research. The rest of this chapter organizes some research exemplars into three broad types: studies based on: (1) sociological category-based identity, (2) practice-based identity, and (3) practice-based variation, headings that range along a continuum of the use of analysts' categories vs. participants', and that are as much about their attendant methodologies as they are about their findings. Note that not

all studies fit easily into a type, and some may use mixed methodologies that place them in more than one type. Further, there may appear to be a chronological organization to the research, since the bulk of practice-based identity studies generally started appearing in the 1980s, yet in reality all three approaches have been pursued since the inception of the field, sometimes concurrently and sometimes complementarily. Most variationist research on identity today engages at least the first two approaches to some degree. In the conclusion I will argue for a multiplicity of approaches to maintain both the breadth of the survey method, the controlled quality of psycholinguistic experiments, and the depth of the ethnographic approach in variation studies.

2 Type I: Sociodemographic Category-based Identity

Studies of linguistic identity that are based on the stratification of a population according to sociological/demographic categories (such as region, age, sex, occupation, social class, ethnicity) were the first explorations of the systematicity of the relation of social and linguistic constructs. Were it not for the pioneering studies of Labov (1972a, 1972c, 1972d) in New York City, we would not know which variants are innovative, which conservative, and which newly introduced; without Wolfram (1969) we would lack a compass to investigate the linguistic expression of a speaker's ethnicity in Detroit today; similarly, the reference point for a study of Spanish in Panama is Cedegren (1973). Much work in the discipline of sociolinguistic variation has its roots in the sociological study of urban areas beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, and to date hundreds of city-studies in the United States and around the world have applied this kind of methodology, creating stratified models of the speech of urban populations. (Just a few recent examples: Silva-Corvalán 1989 for Santiago, Chile; Thibault and Daveluy 1989, Thibault and Sankoff 1993 for Montreal, Canada; Tagliamonte 1999 for York, UK; Kontra and Váradi 1997 for Budapest, Hungary; Lennig 1978 for Paris, France; Trudgill 1974, 1986 for Norwich, UK; Horvath 1985 for Sydney, Australia; Labov et al. 2000 for 145 central cities in the United States alone).

Although it is in theory possible to achieve comparable coverage with practice-based, ethnographic approaches, the investment of time and resources for groups of ethnographers to cover an entire city would be astronomical and highly impractical. Studies of Type I, with their findings of the systematicity of linguistic variation, their broad coverage and emphasis on statistical representativeness, orient us to the linguistic variables and social issues at play. In complement with the experimental studies of psycholinguistics, they provide the basis and background for the practice of ethnography. These studies are of necessity a synchronic snapshot from which we can infer processes of change

by observing differential distributions of variables, through real-time and apparent-time studies (cf. Bailey, this volume).

Labov's early work provided a blueprint for the study of large-scale patterns of variation, where the objective was to discover statistically significant correlations, and later to create multivariate models of the covariation of individual tokens of a single linguistic type (the dependent variable) and social categories (the independent variables). As with any discipline that prides itself on being scientific, the emphasis is on objectivity and replicability (Labov 1994).

And yet if identity would be studied by the correlation of these stratified social categories to various quantifiable linguistic variables, then the most important questions to be asked are how and why particular categories are chosen. Were they observed to be important by the researchers? Are the categories themselves traditional classifications in sociology and demography? In most instances, it was a combination of these criteria that determined the categories chosen for investigation. Wolfram and Fasold (1974: 96–7) explicitly caution against applying the same criteria for social status to situations that the researcher knows to differ, yet at the same time acknowledge the limitations of researchers who do not possess extensive ethnographic knowledge of a community.

For example, the project on language change and variation (LCV) in Philadelphia has the following independent variables available to the analyst (Labov 1994: 58):

- 1 Age
- 2 Education (in years)
- 3 Occupation
- 4 Residence value
- 5 Socioeconomic class (based on indicators 2–4)
- 6 A five-point measure of house upkeep
- 7 The neighborhood
- 8 A classification of social mobility
- 9 Four indices of participation in communication networks
- 10 Foreign language background
- 11 Generational status in the United States
- 12 Whether or not the person's telephone is listed.

This array of variables ranges from easily accessible "objective" public information about the participants (telephone listing; residence value, often available from census statistics) to highly "subjective" (yet quantified) measures such as analyst judgments of participants' house upkeep. The latter are to be used especially cautiously in correlational investigations, as they rely on analysts' categories par excellence: it is doubtful that participants in this study would orient to that type of outsider-observed behavior.

Researchers typically approach the investigation of a speech community with an eye to the broadest possible coverage and to the representativeness of

the sample, beginning usually with census tracts, carefully constructing random samples that will be statistically balanced with respect to some predetermined demographic categories in the population, plus other categories that the researcher considers as having potential to elucidate social processes in the population in question – for example, urban orientation in Jamaica (Patrick 1999) and in Yucatan, Mexico (Solomon 1998). Many indices are composites, and notable among these is social class, often based on a composition of several different factors, such as occupation, educational rank, income, and residency, as above. Critiques of this way of modeling social class have surfaced in Pidgin and Creole studies, in language and gender, and in studies of endangered languages, as researchers have challenged these ways of typologizing social class on grounds of presuppositions that were untenable in different societies where gender-specific labor, education, or capital holdings were differently structured (Nichols 1983, Rickford 1986, Sidnell 1999, Nagy 2000).

Nevertheless, the contributions of Type I studies to what we know about identity have been remarkable, not only for their theoretical advances but for their public impact. In the United States, these are arguably some of the most socially useful contributions the discipline of variation has made, speaking to communities beyond the scholarly and often having an impact on public policy. Studies on African American English have served to debunk deficit models of African-American language and identity (for critical reviews, see Rickford 1997, 1999, Morgan 1994); similarly, studies of Spanish/English bilinguals have served to combat common myths of bilingual speakers as linguistically confused, or worse, “alingual.” Research on Puerto Rican English and Spanish (Poplack 1979, Urciuoli 1996, Zentella 1997), and Chicano English and Spanish (Valdés 1981, García 1984) still enriches debates on bilingual education today (for a review on the sociolinguistics of US Latinos see Mendoza-Denton 1999a).

A related area in the study of identity in variation has been that of shifting and multiple identities that are indexed in the act of speaking different linguistic varieties, whether they be different languages (code switching) or different varieties of a single language (style-shifting). In the area of code switching, Myers-Scotton (1993) has applied rational choice theory to understanding how a change in code might signal a different identity by theorizing that a switch indexes a different set of social rights and obligations (a particular RO set) that the speaker proposes to apply in that particular interaction. A speaker switching from Modern Standard Arabic to Tunisian Arabic in Tunisia, for instance (Walters 1996) would be indexing the specific rights and obligations that derive from being a member of a local community, rather than the supra-local RO set that is indexed by Modern Standard Arabic. And yet, as Walters and Woolard point out, these indexicalities are not so straightforward, since a particular utterance can be bivalent (Woolard 1998), that is to say, fitting both varieties ambiguously, or even more complex, having the syntax of one variety and the phonology of another (Walters 1996: 551).

Much work on identity in sociolinguistics works under the assumption of relatively stable identities, with researchers assigning identities based on social

category membership (cf. critique in Eckert 1999) or using emergent participant self-identification categories (Mendoza-Denton 1997). Dubois and Melançon (2000) carried out an investigation of Creole identity in Louisiana, showing that self-identification as “Creole” by African-Americans given a questionnaire task is historically contingent and involves shifting relationships between skin color, ethnicity, material capital, language patterning, and ancestry. As in Baugh (1999), Modan (forthcoming), Johnstone and Bean (1997), and Michaels (1992) the various overlapping and contradictory meanings of identity-designators over time, space and within a single community are highlighted, showing that sociohistorical and ideological factors should be carefully considered in studies of identity and identity attribution.

In variation studies, another arena for the study of attribution of identity has been the psycholinguistic study of speech perception. Significant findings from experimental work in the area of perceptual phonetics have had profound implications for our basic understanding of topics ranging from the nature of the phoneme, to gender categorization, to the operationalization of discrimination.

Strand (1999) has carried out a series of striking experiments showing the influence of gender identity and gendered expectations on processes of phonological perception that are ordinarily thought to be impervious to higher-level (social) information. Variations of the well-known McGurk audio-visual integration effect, these experiments set up conflicts between simultaneous aural and visual inputs, forcing a resolution at the perceptual level. In the original experiment, McGurk found that upon being presented with an aural [ba] and a visual [ga], subjects would automatically “integrate” the information and perceive [da] (McGurk and MacDonald 1976; for a demonstration go to [http://www.psych.ucr.edu/faculty/rosenblum/McGurk Effect Demo](http://www.psych.ucr.edu/faculty/rosenblum/McGurk_Effect_Demo)). In Strand’s experiments subjects are presented with synthesized consonantal continua: ten synthetic steps from [s] to [ʃ], embedded in the carrier words “sod” and “shod.” Given either the lip-synched video of a man or a woman uttering a carrier phrase with the synthesized segment, subjects routinely assign a different phonological category to the same acoustic signal (see figure 19.1). This is because the [s] and [ʃ], homorganic and largely similar save for the lower frequency of the latter, lead to anticipatory normalization following from listener’s expectations regarding the size of the speaker’s vocal tract. In other words, given an ambiguous auditory stimulus, seeing a male subject who might be expected to have a longer vocal tract would lead a listener to believe that the stimulus lay in the higher frequency [s] range of the s/sh continuum for that speaker. Presentation of the same stimulus with a female speaker’s face would lead to the perceptual ambiguity resolution that the stimulus lay in the lower-frequency range of the s/sh continuum for the speaker (and thus the listener would perceive [ʃ]).

This perceptual resolution based on higher-level information may seem unsurprising to the reader and easily subsumed under the well-known processes of speaker normalization (Peterson and Barney 1952). However, depending on

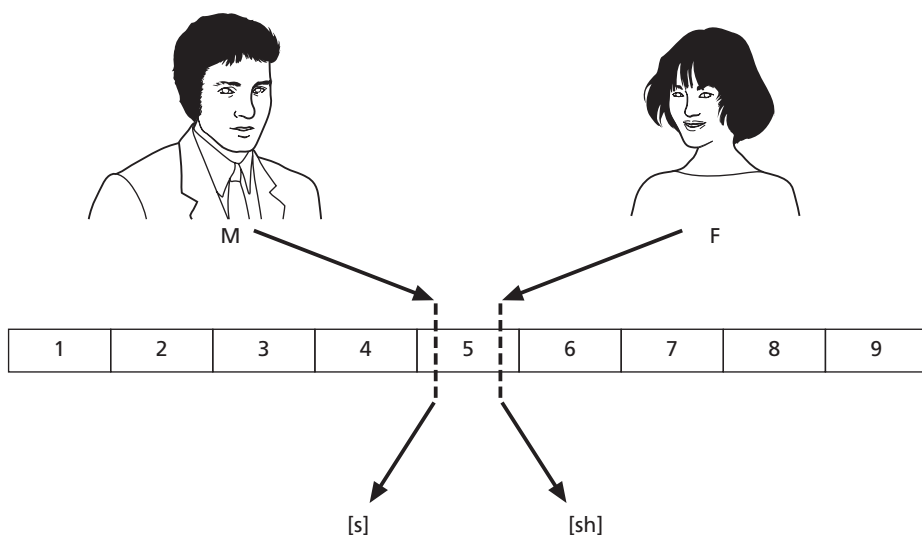


Figure 19.1 Gender of face determines the final precept in a fricative continuum

whether the video shows a “prototypical” or “non-prototypical” man or woman (as determined by prior subject ratings), the phonological boundary itself shifts in frequency. Physical characteristics that are plainly subject to social construction – such as big and elaborately coiffed hair, rated by Ohio State undergraduates as more prototypically feminine – have an effect on the baseline level perception of a phoneme. Johnson et al. (1999) have tested this effect further on vowels and prompted the shifting of phonological boundaries on the mere *suggestion* to the listener of male or female identity of the speaker. These studies have tremendous implications in (1) gender theory, showing gradience rather than categoricity of gender attribution, and (2) in phonology because they imply that the identification of a phonological category does not depend merely on the system of oppositions within the sounds of a language, but also on the moment-to-moment processing of social information about the speaker. Social stereotypes affect even our basic categorization of the speech signal.

Purnell et al. (1999) have conducted experimental phonetic studies of housing discrimination based on speech. Using controlled speech samples of a tridialectal speaker from Los Angeles (Baugh himself) who commands African-American English (AAE), Chicano English (ChE), and Standard Euro-American English (SEAE), they set up a three-way matched-guise experiment (cf. Lambert 1967), where the same speaker’s voice (albeit in a different dialect guise) serves as stimulus. The experiment consisted of telephoning rental agencies about

vacancies in San Francisco and leaving a recorded message in one of the three dialects. From the responses, they were able to show that apartments that had been described as unavailable to the AAE and ChE voices were later offered as vacant to the SEAE voice. Although accent discrimination and its transmission is well-documented in sociolinguistic studies (Lippi-Green 1997), the fact that Baugh and associates are working with the US government in these studies might well lead to federal reform designed to prevent housing discrimination on the basis of accent.

Next I will describe some research that links sociodemographic identity studies with the next category, that of practice-based identity. The following studies extend the assumptions of demographic correlation to show that the deployment of speech varieties is crucially involved in political economy and represents differently valued local symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977, 1991).

Gal's (1978) classic study of the village of Oberwart in Austria showed the effect of sex role differences on language change. Her focus was the shifting linguistic repertoire in a Hungarian–German bilingual community, where German was symbolic of the newly available social status of worker, while Hungarian was symbolic of the traditional social status of peasant, and “young women’s language choices [favoring German could be understood] as part of their expression of preference for [the] newer social identity” (1978: 2). Gal created a language choice questionnaire for this study on the basis of native categories, uncovering subtle implicational hierarchies of language usage. At the extreme ends of the continuum, bilingual speakers talked to God (the most intimate, private situation) primarily in Hungarian and to doctors (the most formal, public situation) primarily in German. Her findings showed that because young women had more to gain in the transition from a peasant economy to an industrialized economy, their symbolic and actual choice of German-speaking men as husbands was resulting in both language change within the village, and exogamous marriage patterns for young peasant men. Significantly, this study relies on ethnographic information to give texture to correlational phenomena and to more fully articulate the mechanisms which might account for earlier findings of women’s selection of prestige variants.

Sidnell (1999) similarly seeks to go beyond prior generalizations about the effect of gender in Caribbean creole-speaking societies. Noting that research had failed to find significant correlations between gender and linguistic patterning in creole pronominal syntax, Sidnell shows that a separation within the categories of pronominal usage indeed turns up dramatic gender differences. Men in his ethnographic study were more likely to use a greater range of the creole continuum, whereas women used a more focused range, leading mesolectal marking in certain categories (3sg. obj.), but avoiding others (1sg. subj.). Sidnell shows from overt orientations to the phenomenon in his data that the mesolectal 1sg. subj. was evaluated as arrogant and overly urban/streetwise when used by women vs. playful and cosmopolitan for men, showing how the indexical marking of mesolectal variants differ in their evaluation depending on the speaker. He states, “women must be careful in both how

they move through a community (who they interact with, etc.) and in how they talk – both concerns that emanate from a community construction of gender roles” (Sidnell 1999: 394). In this way, Sidnell goes beyond the agglutination of speakers into “sex” categories that may be masking overall practices of gender: how we *do* being-a-woman.

3 Type II: Practice-based Identity

Studies that I include under the heading of practice-based identity are centrally concerned with the identities that speakers accrue not because they claim or are assigned category membership, but rather because identities are accomplished in the joint practice of particular activities (for fundamental contributions to practice-based theories of social action see Bourdieu 1978, 1991, Certau 1984, Wenger 1998, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). Some examples of types of practice are participation in common social projects, or in voluntary affiliation groups that are defined around activities or enterprises.

In the research exemplars that follow I aim to clarify what is gained in variationist inquiry by engaging in practice-based identity research, and how practice-based identity might differ from other situationally relevant linguistic or sociodemographic groupings such as speech community, regional dialect, or age.

By placing the focus of variationist study at the level of the construction of social relationships, practice-based studies often display a dramatically different orientation and an implicit challenge to sociodemographic definitions of identity. One example of this challenge can be found in Linde et al. (1987), who shows how the local relevance of a hierarchy can emerge within ongoing practice.

Drawing a distinction between rank hierarchy (who is more highly ranked) and task hierarchy (who is more expert in a particular task), Linde et al. (1987) examined linguistic behaviors in cockpit interactions, using videotape of full mission simulated commercial flights where either the captain or the first officer was the pilot. Different patterns of mitigation and address were shown to emerge according to local, moment-to-moment fluctuations in the relevance of rank hierarchy vs. task hierarchy within the interaction. By focusing on participants’ orientations in the practice of flying a plane, Linde et al. go beyond the sociodemographic factors that might otherwise describe the pilots and co-pilots.

The reworking of variationist understandings of class and hierarchical stratification has also attracted much attention in the study of Pidgins and Creoles, where Rickford (1986), Winford (1984), and Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), among others, have argued that definitions of a stratified speech community that assume a widely agreed-upon focus of prestige do not apply in the Creole-speaking Caribbean, where complicated ethnohistorical dynamics are at play

in defining not only class but other types of social constructs (cf. Sidnell, above).

The complexity of the definition of ethnicity in Belize involves relationships among language, class, provenance, nationality, and physical appearance, all of which are symbolically linked to language, and explored in the influential work of Le Page. *Acts of Identity: Creole-Based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity* (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985) locates variation in the agentive activity of individuals with respect to larger groups. Le Page's framework of acts of identity holds that individual users of language strategically deploy varieties and variation to affiliate themselves with groups with which they may from time to time wish to be associated, or conversely, to be distinguished from groups with which they wish no such association. To this hypothesis, Le Page adds four riders:

We can only behave according to the behavioural patterns of groups we find it desirable to identify with to the extent that:

- 1 we can identify the groups
- 2 we have both adequate access to the groups and ability to analyze their behavioural patterns
- 3 the motivation to join the groups is sufficiently powerful, and is either reinforced or reversed by feedback from the groups
- 4 we have the ability to modify our behaviour.

(Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985: 182)

The acts of identity framework has inspired researchers investigating what Bell (1984) calls "initiative design" (see Schilling-Estes, this volume, on contextual styles), that is to say, speakers' implementation of variation that goes beyond a speaker's desire to match the speech of an audience. Trudgill (1983), for instance, investigates the variation through time in the musical lyric phonology of various British pop music groups. Trudgill shows how in the beginning of their careers (1963, *Please Please Me*), the Beatles consistently used some phonetic variants that are closely identified in Britain with American English phonology (such as /æ/ in *can't*, vs. the British /ɑ:/), even engaging in some hypercorrection with non-prevocalic /r/. By the time of their 1967 *Sergeant Pepper*, /æ/ was in alternation with the British variant /ɑ:/, with the progression completed by 1969's *Abbey Road*, where /ɑ:/ was as established as the Beatles' singing success. It was in the *practice* of trying to anchor themselves in a market dominated by American rock musicians that British singers modified their speech, and their success itself changed the industry (making it acceptable and even desirable to sound British) so that later groups enjoyed commercial success without necessarily deploying American-oriented musico-phonological acts of identity.

Crucially, the explanatory power of (Type II) practice-based accounts of identity lies in their ability to identify evolving conditions that are reified in changed practices which in turn have linguistic consequences. It is precisely in detailed understandings of practice-shaping *processes* that comparison across

different settings becomes possible, comparisons not of the statistical properties of the variables themselves but rather at the next level of abstraction: the processes that give rise to their use. For instance, results paralleling those reported for the early Beatles by Trudgill are identified in an ongoing ethnography of Australian country music singers by Snider et al. (2000). Australian country is a genre where globalization, perceptions of “authenticity” and the pressures of music marketing interact to create overt, metalinguistic conflict between American and Australian phonological variants.

Walters (1996) makes use of the acts of identity framework and of the communities of practice framework (Lave and Wenger 1991, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992, Meyerhoff, this volume) in explaining language choice among the community of native anglophone wives of Tunisian husbands living in Tunisia. Here Walters provides one of the clearest examples of how radically different a community of practice can be from a speech community. Given our understanding of a speech community (cf. Patrick, this volume), the native anglophone wives of Tunisian husbands could not be considered one, since they come from varied dialect, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and in fact define themselves not through their similarity to each other but through their collective difference from an external norm. What they do have in common, however, is practice, since they are similarly situated with respect to their husbands and with respect to Tunisian society, and it is this similarity of practices that allows them to think of themselves as a community and allows Walters to find commonalities in their negotiation of the various linguistic codes at their disposal (English, Standard Arabic, Tunisian Arabic and French) vis-à-vis their husbands, children, in-laws, and adopted country of Tunisia.

Wenger defines a community of practice as requiring mutual engagement, a joint negotiated enterprise, and a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time (1998: 76). All of these factors are exemplified in the school-based work of Eckert (1993, 1999), the most influential sociolinguistic theorist of communities of practice. Eckert examines a great range of practices among the Jocks and Burnouts in her ethnography of Belten High, an American high school in the suburbs near Detroit. These practices, ranging from student council participation, to smoking, to bell-bottom jeans-wearing, and the attainment of popularity or particular grades, give fine-pen texture to linguistic variation that might otherwise be incompletely described by broad-brush correlations with socioeconomic status differences among the students. One enlightening example of praxis in this study is cruising (traveling by car to participate in leisurely activities in Detroit unmediated by institutions), a pursuit that positively correlates and indexically connects the greater use of urban space to the greater use of urban variables. We might surmise that cruising represents a literal vehicle for the transmission of urban change from the city to the suburbs, and yet in this setting there is a complication: cruising is “a constraining issue among girls [...] often forbidden” (Eckert 1999: 152). The practice of cruising may adversely affect a girl’s reputation, and thus the correlations between cruising, gender, and urban variables are delicately

patterned, with urban variable use among girls indexing a threat to standard gender norms that is lacking among the boys. Studies of practice such as Eckert's allow us to trace variation beyond abstractions such as gender or class, and extend our understanding to socially controlled uses of broader semiotic resources, such as space, the body, and material artefacts (Mendoza-Denton 1997).

Sociolinguistic research under various theoretical frameworks (accommodation theory, acts of identity, social networks, and communities of practice, among others) has delineated the link between indexical language variation and social practice. It is these studies that provide the strongest and most productive link between variationist sociolinguistics with its emphasis on linguistic variables, and linguistic anthropology, with its focus on speech settings and their social consequences. Some of the research that does focus on linguistic variables includes Labov's study of islanders' orientations in Martha's Vineyard (1972b); Halliday (1976) on "anti-languages," where structural variation is motivated by an ideology of opposition to the establishment; Irvine (forthcoming) on Senegalese Wolof linguistic registers linked to a system of rank and nobility; Errington (1988) on pronominal variation in Javanese speech styles; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1994) on vocalic variation among poker-playing men on the Outer Banks of North Carolina; Bucholtz (1998) on hyper-standard speech among California Euro-American nerd girls; Woolard (1997) on gender and children's peer-group structure in bilingual Catalonia; Meyerhoff (1999) on apology routines in Vanuatu Bislama; Blake (1996) on ethnic identity in Barbados; Okamoto (1995) on masculine speech forms among young Japanese women; Lane (1999) on social networks and their symbolic effects on Thyborønsk Danish; Tsitsipis (1998) on poetic performances in Arvanitika Greek, and Chambers (1993) on the Canadian/American linguistic border.

The Type II studies of practice-based identity discussed above are a springboard for studies that I will group under Type III: practice-based variation. The starting point in these two types of studies is similar, in that they derive from identifiable practices of speakers.

4 Type III: Practice-based Variation

Rather than aggregating behavior and comparing variation across either sociological categories or practice groups, Type III studies seek to focus on variation as practices unfold, identifying the use of symbolic variants in the moment-to-moment dynamics of interaction. Almost always ethnographic and discourse-/conversation-analytic in perspective, studies of Type III track the shifting identities of speakers as interaction progresses, affording researchers a closer look at the microdynamics of indexicality in variation as well processes of performance, achievement, and construction of identity. In these studies speakers' identities are not a determinate given, but open to transformation,

contextually derived, and emergent in interaction. This type of qualitative research focusing at the level of discourse and discourse strategies is nowadays relatively common in various areas of study such as language and gender (i.e. Tannen (1990) in her influential *You Just Don't Understand!*); language and ethnicity (Labov (1969) on the logic of Black English, Bailey 1997 on the (mis)communication of respect in service interactions between immigrant Korean merchants and African-American customers in Los Angeles); language socialization (Schieffelin (1990) on socializing practices in Papua New Guinea), language and power (Reisigl and Wodak (1990) on anti-semitic discourse in Austria); language and racism (Van Dijk (1993) on institutional discourse in Holland, Hill (1993) on mock uses of Spanish in the United States), etc. The fact that it is relatively rare for discourse studies of identity to have an explicitly *variationist* focus points to a lacuna, with great potential for future research. Below I will examine a few representative studies exemplifying some theoretical perspectives, and conclude with one note of caution and one of encouragement in the integration of all three types of studies.

Johnstone and Bean (1997) argue that self-expression and individuality have been under-explored in studies of linguistic variation. Taking as their corpus the speech and writings of two prominent Texas women (Barbara Jordan and Molly Ivins), they aim to show that speakers choose how they sound; that they may be making speech choices to identify with large groups (i.e. African-Americans) or individuals (the way one's teacher speaks, for instance); that their speech choices occur at all levels of language; and that speakers' linguistic choices express one or more self-images (1997: 222–3). Johnstone and Bean show how self-conscious dialect stereotypes, unconventional figurative language, poetic repetition (see also Tannen 1989), and alliteration are among the devices recruited by these speakers in the creation of their personal styles. Special emphasis is placed on public-speech case studies to argue for the study of variation beyond the levels of sound and syntax to rhetorical discourse.

Schiffrin (1996) on the other hand, looks carefully at everyday narratives among Jewish-Americans to track speakers' portrayal of agentive selves and epistemic stances, both indexical of ongoing relationships within the family. Mothers' portrayals of their daughters "pivot between solidarity and distance, between the provision of autonomy and the exercise of power," conveying a range of identities for the speaker within a single stretch of discourse (1996: 197). Schiffrin stresses that just as Labov (1972d) argued that there are no single-style speakers, similarly, there are no single-identity speakers. Such re-conceptualizations of identity as multiple and emergent-in-interaction, closely related to the postmodern theoretical developments reviewed in the introduction, leads researchers to modify the representation of identity in coding matrices commonly employed in variation.

In the legal arena, Matoesian (1999) examines the role of grammar, sequential action, and footing in the construction of expert identity by the defendant in the 1991 William Kennedy Smith (WS) rape trial. WS, a physician by training, takes the stand during his trial, where the prosecutor attempts to impeach his

testimony on the nature and provenance of the victim's injuries. By shifting from defendant to expert footing, WS shifts from answering questions about his actions to providing medical opinion and raising the possibility of alternative diagnoses for the victim's injuries. Exploiting a variety of grammatical devices that strip his testimony of personal agency and his actions of transitivity, he uses expert medical terminology to evaluate the epistemological status of the prosecution's claims, and casts rhetorical doubt on the prosecution's case. This blurring between the status of defendant and expert provides a window into the workings of spontaneous identity negotiation and the resources that can be mobilized by speakers at different levels.

In my own research, Mendoza-Denton (1997, 1999a), I examine the speech patterns of Latina (Americans of Mexican descent) gang girls in California and trace their use of grammatically innovative discourse markers and constructions as carriers of vocalic and consonantal variation, linking the statistical patterns of phonetic variation among the subgroups (core gang girls vs. wannabes) to innovative discourse uses of the carrier constructions by specific members of the community. The coordination of discourse- and segmental-level strategies with other performative modes (such as makeup, dress, and intonation) is crucial to a semiotic conception of these gang-based identities as complex homologies of signs, operating simultaneously on various communicative channels.

Milroy (1999) also seeks to explain wider phonological patterning by looking at discourse-level constraints on variation. The analysis focuses on exceptions to the Pre-Pausal Constraint (glottalized realizations of /t/ in prepausal contexts) in Tyneside, England. Milroy finds that exceptions to the PPC are primarily found in utterance-final grammatical tags, and that an understanding of the discourse-management functions of such tags can shed light on the spread of sound change through the dynamics of conversation (see also Local et al. (1986)). Indeed, some researchers are turning to discourse markers as cross-linguistic (Fleischman and Yaguello, forthcoming) sites for the production of epistemically stanciful elements that can signal speaker identities. Discourse markers bear several important properties such as phonological reduction, relative syntactic freedom, and semantic bleaching that are the outcomes of processes of grammaticalization. All of these elements may encourage flexibility of implementation (see Schwenter (1996) on Castilian Spanish; Matsumoto (1985) on Japanese; Traugott (1997) on historical developments in discourse marking).

5 Automaticity and Intentionality

Constant transformation is an essential feature of the political structures and social circumstances that bring identities into existence. Given this instability, and our power as agents to vary the meaning and the configuration of identities, the very notion of identity may seem untenable (as indeed, Butler 1995

and Michaels 1992, 1994 argue). What this suggests for variation theory is that identities and their linguistic reflexes are the product of continuous axes of difference (race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, status, profession, momentary stance), none of which is solely determinate. At any given moment, symbolic actors may self- and other-mark in specific ways, only to shift footing in the midst of an interaction.

Some of the literature cited above draws inspiration from performative (Grice 1975, Searle 1969, Butler 1990, Tsitsipis 1998) theories of meaning and action in explaining particular linguistic acts as strategic and intentional. Consider the contrapuntal viewpoint of Moerman (1988) and Heritage (1991) in problematizing pervasively intentionalist analyses of action. To quote Moerman in his discussion of overlapping talk:

all of these meaningful, consequential, structurally complex, and densely cultural overlaps were certainly undeliberate, unanticipated, unconscious, and unremembered. No individual human actor is their author. We build our experienced, lived in, significant social reality out of a mesh of interactive processes too tiny and too quick for the thinking, planning "I" to handle. (Moerman 1988: 30)

Such perspectives stressing automaticity are echoed in functionalist and psycholinguistic perspectives on phonology (Bybee 1999, Hammond 1999), morphology (Hay 2000), and language acquisition (MacWhinney 1999). So far the implications for the theory of identity remain to be worked out. It is perhaps this dissonance between automaticity and intentionality that will lead us to new insights.

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