Sociolinguistics: Literature Notes

**Topic 1: Classic variationist sociolinguistics:**

* Variationist sociolinguists are interested in *language variation and change*.
* The goal: the basic question of classic variationist is the **correlation** between *social variables* (sex, gender, social class, education, ethnicity..) and *linguistic variables* (Magglestone’s accent of dropping /h/, Labov /r/, ‘ing’ Trudgill): sociolinguistic variable.
* **Sociolinguistic variable**: a linguistic feature which correlates with some non-linguistic independent variable of social context: of the speaker, addressee, audience, setting, etc. so social variables like age, gender, race, style. (social characteristics are the independent variables)
* Variants: the different realizations of the linguistic variables.
* Variation: regional, social differences in the ways that a particular language is used. All levels of the language can show **variation**(*sounds, words, meanings, grammar*)
* Variety: is the quality or state of being different/ diverse.
* Rhoticism: the pronunciation the syllable final /r/ in English.
* Post vocalic (r): after vowels, at the end of words, before consonants.
* Labovian style: the amount of attention paid to speech.
* Accent: a pronunciation feature/ a distinctive way of pronouncing a language.
* Dialect: a regional, social variety of a language distinguished by accent, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary
* AAVE: a non standard dialect of English.
* Causes of variation of the socio-variables: *linguistic context* (phonetic context, supra-segmental influences, social variables)

**Labov, W. (1972/1997). The social stratification of (r) in New York City department stores. In Coupland N. & Jaworski, A. (1997). Sociolinguistics. Macmillan, 168-178.**

* Labov ‘s social stratification of the post vocalic /r/ in New York City Speech is the foundation study of variationalist sociolinguistics.
* He investigated the pronunciation of the post-vocalic /r/, he collected data from 3 different departments representing different social classes (upper middle class, lower middle class and working class). He asked them about the location of items which were ‘on the fourth floor’; he asked them to repeat.
* He wrote down the different variants of the /r/ sound and the social variables, including store, occupation, class..
* Results: the post vocalic /r/ was stratified by social class: those from high socioeconomic class pronounced /r/ more frequently that those with lower socioeconomic status.
* ‘Observer Paradox’: He observes people, behaves like a customer/ natural setting
* This can cause an ethical issue
* The use of post-vocalic r in New York is perceived to be a sign of a higher social prestige
* Thus: the higher the (price) status of a department house in New York, the more rhotic the sales people are

**Topic 2: Schools in variation studies**

* 3 Variationist Waves in Sociolinguistics

1. **1st wave:** classical variationist approach (Labov 1972)
2. **2nd wave:** Social network, Linguistic Networks, ethnography (Lesley Milroy) and audience design (Allan Bell 1984)
3. **3rd wave:** Communities of practice approach (Eckert, Bucholtz)

* Variation does not simply reflect but also constructs social meaning.
* The role of social practice defines groups rather than class, gender, class, ethnicity...

**Bucholtz, M. (2001). "Why be normal?" Language and identity practices in a community of nerd girls. Language in Society, (28)2, 203-233.**

* Notion of **SPEECH COMMUNITY**: community of people in which the rules for the conduct & interpretation of at least one linguistic variety (language/dialect) are shared: i.e., shared norms for language use (can be a city, neighborhood, region, nation)
* In this article, Bucholtz critiques the inability of the speech community to account for individual identities within groups. This article uses the concept of a community of practice to show how a group of girls in a California high school use positive and negative identity practices to create a ‘nerd’ community. Bucholtz’s study demonstrates how speakers negotiate gender and social identities through these practices. This analysis showcases the potential for using the community of practice as an analytical tool in examining how identity is achieved and maintained in linguistic practice.
* <https://linguistlinguine.tumblr.com/post/141392455772/bucholtz-1999-language-in-society>
* Negative identity practices (Nerd): vowel shift, slang, non-standard phonology and syntax.
* Positive identity practices (Nerd): intelligence, reading books, developing knowledge, hypercorrected pronunciation, formal lexical items...

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| --- | --- |
| Community of Practice (Eckert , Bucholtz) | Speech community (Labov, 1972) |
| Individual | group |

**Topic 3: Language ideologies, language planning and policy**

* **Language ideology:** a set of beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes about language, language use, language learning.
* Ideology always incorporates in languages
* **Standardization:** the process by which conventional forms of a language are established and maintained.
* As an effort by members of a community to impose one dialect or variety as a standard.
* **Language policy:** official documents, regulations taken by policy makers towards languages and their status.
* **Language planning:** the formation and the implementation of a policy designed to prescribe or influence the languages or varieties of a language.
* **Status planning:** turn it to standard/ national language; the choice of the variety (ies) that will become the official language (s) of the state, the medium of its institutions. (decision: Hebrew the official language of Israel)
* **Corpus planning:** norm selection and codification

A collection of the elements of the corpus of the language (pronunciation,

spelling, grammar..)

**McKinney, C. & Swann, J. (2001). Developing a sociolinguistic voice: Students and linguistic**

**descriptivism. Journal of Sociolinguistics, (5)4, 576-590.**

* Course on 'Varieties of English', responses from students in England, Singapore and Greece
* Linguistic descriptivism as problematical concept for beginning students
* Challenge to commonly accepted, everyday conceptions of language
* Indeed mismatch between students' common-sense understandings of language and sociolinguistic ideas
* Many students were able to make a shift in their conception of language
* This shift often had an affective or ideological component
* Prescriptive approach of language: ideology of the standard as the “correct” variety of English

**Descriptive approach**: supports language change and variatiom; Describe/ analyze the reality

**Prescriptive approach**: is based on standard language ideology; Establishes norms for the correct variety which is regarded as; linguistically superior to other varieties.

**Language ideology affects language teaching**

* **Native speakerism**: a language ideology based on the assumption that native speaker teachers represent the target culture from which spring the ideals both of the English language and English language teaching methods.
* Language ideology influences language in education policy
* Language ideology is embedded in a larger social ideology

**Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1990). Language, literacy and minorities. London: The Minority Rights Group, 6-31.**

* Linguistic rights; majority vs. minority, official language(s) of a nation, dominance/power
* Ideology in the context of education
* Language policy reflects the ideology behind
* types of educational programmes: segregation, maintenance, submersion, immersion (factors of teaching materials and trainings)
* *Segregation* = monolingual L1 classroom isolation as minority
* *Immersion* = monolingual L2 classroom/ target language is a medium instruction
* *Submersion* = L1 and L2 are mixed/ target language (L2) is a medium instrcution
* Dominant medium of instruction is L1: segregation (low degree of success (LDS)) vs. maintenance (high degree of success (HDS))
* Dominant medium of instruction is L2: submersion (low degree of success (LDS)) vs. immersion (high degree of success (HDS))

**Topic 4: Conversation Analysis and Interactional Sociolinguistics**

**Brown, R. & Gilman, A. (1972/1960). Pronouns of power and solidarity. In Laver, J. & S. Hutcheson (eds.), Communication in face-to-face interaction. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 156-176.**

* In this paper, Brown and Gilman trace the historical semantics of the pronouns of address in French, Italian, and German to show the connection between *social structure, group ideology, and these semantics*. Through conversations with native speakers and a questionnaire distributed to students from abroad in Boston, the authors demonstrate how there has been a shift from a power semantic use of familiar and polite pronouns to a solidarity semantic. The final sections of the paper explain how a person’s consistent *pronoun style can give away their class status and political views* and how this style can be varied to express transient moods and attitudes.
* <https://linguistlinguine.tumblr.com/post/138761725172/brown-and-gilman-1960-style-in-language>
* The article discusses the semantic dimensions governing Tu/Vos
* Addressing pronouns: Tu/Vos: to show social structure and power ranks
* The power semantics is non reciprocal: the superior says ‘Tu’ and receives ‘Vos’.
* The solidarity semantics is reciprocal: between persons of equal power

**Rampton, B. (2017). Interactional sociolinguistics. In: Tusting, K. (ed.) The Routledge handbook of linguistic ethnography. Routledge. [the working paper version is fine, 1-16]**

* History: John J. Gumperz, Dell Hymes
* John J. Gumperz: his approach is in this second wave of variation; social networks and ethnography. He came up with social networks instead of speech community.
* Speech event as unit of analysis, culture not outside of talk
* **Interactional Sociolinguistics** (ethnography, sociolinguistics, conversational analysis): umbrella term: focus on how language users create meaning through social interaction.
* Inferencing, contextualisation: the use of verbal and non-verbal signs to relate what is said to knowledge (lexical choice, prosody, gesture,..)
* Microlevel (sociolinguistics: study of language in relation to society), macrolevel (sociology of language: study of society in relation to language)
* Theory of communication aligns with constructionist theories of social practice
* **Gumperz** replaced *speech community* with *social network*

**Conversation analysis**: how one utterance relates to another/ how topics are introduced, developed and change.

* Goal: to unveil conversational structures and its underlying principles.
* Principles: Adjacency pairs (Opening-Closing), Turn taking , Repair, Floor allocation, Institutional task, Hymes: model ‘Speaking

**Topic 5: Bilingualism**

* Bilingualism: the ability to speak two or more languages
* Bilingual and multilingual are synonym
* Balanced Bilingualism: an individual whose mastery of two languages is roughly equivalent.
* Asymmetric: one language dominates the other.
* Code switching: is the use of more than one language simultaneously in conversations.
* Diaglossia: two related codes with rigid functional separation (high/ superstandardized language)

**Gal, S. (1978): Peasant men can't get wives: Language change and sex roles in a bilingual community. Language in Society, (7)1, pp. 1-16.**

* In the Austrian community Oberwart, which is bilingual (Hungarian-German), a language shift is taking place (in 1978): *a shift from Bilingualism to monolingualism*
* The use of Hungarian is mostly associated with the peasantry, the use of German is associated with workers and so German has a higher social status
* Women frequently shift to speaking German instead of Hungarian because they want to acquire a higher status in society
* Young women are more advanced in the direction of the linguistic changes as compared to older people and young men.
* The women’s social network is very influential in that regard
* Distinction between genders (Trudgill’s study of ‘ing’: -> running vs. runnin')
* **Lesley Milroy and James Milroy**: Language and Social Networks (Belfast study): young women lead to innovation
* **Peter Trudgill** (1st wave’ Classical Variationist) : g-dropping in Norwich
* Acquire social status/ prestige

**Topic 6: Contact languages, English as a Lingua Franca**

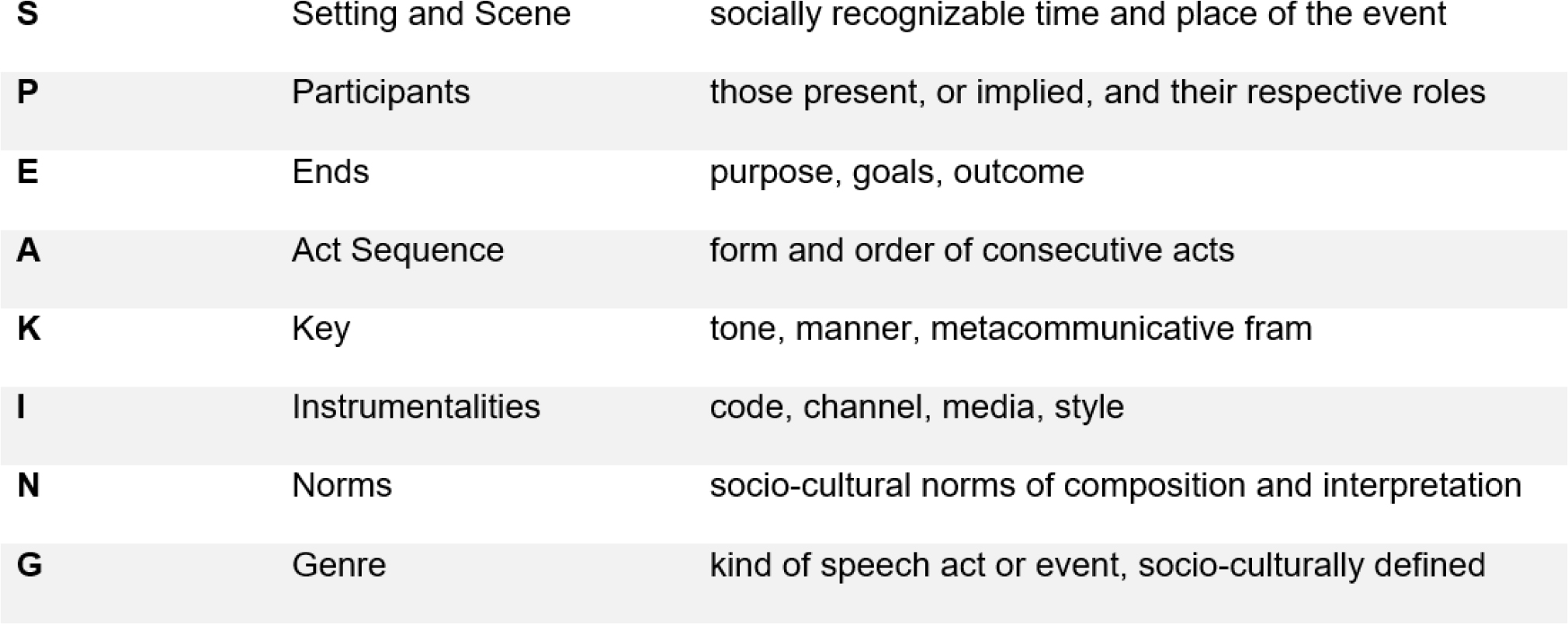
* Contact languages: Pidgin, creole, a lingua franca
* **Pidgin** is a simplified language/ auxiliary language: reduction of morphology and syntax/ tolerance of considerable phonological variation.
* **Creole** is a fully developed/ elaborated on a pidgin basis which has become the native language in a special community.
* **A lingua franca** is a language used by people who do not share the same native languages to facilitate communication. (e.g., French: was used as a lingua franca)
* Phonological variation: Philippine English: absence of aspiration of stops in all positions, substitution of [a] for [æ], [ɔ] for [o], [ɪ] for [i], [ɛ] for [e]
* German accent in English: pronounce /s/ in place of / th/: think: sink: Berlitz: The German coast guard Commercial <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MUsVcYhERY>
* **Superstrate**: is the socially, economically and politically dominant language (vocabulary)
* **Substrate**: the native language of the speakers who contribute to the development of the pidgin and creole language (*most grammar, pronunciation*)

**The causes of varieties: contact, migration: the process of colonialism**

**Widdowson**, H. (2012). ELF and the inconvenience of established concepts. Journal of English as a Lingua Franca, 1, 5-26.

* Understand English as a lingua France
* Reality of English which is demonstrated in English as a lingua Franca
* Learners construct their own version of language
* Performance of real language
* Performance is representation of the abstract knowledge
* Linguafranca is to the way to express identity, way to express cultural values
* Implications for the teaching of English
* Rethink possible alternatives to adjust teaching according to learner language
* Learner-centered approach
* Ownership: who owns English?
* Native speakers?
* English users and speakers?
* Debate between supporters of Standard English and supporters of English as an International Lingua franca
* **Widdowson** is one of the supporters of English as a lingua franca.
* Kachru (three circles, native, L2 and Foreign) , Crystal (English as international language)
* Vienna Corpus: Barbara Seidlhofer: VOICE corpus

**Topic 7: Anthropological approaches**

* Anthropological Linguistics: is a sub field of linguistics and anthropology: is interested in the **cultural** and **social aspects of language**, **cultural differences**.
* Ethnography: is the study of how **rules**, **cultural norms** and **values** are related to language use. (John J. Gumperz)
* Ethnography is the link between interactional sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics.
* Communicative competence: the knowledge of how to use language in a culturally appropriate way (Communicative competence by Hymes and Dornyei’s pedagogical aspects)
* Ethnographic methods: rules, cultural norms, values in relation to language use.
* Participant observation
* The Speaking (Hymes)
* Speech Event

**Heath, S. B. (1982). What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and school. Language in Society, (11)1, 49-76.**

* Conducted a study on speech event, focusing on bedtime story telling as a literary event (the first literary event that children encounter).
* She investigates the diverse ways of developing literacy and approaching knowledge.
* The three communities differ a lot in their approaches to developing literacy habits in children.
* 3 communities in the US: Maintown, Roadville, Trackton
* Maintown: white/black middle-class – the „mainstream” community (the dominant system)
* Roadville: white working class
* Trackton: black working-class
* Maintown and Roadville: child-centered communication
* Trackton: no child-centered communication
* Approaching knowledge - questions: what, why (how) and what if
* Maintown: questions take place in the order what, why (how) and what if
* Roadville: what-questions, no why- (how) and what if-questions
* Trackton: why (how) and what if-questions, no what-questions
* culturally diverse ways of developing literacy and of approaching knowledge
* all three communities value literacy, but they differ a lot in their approaches to developing literacy habits in children
* school favours the mainstream community practices, children from the other two communities are disadvantaged
* Cultural patterns can come in any combination. One is not better than the other but one becomes more valuable because that is supported by the mainstream education and rewarded in the mainstream culture.

**Topic 8: The emergence of the standard language: The case of English (Modernity; Standardisation; Selection; Elaboration; Codification; Implementation)**

Chapter 3 in Graddol et al. (2007, 79-112)

**Modernity**: intellectual, political, religious developments in Europe.

Renaissance: intellectual movement started in Italy in the 15th Century. During this period, scholars started to rediscover works of Greek and Roman times.

**The growth of capitalism**: new social class relations began to take place.

England began to manufacture, export goods.

A growth of the market economy

**The rise of humanist science**: Renaissance led to an expansion of knowledge, a growth in scientific research (Newton theory).

**Puritanism**: the rise of puritans: a group of people who believed in the idea of an English Church. This led to the study of the Anglo-Saxon culture and English dialect.

**The process of Standardization has 4 stages** (**SECI)** :

1. **Selection** (a variety is identified as the basis usually the **most powerful** and **influential**)
2. **Elaboration** (the process when wide range of function is given to this selected language) the extension of language resources (vocabulary and grammar)
3. **Codification** (establishment of norms of grammatical usage and vocabulary in dictionaries, grammars, and manuals (special instruction how use the language) )
4. **Implementation** (making texts in standard language available) to make the standard language known by many people.

* English was transformed from a Vernacular language to a Standard Variety.
* Focusing: reduction in variation arises in a speech community without formal intervention by government or language planners.
* Standardization is not simply a linguistic fact but an ideological process.

**Milroy, J. (2001). Language ideologies and the consequences of standardization. Journal of**

**Sociolinguistics, (5)4: 530-555. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1467-**

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* Ideology of the standard language, standard language cultures
* Ideology affects in a way which speakers think about his/her language and language in general
* Standardization: promoting uniformity within a class of objects (high and low class)
* Another meaning of standard: measure of achievement (value judgement of uniformity)
* Usually identification of standard with prestige (Standard variety if the highest prestige variety): Received Pronunciation
* Uniformity of usage has been institutionally imposed
* Formality/ carefulness relate to standardization
* Dialect cannot be labelled as non-standard
* Standardization relate to socio-political point of view
* Popular attitudes associated with the standard: correctness, common sense (the correctness of the standard is taken for granted), legitimacy (what counts as the standard may be legitimized in grammar books, dictionaries, codification), maintenance (language needs to be treated with care, otherwise there is decay): to protect the language.
* Ideology standardization includes prestige, correctness, uniform in structure, legitimation

**Topic 9: Processes of colonisation and the spread of English (Colonisation; Dialect levelling;**

**New-dialect formation; The spread of English within and beyond the British Isles)**

**Chapters 4 and 6.7-6.10 in Graddol et al. (2007, 117-148, 204-221)**

* The role colonialism in the new-dialect formation.
* The colonial expansion of English in the 16th C; English became the main language of the Celtic speaking territories (Ireland, Scotland and Wales).
* The process of colonization affected all the Celtic territories of the British Isles.
* The linguistic consequence was the introduction of varieties of English.
* The colonial conditions gave rise to forms of linguistic changes: including dialect levelling and the creation of new varieties.
* Dialect levelling: when speakers of different varieties of English are brought together in a new community.
* The creation of new varieties: colonies developed its own local linguistic and cultural identities.
* Incorporate many linguistic features from their first languages.
* The contact between English and Irish brought several phonological, grammatical features: Irish English for example /t/ and /th/ the same, /t/ as dental not alveolar

**Kerswill, P. (2020). Contact and new varieties. Chapter 12 in Raymond Hickey (ed.): The Handbook of Language Contact. 2nd ed. Wiley Online Library, 241-259. DOI:10.1002/9781119485094.**

* New Variety: a set of linguistic norms which are different from previous norms.
* New variety formation processes: Migration, Language contact, colonialism
* Accommodation: adjustment by speakers who are interacting with others
* Dialect levelling: *eradication* (meaning people speak different varieties tend to lose not commonly use features during the language contact) of marked linguistics features that are not commonly shared by two varieties (mostly appears on regional level)
* Several stages of levelling (Trudgill)
* Stage 1: level away features in the mix of the dialect they encounter. They don't use the not commonly features
* Stage 2: the demographic distribution (meaning when children pick up the new selected features) of features begins to determine the shape of the focused variety.
* Stage 3: the focusing of the new variety. Due to the language contact and distribution to new generation a new variety is shaped.
* Levelling is when dialects come together from **different** areas and the two dialects mix.
* Kerswill: examined the Norwish dialects in two different cities Odda (west) and Tyssedal (East). The dialects in both towns are very different from each other. The new dialect includes features from both.

**Topic 10: Accent as social symbol**

Chapter 5 in Graddol et al. (2007, pp.153-178)

* Accent is the way how we pronounce and intone the words we speak.
* Belief: one form of speech (pronunciation) is better than the other
* Inherent: Prescriptivism is the view that one variety of a language has inherently higher value than others, imposed on the whole speech community.
* Received Pronunciation (RP): educated accent: education pronunciation
* Trudgill: Standard English is the dialect of education.
* Native-RP (high prestige) : type spoken in normal circumstances by RP speakers: has some features from other regional features.
* Construct-RP: codified, normative pronunciation as found in dictionaries
* Language attitudes are changing/ rise of language attitude
* Estuary English: first identified in 1984: the phonological features of South East of England. A mode of speech, a variety of modified regional speech.
* BBC shifts to accept regional accents.
* Public school in the UK is as an example of social class association with a wealthy and socially well-to-do: students use a proper accent
* Modern educational practice this kind of example doesn't appear anymore on the basis of accent differentiation. (Trudgilll)

**Mugglestone, L. (2003). /h/ and other symbols of the social divide. Chapter 4 in 'Talking Proper': The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol. 2nd ed. Oxford: OUP, 95-134.**

This chapter explores the patterns of both usage and language attitudes which came into existence in the late 18th and 19th centuries. **It shows how the use of /h/ in modern English** **became one of the foremost signals of social identity**, **its presence in initial positions associated almost inevitably with the ‘educated’ and ‘polite**’, while its loss commonly triggers popular connotations of the ‘**vulgar’, the ‘ignorant’, and the ‘lower class’**. Surrounded by social values and attendant value judgements, the dropping of [h], now operates as ‘the single most powerful pronunciation shibboleth in England’, **a ready marker of social difference**, a **symbol of the social divide**.

**Topic 11: Dialect variation in English (Standard Englishes; Class, gender and age; Social**

**networks; Traditional dialects)**

Chapter 6 in Graddol et al. (2007, 189-221)

* Examined the **factors (class, gender, age and social networks)** which determine the dialect you speak
* Standard language: correctness
* Standard English: the vehicle of educational success.
* Variety and macro-social factors:

**Gender**: men use non-standard forms than women

**Age**: a correlation between age and prestige

* Variety and micro factors:
  + social networks Gumperz = speech community
  + Social network: the interaction in which we are involved in.
  + Social network is a network of individuals (such as friends, acquaintances, and coworkers) connected by interpersonal relationships
  + Social network as **uniplex**: they are largely unrelated to each other.

**Multiplex**: networks are related

Standard 🡪 has norms, codified. uniformity. legitimation

Non standard (new varieties)🡪 have distinctive features

Grammatical variety:

Strong verbs

Age was found to be a significant factor in the simplification of strong verb forms.

I saw/ I seen

Quotative verbs: the verbs that are used to introduce dialogues such as say, think, go..

Be+like is a quotative (I’m like)

**Cheshire, J., Fox, S., Kerswill, P. & Torgersen, E. (2008). Ethnicity, friendship network and social practices as the motor of dialect change: linguistic innovation in London. Sociolinguistica, (22)1: 1-23. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/9783484605299.1. (Also available as https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/75066/1/Cheshire\_u.a.\_pdf.pdf)**

* Investigate the role of ethnicity and type of friendship network in language change.
* Hackney: is in inner London in the East/ non-anglo speakers : heterogeneous
* Havering: most of citizens are local.
* Is ethnicity a significant factor in language variation in London?
* Ethnicity is crucial for both phonetic and discourse variables
* All Hackney adolescents use phonological innovations, most innovative variants used by non-Anglo speakers
* New quotative form: *THIS IS + SUBJECT*, e.g. *This is me* (meaning “I said”, used only by young speakers in inner London)
* “Brokering” (Eckert 2000): multimembership used to transfer an element of one practice into another; the way adolescents introduce new ideas into their friendship groups (e.g. the new idea/term by mentioning to a new group with expression of *This is me* instead of *I said*)
* There seemed to be innovation in the center (Hackney) and levelling in the periphery (Havering).
* Ethnicity and age are the key role of leading innovation in London.