

Style as Stance

Stance as the Explanation for Patterns of Sociolinguistic Variation

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At the heart of the sociolinguistic enterprise is the search to explain why speakers choose one linguistic form over another. In the chapters in this volume, the focus of that explanation is stance: How do speakers use linguistic form to create stances, why do they take these stances up, and how are forms associated with stances? The search for the motivation of linguistic choices is also the focus of studies of variation and change, but whereas much of the focus on determining stance is more qualitative and syntax- and discourse-oriented, variationist studies are generally quantitative and focus on morphophonological phenomena. Variationist studies proceed mainly by finding correlations between a linguistic variable and either some other linguistic element (so-called internal factors) or some nonlinguistic factor (so-called external factors or sometimes, social factors). The kinds of factors included in the latter are almost always based on identity: age, gender, race, class, and so on. But Labov showed early on (1966) that there are other factors—which he placed under the general term “style”—that are not correlated with a speaker’s identity, but rather with speech activity: careful and casual. In this chapter I explore how stance can be used in variationist sociolinguistics, specifically, how stance is related to the variationist conception of style.

The study of style in sociolinguistic variation has had renewed interest in recent years. Contemporary sociolinguistic work on style, including Schilling-Estes (1998), Eckert (2000), and the edited volume by Eckert and Rickford (2001), has explored style in a more speaker-centered, interactional vein than in much earlier style-focused analyses. Even so, the relationship between these style and identity meanings in variation has not been explored as much as we might expect. Rather, style and identity patterning have usually been seen as reflecting orthogonal meanings. In the earliest style work, Labov (1966) seems to suggest that it is the *social group*

meaning (as I will call the gender, age, class, etc. meanings) that are primary. In this view, a linguistic form (that is, a variant) acquires a meaning of prestige because speakers perceive that it is used by the upper classes (and if a variant is used a lot by lower classes, it may have “covert prestige”). Similarly, Bell’s (1984, 2001) model of audience design explicitly takes the view that stylistic variation is derivative of social group meaning. The meanings of the linguistic form within a particular interaction (what I will call *interactional meaning*) in this view arise because speakers wish to adopt aspects of an identity category, or even claim that identity entirely.

As I discuss below, more recent conceptions of style do not share this view, and in this chapter I will extend these recent conceptions to argue that the premise that style derives from social group patterning should be reversed: I contend that stance is the main interactional meaning being created, and it is a precursor, or primitive, in sociolinguistic variation: that is, sociolinguistic variants are initially associated with interactional stances and these stances become in turn associated with a social group meaning in a community over time and repeated use (I will elaborate on what I mean by “associated with” below). In fact, I want to test the more extreme hypothesis that stancetaking is where indexicality in variation begins; stance is, in Silverstein’s (2003) terms, where the “baptismal essentializations” of indexicality occur, and is the original first- (or, possibly, zero-)order indexicality (Silverstein 2003, Johnstone et al. 2006). I thus evaluate how far I can take the proposition that any choice of linguistic form made by a speakers is based ultimately on the interpersonal or epistemic stance they wish to take with their various interlocutors at a particular time, and that it is stances that become associated, through cultural models, with various identities (including particular speaking roles in specific situations).¹ The overall goal of this chapter is to connect the everyday use of language variation in discourse to the ways that it patterns on larger social scales, and to test the hypothesis that this connection can be made through the concept of stance.

In order to understand relationships between style, stance, and indexicality, we need to have some definitions and understandings of how these terms have been used, and how I will use them, which I address in the next section. I will then move on to discuss some examples of how stance can be seen to be driving the use of variants.

Style, Indexicality, and Stance

Stance

All linguistic patterns of use arise from decisions people make in interaction when they are talking to a real person and thinking about “who they are” in relation to that person or people.² I argue that people’s primary way of organizing interaction (including and especially the language in interaction) is through stances. I define stance as a person’s expression of their relationship to their talk (their epistemic stance—e.g., how certain they are about their assertions), and a person’s expression of their relationship to their interlocutors (their interpersonal stance—e.g., friendly or dominating). Epistemic and interpersonal stance are often related: someone who is being patronizing (interpersonal stance) is usually expressing that they are also very certain (epistemic stance) about what they are saying, but they are also expressing

something about that knowledge vis-à-vis their interlocutor, namely, that the interlocutor does not have the same knowledge. Stances are thus connected both to the ways we relate to the content of our talk and to the socialness of our talk.

Stances have been used extensively in the discourse analytic and linguistic anthropological literature (see Ochs 1992), but it is only recently that the interactional meanings arising from morphophonological variables have begun to be studied (see Benor 2001, Bucholtz 1999, Johnstone and Baumgardt 2004, Kiesling 1998). The work so far suggests that variants have very diffuse meanings (such as *casual* or *urban*) across interactions that are made specific in interaction to create stances in concert with other variables in talk, and that this meaning changes depending on the stability of the variable and the age of the change, if one is in progress.

There is a general problem in such work of *coding* stances. Variationist sociolinguistics requires that each variant be coded with certain characteristics so that it can be entered into a quantitative analysis. The main difficulty in coding for stance is that there is no single list of stances, and even one stance can be slightly different for different people. But we can notice that interactants are engaging in similar activities (such as *arguing* or *flirting*) in how they participate verbally (and nonverbally) in interactions, and we should be able to show some relationship between this participation and variation (see also DuBois this volume for some possibilities in encoding stance). In order to discern what kind of stance might be going on in an interaction (or text), we can use many features that discourse analysts have shown are used by speakers to indicate stances. In the examples below I will explain the specific steps taken in each study to code for stance. However, it should be noted here that there is no “automatic stance-recognition” that can be done (otherwise we could code for other linguistic features rather than stance), because the same linguistic features can be used to take up different stances depending on other elements of context (widely defined).

Approaches to Style in Variation

There is a rich literature on sociolinguistic style, which I will not attempt to completely review here. However, there are a few important points that need to be established. The first is how the term *style* is being used in this chapter. There are two main ways of thinking about style in variationist sociolinguistics. The first conception is similar to Labov’s view: style is “intraspeaker variation.” Individuals use variants at different rates depending on the situation, broadly speaking. The research on this type of style has the longest tradition, and the goal has been to account for the speech situation or activity so that we do not compare “a casual salesman and a careful pipefitter” (Labov 1972: 240) and conclude that they do not differ in the use of some variant. This is the way in which style has most often been considered in variationist work, including in Bell’s (1984, 2001) audience design model.

Schilling-Estes’s (1998) view of the “performance register” of style shifting also understands style to be intraspeaker variation. In this view, though, speakers are much more proactive in their style shifting. She notes (1998: 69) that “style-shifting is primarily a means whereby speakers alter the images of self which they project for others. Sometimes these alternations are triggered by changes in the conversational

context, but more often they are not; in fact, they often serve, in and of themselves, to bring about contextual changes.” Schilling-Estes’s discussion of style as *altering* images of self aligns her interpretation with a stance-based approach.

Another definition of style focuses not on the use of a single variable by an individual speaker in different situations, but on the use of more than one linguistic variable by one speaker. This is the view discussed by Eckert and her students, which I will refer to as the Stanford group (see, for example, Benor 2001, Eckert 2000, Mendoza-Denton 2008, Podesva 2007, and Zhang 2008). In this view, a single variant is seen as part of a more complete *personal style* or *persona*: “While the individual variables available in a dialect may correlate with various aspects of social membership and practice, most of them take on interpretable social meaning only in the context of the broader linguistic styles to which they contribute” (Eckert 2000: 213). In this view, style is the product of the combination of a number of linguistic (and nonlinguistic) social practices, yielding a particular persona. It is a creative, negotiated process within a community of practice (“an aggregate of people who come together around some enterprise,” which develops and shares practices “as a function of their joint engagement in activity” Eckert 2000: 35). “Stylistic practice is a process of *bricolage*, in which ways of being are transformed through the strategic re-use of meaningful resources” (Eckert 2002: 5). In her ethnographic sociolinguistic analysis of variation in a Detroit-area high school, Eckert shows how vowel variants covary with other aspects of social practice and style, such as “cruising” (driving around a particular route with friends without a destination) and pants cuff width. She shows that although the variables she analyzes have general meanings throughout the school (e.g., association with urban versus suburban areas of Detroit), they are used in specific ways to create personal styles by individuals.

Let me distinguish these two main views of style as “intraspeaker variation” and “personal style” in order to be more precise in my discussion. They are of course connected: the ways one individual shifts use of a single variant from situation to situation is related to that person’s personal style and the other stylistic practices that shift in each situation. I will show that both of these conceptions of style are at heart talking about speaker stance. Schilling-Estes’s is probably the most sophisticated understanding of intraspeaker variation because it understands that speakers actively use variants in situations for various ends. But she is clearly referring to stance in her claim that the performance of dialect is explained “in terms of the roles (both real and metaphorical) that conversational participants play with respect to one another during a given interaction” (1998: 72). It will also become clear that stances are taken not by using a single variant, but with a range of social practices in the manner that the Stanford group outlines for personal styles. However, they also argue that speakers take on or create relatively enduring *personas*, so that the style they discuss thus seems to be more a speaker’s recurring set of linguistic practices. The view that stances underlay these personal styles and personae is completely compatible with this view of style: we simply understand the personal styles to be *repertoires of stances*. In Eckert’s (2000) high school, she shows that burnout girls take on much more agentive and confrontational stances than the jock girls, who take up much more “smiley” personae; in other words, their personae match their “personalities,” and the personalities are the same thing as regularly taken stances,

or stances that generalize what is common to several stances regularly taken. The connection between stance and both personal style and intraspeaker variation will be noted throughout the rest of this chapter; the goal for variationist sociolinguistics is to produce an understanding of how this connection comes to be made and how such relationships affect language change.

Discussion of personae and personalities inevitably brings up the question of *identity*. Though variously defined, identity in one current of variationist work has to do with the ways in which individuals are similar to or different from other individuals in a particular social group—hence their grouping on characteristics such as gender and age. These kinds of identities have been shown since Labov (1963) to affect speakers' variation patterns. Eckert (2000) moved the discussion of identity forward by showing that individuals create personal styles and enact them linguistically; that is, they do not just play out social category memberships. Seeing stance as primary is compatible with both a focus on personal style and a focus on the role of census-like identity categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality, region, and so forth. First, personal style is often described by people (or novelists) in terms of their habitual stances: "she's very full of herself," "he's very touchy-feely," and so on. Second, we find that what tends to differentiate census-like groups—in the discourses of the society that define them, real or imagined—are the stances they habitually take. This is especially true with linguistic differences that are found between men and women (e.g., "men are confrontational," "women are servile"). Thus, identity and personal style are both ways of stereotyping habitual patterns of stancetaking, or repertoires of stance. This connection will be elaborated upon below.

The picture that emerges is that stancetaking is the main constitutive social activity that speakers engage in when both creating a style and "style-shifting." The Stanford group shows that personal style is similarly constitutive of more widespread social group variation patterns, and so by this logic, stance underpins social group variation as well as the two conceptions of style.

I also argue that stance underlies the acquisition of variation. First language development has long been seen, and still most often is, as a problem of how children take decontextualized "input" and create decontextualized grammars. But as Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) show, this is not how children learn language. Rather, they learn language in a rich contextual environment; they remember who said what and how, and what kinds of speech activity or stance work was taking place. The work on developmental pragmatics pioneered by Schieffelin and Ochs show that learning stances—how to take them and who normatively takes what stances—is an integral part of learning language. In their analysis of caregiver-child speech, they identify different normative stances associated with caregivers' accommodation to children. In some cases, it is the child's responsibility to speak so that he or she is understood (as in the Samoan culture observed by Ochs); in others, it is the caregiver's responsibility to repeat and guess what the child is saying (as in American middle-class white culture). Schieffelin and Ochs show that these different stancetakings by caregivers teach the children important lessons in how to orient themselves in talk in their societies, and that stance meanings are not separate from, but learned as part of, the grammar.

The limited work on sociolinguistic style and variation in young children provides evidence that style patterning is present early in the child's development of her

or his adult grammar, and supports the view that children learn the stances of their caregivers and the variants that go with them before they learn other indexicalities in the speech community. Labov (1989) shows that distinct style patterns are present for children as young as seven, and generally pattern according to their parents' style shifting. We can thus conclude that children learn style variation before they are exposed to the full social variation present in their speech community. If this style variation is related to stance, then it can be argued that stance is what children learn first, and then generalize other meanings from these stance meanings.

A simple but elegant study performed by Smith, Durham, and Fortune (2007) provides evidence that it is stance the children are learning, or at least they are learning speech activities that entail stances. They analyzed talk from a corpus of recordings of caregiver-child dyads from the town of Buckie, Scotland, in which the children ranged from two to almost four years old. These recordings were made as caregivers carried the microphone and recorder throughout their day, so that a number of different speech activities and stylistic contexts were recorded. Smith et al. focus on the Buckie variable of (ou), the alternation between the more standard [ʌu] pronunciation and the local [u:] in words such as house and down. They find that caregiver talk is more nonstandard with older children, and that there is a strong correlation between caregiver rates and child rates: that is, older children use the more local variant more than younger children. Variation is thus conditioned by age (for the children) but not yet by sex, as is found in adult corpora on this variable. Finally, Smith and colleagues coded for four speech activities (what they call styles): playing, routine, teaching, and discipline. They find that the children mirror their caregivers' shifts in these speech activities almost exactly. There is thus evidence that children are learning what is appropriate in a speech activity before they learn social constraints like those related to gender.

Furthermore, Smith et al. found that playing and routine pattern together for most speakers, as do teaching and discipline. Teaching and discipline share a stance that focuses on hierarchy or power, and play and routine share a stance of connection or solidarity. By using stance, then, we can generalize the pattern found by Smith et al. further and more precisely. In other words, this study provides evidence that children are learning the stance (power and solidarity) indexicalities of the variants before they learn the social identity indexicalities such as gender (although they are likely learning about age indexicalities, as well, to the extent that they are developmentally capable of generalizing age categories from their experiences).

There is thus strong evidence from the few studies of the acquisition of variation in early childhood that stance is learned before many, if not all, other social constraints. This result is unsurprising, because the main differentiation a child is likely to hear is not among many different speakers, but different ways of interacting among the relatively few speakers (compared to adults) with whom she or he is in direct contact in early childhood. Even in extended families of more communal forms of childcare such as those described by Schieffelin and Ochs in the Kaluli and Samoan societies, the number of speakers a child is intensively exposed to is low. No matter who the child's primary caregiver or caregivers may be, it is crucial for that child to be able to interpret their stances; to tell, for example, whether a caregiver is giving important directions or playing (in fact, communication requires that the child

be able to detect play, in the same way as described for primates by Bateson [1972]). Viewing stance as developmentally primary is thus not an unwarranted conclusion.

Indexicality

An index is a type of linguistic (or other) sign that takes its meaning from the context of an utterance, with context understood fairly broadly, including aspects of the speaker, hearer, and speaking situation. These issues are discussed in considerable detail by Silverstein (1976, 2003) and Agha (2003, 2007). Address terms (ATs) are a good example of such indexes: although they by definition identify a person being addressed, speakers always have a choice as to whether to use an AT or not, and which one to use; these choices both relate to cultural norms and have social and cultural implications. *Dude*, as used in North American English, is a good example of such an AT with indexical meaning. I will not explain all of its indexicalities here (see Kiesling 2004), but it does show how context can be encoded. Although this is changing, it most often identifies both speaker and addressee as male, and also may indicate the speaker's understanding of what kind of speech event is under way. Finally, *dude* expresses the speaker's interpersonal stance of "cool solidarity." Indexes thus both create and reflect context.

Indexical meaning is often taken to mean co-occurrence. That is, if a linguistic item co-occurs frequently in the speech of a particular person or kind of person, that linguistic item will be taken to index that group. In the case of *dude*, it has historically been used more by men to men, so it has taken on this indexicality. However, it is possible to have co-occurrence without indexical meaning. Johnstone and Kiesling (2008) show that in fact the people who use a particular feature of Pittsburgh speech (/aw/-monophthongization) do not necessarily understand that feature as indexing a Pittsburgh identity; rather, other aspects of social discourse must take up this possibility and "point out" to speakers in different ways that the form is local to Pittsburgh. Indexical meaning can thus arise out of statistical commonality or single instances of use that are salient enough to gain meaning for speakers.

Following Ochs (1992) we can also understand indexes to work both directly and indirectly. Indirect indexes refer to a linguistic item which indexes a stance, act, or activity, which then acquires an indexical connection to something else, like gender, class, place, race, or age. I argue (Kiesling 2004) that *dude* is used this way, such that the cool solidarity stance it indexes also indexes masculinity. Analyzing the complex ways language indexes social identity in any instance thus requires a deep understanding of the social context of use because it is this context that structures speakers' models of indirect indexes.

In addition to direct and indirect indexicality, I would like to make a further distinction between interior and exterior indexicality. This is based on a spatial metaphor of the speech event, in which interior indexicality is indexical meaning created within, and particular to, the speech event, while exterior indexicality is indexical meaning that is transportable from one speech event to another, and connects to social contexts that perdure from one speech event to another, or at least change very slowly. Interior indexicality holds only at the moment of speaking, and creates local relationships with present interlocutors, such as stances, footings, and positions.

Let us consider the interior and exterior indexicalities of *dude*. The interior indexicality of a particular use of *dude* will depend on a host of factors that hold for a particular speech event. For example, in the middle of a confrontation between two men, the use of *dude* could diffuse the situation by indexically communicating that the speaker means no harm. A recent television advertisement for Bud Light is a good example of how an index can be used in a number of different situations and have different interior indexical meanings. This ad shows one man in several situations, and in each he utters simply the word *dude* with varying intonation. In each situation, it is not specific words that he is trying to communicate, but a stance, and these stances are clear from the situation, his intonation, facial expression, kinesics, and his use of the word *dude*. But the use of *dude* also has exterior indexicalities—it points to other levels of society beyond the immediate interaction. In each use, it retains some sort of solidarity meaning, but one that is not intimate. In addition, and through this more abstract and diffuse stance, it indexes masculinity (in fact, a certain kind of masculinity; see Kiesling 2004).

Interior and exterior indexicalities are connected. Meanings can flow from interior to exterior (as in the indirect indexicalities noted by Ochs), but they can also flow from exterior to interior. In the latter case, the exterior indexicalities are used in a “reverse indirect indexicality,” such that the exterior indexicality (say, masculinity) is used to index an interior indexicality (a leadership role in a meeting, for example). Note that in this view, both interior and exterior indexes can be used to create stances within the speech event.

My claim is that the interior indexicalities of stance are the primary meanings of variables for children, and that they are generalized or “short-circuited” to groups who are thought to share these stances (and speech activities). In fact, the interior and exterior indexicalities become almost indistinguishable from one another: in Kiesling (2004), I show that this is exactly the path taken by *dude* in North America in the last two decades of the twentieth century: it was the counterculture, laid-back stance of so-called “surfers” and “stoners” that American men found attractive in the 1980s, and that as the word has become used less and less exclusively by young men the stance meaning has widened. Thus, it is the interior indexicality of *dude* that has been central to its spread—and the only consistent indexicality across time and speaker. Below, I pursue the argument that for second-order indexicals such as (ou) in Buckie Scots, (ING) in English, and (er) in Australia, stance is the primary social indexicality, both in terms of developmental primacy and social primacy.

The example of the spread of *dude* also shows that stance is implicated as one of the driving forces behind language change. In short, people adopt stances when they adopt ways of speaking, and changes spread (in part) because stances spread. This view is one that Eckert (2000) pursues in her work on a Detroit-area high school and the spread of the Northern Cities Chain Shift. In her study she shows that variables at different stages of shift have different local indexicalities for the students in the school. The differences in use are (to oversimplify) attributable to the students’ different ideologies about what kind of person they want to be and what community of practice they want to be a part of. Much of this has to do with how they orient to the school and the urban area of Detroit, but even these are mediated by stances: boys avoid being “flamboyant,” and the jock girls avoid being “loose.” Although Eckert

does not use the term *stance* to describe these, it is clear from her discussion that stance is what the students are taking into account when they are “deciding” about what variant to use—they are thinking about what stance to take, and their social practices (dress, walk, physical comportment), including their linguistic practices, are part of that stancetaking.

Eckert’s work shows that to understand language change, we must understand how variation is used for speakers to create social meaning—what the processes of indexicality are, and how they are related to the patterning of linguistic variables. I have argued above that stance is primary in that social meaning, and Eckert’s work supports the view that stance is at the basis of some of the patterns she finds. Of course, these stances are not isolated from the social landscape as seen by speakers; in fact, speakers rely on structured social knowledge—the ideologies and discourses of their community of practice, culture, and society—to give full meaning to the stances they take. As reported by Eckert (2000), in Belten High a jock girl may use (or avoid) a variant to maintain a “pure” image. A girl who does so would be relying on a cultural discourse of femininity in which the appearance of sexual chastity is hegemonic in order to create status in her community of practice. In the burnouts’ community of practice, there is a different orientation to this discourse (perhaps one of rebellion), but the discourse is still there because to rebel against something is to acknowledge its presence. Thus, the stances indexed are still the interior indexicalities (what the speaker thinks she is doing at the time), but this focus on the interior indexicalities does not mean that they are not connected to the exterior indexicalities in a very salient way. So it is not the stances alone that account for their primacy in intraspeaker shifts, but how they fit into the total social landscape.

Finally and crucially, indexes do not work alone, but combine with other indexes and context to propose relationships among people, and these meanings are subsequently negotiated by the interactants. Stance is at the center of this process of indexicalization because it is not each individual linguistic and social practice that an interactant decides on, but what stance to take in a particular situation. I will illustrate these processes more fully through three examples.

Stance in Variation: Three Examples

The argument I am pursuing, then, is that stancetaking is always a speaker’s primary concern in conversation; even in speech events in which we might think stance is peripheral, it is in fact of central importance. Explanations are made with stances that give cues that an explanation is taking place, that the speaker is taking an “explainer” role (perhaps even being identifiable as a “teacher” or “trainer”). To be effective, such explainers must take rather authoritative epistemic stances. So the informational function of language is subordinate to stancetaking: speakers ultimately make linguistic choices in order to take stances. Along with Eckert and others, I argue that linguistic features are resources that are deployed in concert with other resources; a variant, for example, does not have a necessary stance or social meaning, but rather several potential ones. New variants have a shifting indexicality, whereas older, more widespread and stable variants have an indexicality that looks more conventional,

in that this indexicality is widely shared. It is the combination of linguistic features in conversation that gives any one instance of a feature a more precise stancetaking indexicality. I turn now to three examples of how this process works, and the primary role of stancetaking in each.

(ING) in a Fraternity

The first example is based on the data and argument in Kiesling (1998), and I refer the reader to that article for further details. In this work, I spent a little over a year recording interviews and interactions in a college fraternity in northern Virginia. In analyzing the variable (ING) (Houston 1985) among the men in this fraternity, I needed a way to control for what was usually called *style* in differing speech events; the attention-paid-to-speech model was impossible to use when analyzing interaction among members rather than just interviews. I therefore divided the data by speech activity, which fell into three broad categories:

1. *Interview speech*, which was all speech produced in the interviews
I performed with the men, with the exception of word lists
and other reading situations;
2. *Meeting speech*, which was all speech produced in the regular portion
of meetings;³
3. “*Socializing*” *speech*, a residual category of speech of the men
in “casual and spontaneous” conversation.

My goal in this research was to understand how men used this variable in the fraternity, with a view toward understanding why men might use higher rates of the “non-standard” variant, as documented in every study of this variable. The results showed a strong consensus among the men in the rate of (ING) variation across individuals in the socializing situations, but in the interview and meeting situations individual differences appeared. Figure 8.1 shows this pattern.

The goal of variation studies is of course to explain such patterns. This one is not easily explained by the usual suspects of dialect, race, or class differences. Rather, I showed that the men who exhibit a higher rate of the alveolar variant (such as Speed, Waterson, and Mick) take very different kinds of stances in the meetings than the other men. The majority of men take stances that display their institutional power, or assume that power in some way. For example, Mack makes statements that are not marked epistemically, making them seem like “eternal truths” (see Agha 2007 and Scheibman 2007). On the other hand, Speed takes at one point a more laid-back approach, and later an oppositional stance. Saul and Mick both take stances that stress their hard-working identities and solidarity with the other members of the fraternity. The creation of laid-back, oppositional, and hard-working stances is aided by an increased use of *-in*: This variant has indexicalities that connect it to a stereotype of a hard-working masculinity, with an oppositional, practical stance and a particular kind of solidarity.

The indexicalities in this case are indirect in complex ways; this variable is old enough that it has short-circuited indexicalities with social categories like class and

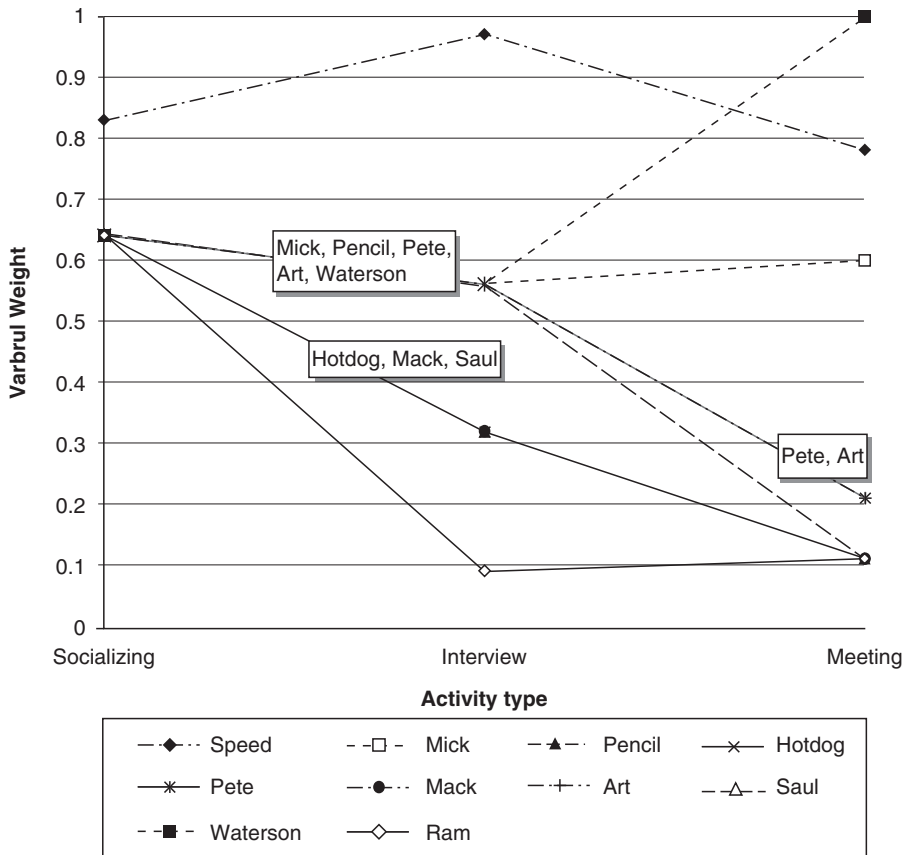


FIGURE 8.1 Varbrul results for the (ING) variable in the fraternity. Men are combined in groups when no significant differences were indicated. A varbrul weight above 0.5 indicates that the speaker is more likely to use the alveolar, or *-in'*, variant than the group. For details, see Kiesling (1998, in press).

gender. But the “nonstandard” is also used to represent informality, casualness, and opposition to formality or official power structures. These indexicalities mean that nonstandard speech can be used to create stances that emphasize solidarity and subversiveness. But it also is useful for men, because a casual power (that is, power exercised in a seemingly effortless manner) *and* cool solidarity is an ideal masculine trait for men in the United States (see Kiesling 2008). Thus, it is the stances that are ultimately at the heart of the indexicalities here: the men are unlikely to be thinking simply that they need to index masculinity, but rather that they need to create an impression of their persona and abilities for the audience, which they do by creating particular stances.

These stances are indeed parts of the men’s individual styles. I show in Kiesling (1998) that Speed consistently maintains a laid-back style that expresses opposition

to rules and institutional roles in other interactions. But this individual style is a collection of stances created in each moment of many different interactions. Over time, Speed has settled into habitual ways of taking stances in interaction, ways that agree with—or help him to continually recreate—his personality.⁴ Again, stance is primary, but in a more developmental manner: at some point in his life (perhaps in adolescence) Speed tried out this stance, found it worked socially for him, and kept using it until it became a habit. Eckert (2000: 171–212) and Wagner (2008) show how this process might work in American high schools. These data thus provide evidence that stance is at the heart of the men’s stylistic differences, both linguistically and more generally.

Variation in Multiparty Conversation

In most studies of sociolinguistic style, data primarily consist of conversations that were sociolinguistic interviews. Although techniques have been developed to elicit a wide range of speaker stances, there are a limited number of speech activity types that can be recorded in such situations, and as such cannot represent any speaker’s entire repertoire (which is both an advantage and a disadvantage for variation analysis. One of the subprojects of the Pittsburgh Speech and Society Project was to collect data that illustrated a wider repertoire than the sociolinguistic interview, and involved the taping of an eight-person interaction in which each speaker was recorded on her own microphone.

The interactants were a group of women who shared similar administrative positions at a large university located in Pittsburgh, and who had been meeting for lunch semiregularly for several years when I approached them, through an intermediary, to have one of their sessions recorded. I offered to fund several of their lunches in return for recording one of their sessions, observing several others, and recording an interview with each woman. They agreed, but asked that Maeve Eberhardt, a linguistics graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh, and a research assistant for the project, be the one to observe the meetings because she is a woman. The women ranged in age from mid-20s to mid-50s, and were roughly of upper-working- to middle-class backgrounds.

Eberhardt observed three meetings before recording a fourth. Each person was recorded on a different track and transcribed separately. Eberhardt and I found that speakers engaged in many different genres and forms of participation in the recorded interaction. These included quasi-lectures, classic Labovian sociolinguistic narratives with a long monologue, short quips that barely counted as a turn, “byplay” (Goffman 1981: 133–134), and (in this conversation) simply an orientation to the management of the conversation itself. We chose to code “style” as “speech activity,” similar to the way I did in the fraternity study, but with a stronger grounding in the features of the discourse itself. The speech activities in this study were as follows:

COMMISERATING: Alignment with other speakers but expertise not asserted
 (often complaining)

PROVIDING EXPERTISE: Instructional “how I do it” or “you can/can’t do it this way”

- FACILITATING: First pair parts that provide space for other speakers, without subordinating
- GOSSIPING: Evaluative talk about nonpresent others
- DISCUSSING LOCAL CONTEXT: Talk about current physical space/time
- QUESTIONING: Alignment of other as expert, requests for advice, and admissions of uncertainty

We also coded three linguistic variables in one speaker's track throughout the conversation. The three variables in question were all features of the local Pittsburgh dialect that are not found in surrounding dialects (see Johnstone and Kiesling 2005): (aw), or the monophthongization of /aw/, a local Pittsburgh dialect feature; (ay), the monophthongization of /ay/, and (l-voc), the vocalization of /l/. Each of these variables has a different status in Pittsburgh, and potentially different indexicalities. The main manner in which they differ in Pittsburgh is their place in the indexical order (similar to their "level of awareness"—see Silverstein 2003, Johnstone et al. 2006, and Johnstone and Kiesling 2008 for more on the indexical order and its importance in Pittsburgh). The monophthongized variant of /aw/ is one that Pittsburghers are most aware of, and typifies older working-class Pittsburghers. On the other hand, /ay/-monophthongization shows much less awareness, although some people comment on it explicitly, and it also is used more by working-class Pittsburghers. Finally, /l/-vocalization is a variable that Pittsburghers rarely talk about, or hear discussed as part of their dialect; most cannot hear the difference between vocalized and nonvocalized variants. Given this distribution, we suspected that they would be used differently in the construction of stances in the conversation, and might pattern differently statistically as well.

The results are shown in figure 8.2. Each line represents one variable, and the y-axis charts the average percentage of the "nonstandard" variant used in a speech activity. We can first note the wide variability of (aw). This was largely due to the fact that there are not many tokens of this variable; words like *house* and *down* are surprisingly rare. An average for each thus does not necessarily represent many tokens. However, because (aw) is a variable in wide metapragmatic circulation, it is logical that it would be deployed differently in the conversation from (ay) and (l-voc), which will be less overtly noticed by the interactants. Finally, we can see that "expert" is a speech activity that shows a relatively low rate for all three variables, but especially (ay). This is as we might expect, as experts are more likely to be indexed by the "standard" diphthongal variant and an association with education, rather than with the "nonstandard." Eberhardt then examined a more frequent and widely known variable: (ING), which has the variants [ɪŋ] (notated here as *-ing*), [ɪn] (*-in'*).

Eberhardt (2006) expanded the method for the stable variable (ING) coding all (ING) tokens in the conversation for each speaker. She initially used the same set of speech activities as above, but made some refinements as she found utterances that were problematic to code in one of the existing speech activities. The final list is shown in table 8.1.

The results were subjected to a varbrul analysis (see Tagliamonte 2006 and Paolillo 2002). The speech activity factor group was significant, and the results are shown in figure 8.3. However, we were interested in whether all speakers used this

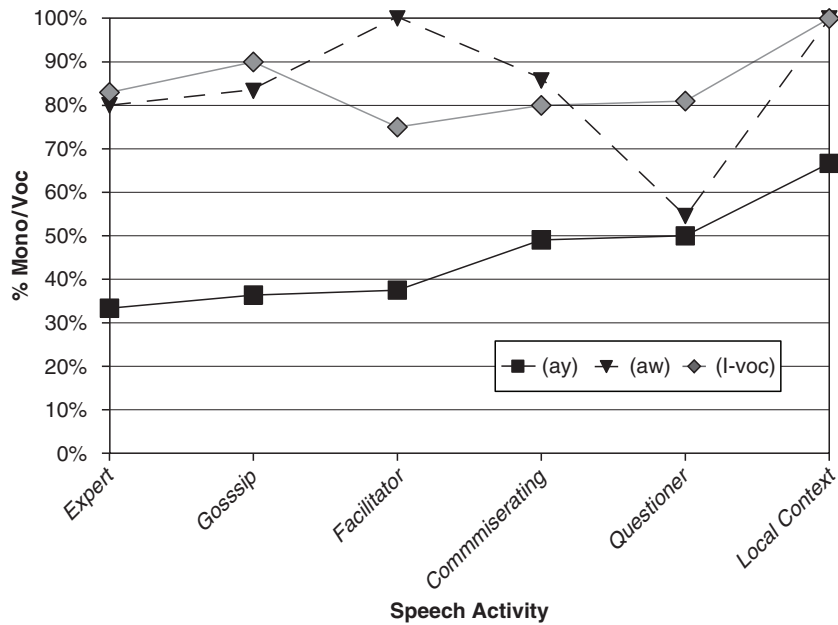


FIGURE 8.2 Average use of the “nonstandard” variant for three variables in six speech activities, for all speakers in the women’s conversation.

TABLE 8.1 Speech Activity and Description for Recorded Group Meeting

<i>Speech Activity</i>	<i>Description</i>
Commiserating	Alignment with other speakers but expertise not asserted (often complaining)
Expert Information	Information presented as “this is the way it is” or “this is how it’s done”
Expert teaching	Instructional “how I do it” or “you can/can’t do it this way”; often presented as the way things are.
Facilitator	First pair parts that provide space for other speakers, without subordinating
Gossip	Evaluative talk about nonpresent others
Local context	Talk about current physical space/time
Questioner	Alignment of other as expert, requests for advice, and admissions of uncertainty
Joking	Telling a joke or a funny story
Information sharing	Sharing information, but without asserting expertise; includes sharing how speaker does something, but not presented as “this is the way it should be done”
Clarification	Clarifying what someone else has said or clarifying for someone else what one has said
Personal evaluation	Expression of a personal opinion

TABLE 8.2 Collective Speech Activity Factors

<i>Social</i>	<i>Informational</i>	<i>Discourse Management</i>
Commiserating	Expert information	Local context
Gossip	Expert teaching	Clarification
Joking	Information question	Facilitator
Personal evaluation	Questioner	Other
	Information sharing	

variable at similar rates for similar speech activities. When cross-tabulated with speaker, however, there were not enough tokens for each speaker to find a discernible pattern. The decision was made to therefore group the speech activities into larger categories. This grouping is shown in Table 8.2. The “social” categories are those speech activities that have as their ends (in a Hymesian sense) social interaction, whereas the “informational” category comprises speech activities with ends that focus on information transfer and sharing (including aspects of the speaker’s status as the giver of the information or the receiver). A third category, “discourse management,” is composed of speech activities that focus on the discourse itself. This third category also did not have enough tokens to be meaningful in a cross-tabulation, but was included in the varbrul analysis. Although any such groupings obscure some of the complexities of speech acts that can have multiple functions (and thus require a qualitative analysis), this process nevertheless allows us to make a statistical analysis of the conversation that supports our claims about the role of variants in discourse and to explore if (and why) speakers take different epistemic and interpersonal stances in different speech activities, and the extent to which speakers exhibit a consensus as to how to use a particular variant in each speech activity.

The final analysis combined the collective speech activity factor group and speakers into a single factor group. For example, there was a single factor for “Debbie, social speech activity” (thus providing a method for determining interactions in varbrul). The model with this combined factor group proved to be a significantly better model for the data than the model with the factor groups separated, and the results are shown in figure 8.3.

The results show striking differences among all of the speakers, but that in general they are consistent in that they use less *-in’* in the informational speech activity type than in the social, which is consistent with findings in Labov (1972) and Trudgill (1972). It is clear that the majority of speakers agree on the general use of (ING) in these two speech activity categories. However, why is Marcie acting so differently? Does she not share the norms of the others in this community of practice? To answer these questions, Eberhardt carefully analyzed the stances adopted by Marcie and another speaker who shifts more standardly (Jane). Jane was chosen because both she and Marcie were named in the postrecording interviews as members of the group whom the interviewees viewed as leaders. Eberhardt’s analysis shows that both women do significant amounts of informational work, but do so by taking up very different stances. Jane adopts what we might think of as a typical teacher-like

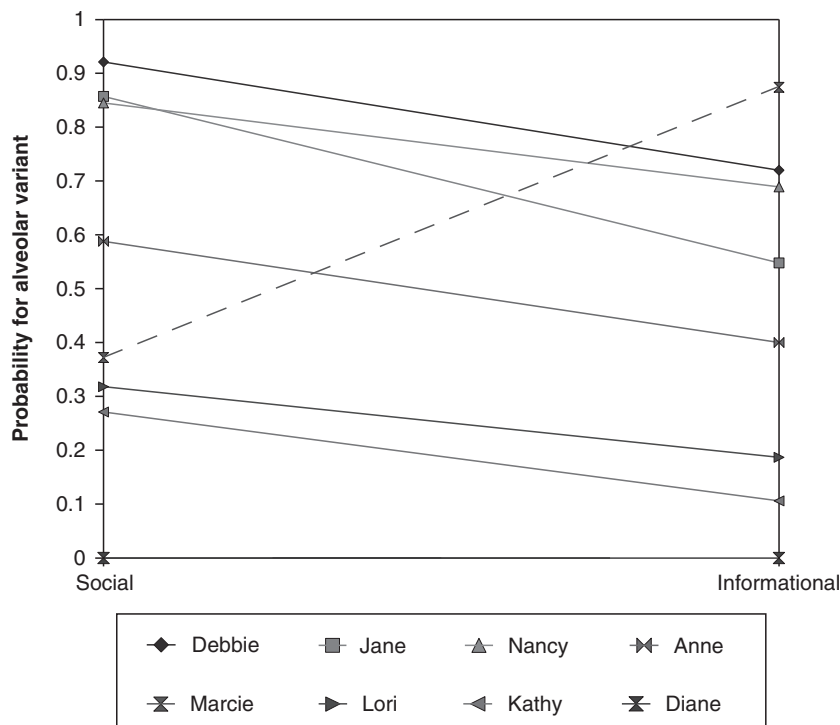


FIGURE 8.3 Varbrul results for the (ING) variable in the women's conversation for speaker and speech activity type combined factor group.

manner, taking epistemic stances of certainty, overtly displaying her knowledge and calling attention to it. She is in fact in a position to have more “inside” information about the organization, and often displays her knowledge from this kind of position, orienting to her privileged knowledge in the stances she takes. In fact, she sounds very much like Mack in the fraternity study described above.

Marcie, on the other hand, plays down her expertise, acting almost as if she is incompetent. This can be seen in excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1

- 1 ANNE: and I'm sometimes I'm sitting there till May
- 2 doing every
- 3 entry on my shadow system
- 4 which we're all supposed to get new ones
- 5 we're all supposed to start using
- 6 DIANE: well I called Tara to ask her
- 7 MARCIE: Is it ready
- 8 DIANE: yeah

- 9 she said it's not ready
 10 because I'm not doing anything right now
 11 except what I do on my indiv-
 12 MARCIE: I just did it on Excel
 13 I just started dumpin' everything in there
 14 DIANE: but that's such a hassle on Excel
 15 MARCIE: we're over so
 16 ((laughs))
 17 we're always over ((laughing))

Eberhardt notes the following:

the hedges [*just* in lines 12 and 13], the lexical choice of “dumping,” the laughter and the comment that her department is over budget, with the implication that it does not matter much how she does her budget report, all help Marcie create a stance of a non-expert when providing helpful information to the group members. It is not surprising to find that the token of (ING) present in this excerpt is realized as N and not G. In conjunction with the other features of Marcie's speech, N aids in the presentation of Marcie as a casual bearer of information, not as an expert with advice that the rest ought to heed. (2006:21)

In sum, here again we find that the best way to explain Marcie's use of *-in'* is in terms of the stances she takes in particular speech activities. Eberhardt shows that most of the women switch from a more solidarity-focused stance in the social speech activities to stances that emphasize their knowledge in the informational speech activities. This can be explained by noting that (ING) can index both of these, with the *=ing* variant indexing a more learned stance associated with formal education and positions of power, and the *-in'* variant indexing a casual stance that can be deployed to specifically downplay positions of power and increase solidarity. There is thus a connection between the stances that the variable indexes and the way it is used more generally in the speech community, and in fact (ING) is such an established, stable variable that its indexicalities are very general (solidarity, casualness, and possibly opposition) and can be deployed flexibly. The point is that Marcie, is *actively and uniquely* (for this conversation) using the *-in'* variant to take an interpersonal stance within a particular activity type. It is not only the norms of the audience nor the norms of the speech activity that determine her use of (ING). Rather, it is her stance; that she repeats such stances in similar activity types leads to her personal style. But the association of this style with her person is based on her repeating similar stances to the point that it appears to her regular interlocutors as a property of her as a person. So, the fact remains that the most satisfactory way to explain these data is through an appeal to the different stances the speakers take in the conversation, just as was the case for the fraternity data. The next case provides different kinds of data for this hypothesis.

Whatever and Ethnicity in Sydney

In her pathbreaking study of the Sydney speech community, Horvath (1985) showed that both first- and second-generation migrants used a significantly different variety

of English than Anglo nonmigrants. In the mid-1990s, awareness grew of a variety of Australian English associated with the second generation of recent migrant groups (especially Greeks and Italians) in Sydney and Melbourne. In a paper based on interviews from 1998 (Kiesling 2005), I attempted to discover whether or not there is a “migrant” variety (which I referred to as “New Australian English,” NAusE) of Australian English, and if so, how it might have developed. The variable in question was the lowering and backing of word-final *-er*, as in *brother* or *whatever* (I will refer to the lowest and most back pronunciations as “open”). Although I did find some intriguing correlations, these correlations are not necessarily indexical, and are unlikely to be second-order indexicals.

One important aspect of this study is that the interviews were performed by Ouranita, a second-generation Greek woman. This aspect of her identity may have been salient to the interviewees, but it is not *a priori* important, because she had other identities that may have increased distance, such as her role as a former teacher in a local high school. In fact, the analysis shows that those speakers who used the most NAusE tokens were those who were not only similar to her (and not differentiated by power in some way), but those who specifically oriented to their shared background in an authoritative way. That is, these speakers assumed or brought in shared second-generation migrant experiences in a stance of “authoritative connection.”⁵ I also show, through discourse analysis, that the more extreme new (er) is used in particular instances in interviews in which the stance of authoritative connection is being created. Further, *whatever* is the lexical item that consistently had the most open pronunciation. This lexical item, functioning as a general extender, is used by interviewees at the end of an utterance to mean something like “etcetera,” and thus invites the interviewer to supply the missing information based on her own knowledge. *Whatever* thus lexifies the stance of authoritative connection because it displays (assumed) knowledge and connection simultaneously. Excerpt 2 shows a passage in which Ellie, a Greek woman, uses *whatever* and constructs the stance of authoritative connection (the “+” signals an HRT that does not rise as fully as clause-final HRT):

Excerpt 2

- 1 ELLIE: Well I *remember*+... As kids we used to um... put um tobacco
- 2 I think my parents used to grow tobacco?
- 3 Do you remember that too? ...
- 4 And y’know we used to sit here
- 5 IVER: No no no not me but but but tell me yeah
- 6 ELLIE: Ye:s yes all like aunties or relatives or *whatever*+
- 7 I can’t remember where we used to do this,
- 8 but you used to have like a needle?
- 9 Some sort of but they were flat needles.
- 10 And you had to hold it a certain way: and you put the tobacco?
- 11 IVER: Mmm hmm
- 12 ELLIE: And the kids used to help
- 13 everybody used to help+
- 14 and they used to my dad used to put them outside on a rack?

- 15 and let them dry out . . .
 16 and he used to sell . . . that.
 17 and he used to make money from that as well.
 18 very tough life.
 19 IVER: tough life yeah
 20 ELLIE: but very h- I think it was a *harder* life on my *mother*.
 21 because she had to . . . bring us up at the same time?

In this excerpt Ellie is recounting an experience from her childhood, and assumes that the interviewer shares much of this experience (even though in line 5 the interviewer says she does not actually share the experience). In line 6 Ellie uses *whatever* to stand for a list of relatives that the interviewer is also assumed to be able to fill in. Ellie is thus constructing a stance of authoritative connection. She succeeds in getting the interviewer to orient to this stance, as can be seen by the repetition in line 19, which references a tough life, not necessarily the details of tobacco growing.

The tokens that were measured in this section of the interview are in italics in the extract, and all of Ellie's measured tokens of (er) are plotted in figure 8.4 (not all instances of *-er* words were measured because there was a restriction on the number of tokens that could come from one lexical item; in this case *remember* and *whatever* had reached their quota).⁶ The tokens shown in italics in excerpt 2 are also in italics in figure 8.4. These four tokens are clearly among the most back tokens in her set, showing a correlation between the stance of authoritative connection and a more open (er). I therefore argue that it is partially through this open (er) that Ellie creates this stance with respect to Ouranita. We might propose that the explanation can be made in terms of topic. But while the topic (such as narratives of migrant life) helps to predict the openness of (er), it does not explain why it is precisely these certain topics are the ones that trigger the open (er). Thus the explanation always leads to the stance the speaker is taking, and the uses she or he makes of linguistic resources to take this stance.

The results from both the entire corpus and Ellie's use of (er), in taking the stance of authoritative connection (along with other examples in Kiesling 2005), provide evidence that it is stance that speakers are orienting to. Thus, it is not an "automatic" process of talking the same as someone who appears to be similar to oneself, but, rather, using resources to take a particular stance toward someone who appears similar, and in fact fostering that similarity through language.

It is not hard now to see the connection and progression of the meaning of open (er) from interior to exterior indexicalities, and (in parallel, or perhaps necessarily) from first- to second-order indexicality. We can propose that open (er) would begin within non-Anglo communities as they took stances of authoritative connection with each other, and built solidarity through their shared experiences. As this stance became more widespread in the community, so would the open (er) become more widespread, providing the first-order indexicality that produces more non-Anglos using the open (er), but allowing for significant use in the Anglo community, as well, especially those Anglos with significant contact with non-Anglos. The use

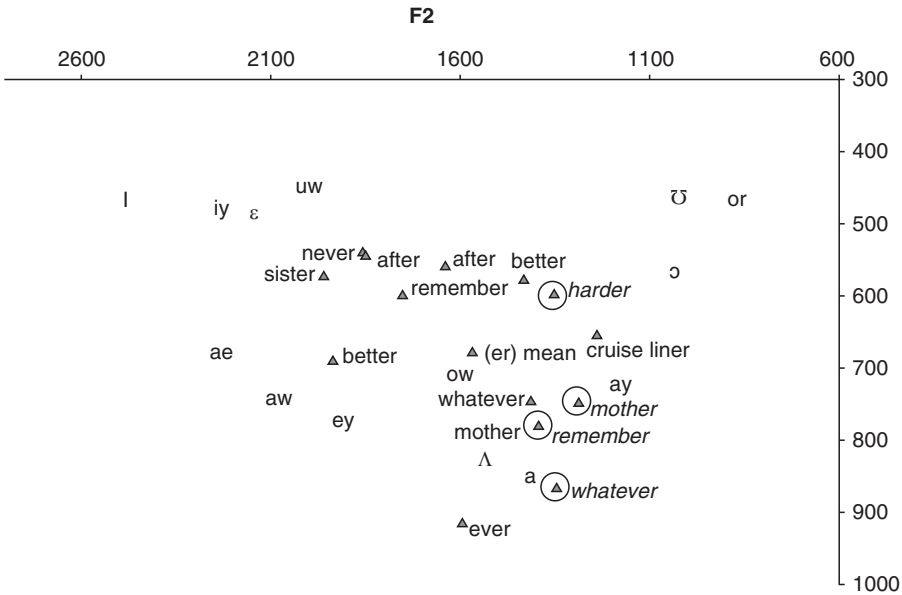


FIGURE 8.4 Plot of Ellie's tokens in an F2/F1 vowel space. The (er) tokens are triangles. The means for other vowels are plotted with their labels. The measured tokens in excerpt 2 (*remember*, *whatever*, *mother*, and *harder*) are circled.

of (er) thus becomes linked to any kind of authoritative connection, not just that focusing on the non-Anglo experience. Finally, it becomes enregistered (Agha 2007, Johnstone & Kiesling 2008) and becomes a second-order indexical marking a non-Anglo identity.

Summary and Unanswered Questions

In each of these three examples, local speaker relationships in the form of stance are the best explanations for the patterns found. In the (ING) examples, if we do not appeal to stance, we would have to assume that Speed and Marcie somehow have a different understanding of the indexicalities of (ING) than the other speakers in their communities. This seems unlikely because we find that the speakers are using the *-in'* variant strategically to create stances. This stancetaking is immediately relevant socially for the speakers. So it is logical to view these stances as motivating variation patterns that have social meaning. Finally, stance provides an explanation of variation use from the speaker's perspective that goes beyond a mere restatement of correlational patterns.

Stance also provides us with an improved way of understanding recent approaches to style, both those focusing on intraspeaker variation and personal style. All of these recent approaches share a focus on the agentive speaker; that is, a speaker who is actively managing his or her variable use in order to achieve socially meaningful

impressions. Stance takes these ideas to their logical conclusion. Therefore, a personal style is created through habitual stancetaking (and in the case of innovative styles, in some cases defines the initial indexicalities of the variant).

There are two issues that I haven't had space to address here, and would constructively be the focus of future work: the role of the audience and "awareness." In the discussions above, and in most views of variation and some views of pragmatics, the intention of the speaker is taken to be equivalent to meaning. However, much work on discourse and interaction shows that this is not a warranted assumption (see, for example, the volume edited by Duranti and Goodwin 1992, as well as the chapters in this volume by Jaworski and Thurlow, Jaffe, and Coupland and Coupland). In other words, assuming that stance is a motivating factor in the choice of a linguistic variant, how does the response of an interlocutor to a speaker affect either subsequent uses of a particular variant or even what I have been arguing is the stance meaning of the variant? In fact, I believe that once we start going down this path, we find that stance is even more important. Assume, as with the authors just cited, that stances and meanings are negotiated in interaction. It would make sense then that social meanings in general are negotiated in interaction, and that would be the case for variants as well (at the specific interior indexicalities). But it is difficult to imagine this negotiation without reference to stancetaking: the use of a variant should elicit some stance in the interlocutor, and this stance will then be responded to by the original speaker of the variant. Thus if meanings of variables and variants are negotiated (as Eckert 2000 shows forcefully), then the way this must happen is through stancetaking.

However, the amount of negotiation available likely depends on the amount of enregisterment (Agha 2007, Johnstone et al. 2006, Johnstone and Kiesling 2008) that has taken place. That is, if a form's indexicalities have reached the second or third orders, then the possibility for negotiation is different. The interior indexicality is perhaps still open for negotiation, but because the indexicalities are so widely shared, the external indexicalities form the basis of the interior indexicalities—they are the resources upon which the interior indexicalities are built. For example, in Pittsburgh, some of the local variants are highly enregistered to the point that they appear to be third-order indexicals. This is the case with the second-person plural *yinz*. It is so readily indexed as "locally Pittsburgh" that a certain type of local identity is named after it: the *yinzer*. Thus one could use the term *yinz* for second-person plural reference, but in fact be recycling it so that the one is not necessarily making a claim about one's own ("authentic") identity, but rather building a solidary stance by a shared relationship to Pittsburgh. There is much we do not know about how these meanings circulate, relate, and feed into one another. Much more work is needed to understand the relationship between the stance indexicalities of variants and the social identity indexicalities, and how they change over the course of a linguistic change.

For example, in one of the fraternity meetings I analyzed (Kiesling 2001), one of the members (Pete) takes a very condescending and confrontational stance to the rest of the members in a meeting. The reaction is equally forceful, and pushes him to revise the stance he takes in the rest of his turn. Although he does not necessarily change his variable use, he does change his stance in reaction to the stance of his audience. We could also imagine more "overt" stances toward variable usage,

for example, when someone repeats an utterance and shows skepticism about its use (for example when an Anglo might use *whatever* with a very open (er), and a non-Anglo repeats the usage in an exaggerated way with questioning intonation). It is through stances, then, that this meaning negotiation is generally going to take place.

Acknowledgments

Many people, including those whose voices are studied and representing in this chapter, deserve my thanks; this chapter is really a collaborative work. Most centrally, however, I would like to thank Maeve Eberhardt for her diligence, professionalism, and insights, without which this chapter would not have been possible. I also wish to thank Misty Jaffe for her sometimes-challenging comments which improved this chapter immeasurably. Of course, I alone am responsible for the claims in this work.

Notes

1. This claim is mainly for variables that end up with some kind of social meaning—so-called second-order indexicals. There are many variables that are much more conditioned by internal linguistic structural factors than social factors of any kind. Furthermore, there may be a distinction based on the linguistic complexity of the variable (although this influence may be also connected to awareness): the “short-a” pattern in Philadelphia (Labov et al. 2006) is subtle, as are the constraints on verbal -s in Buckie Scots (see Smith et al. 2007), and this may prevent speakers from exploiting the variation for stance. Other subtle sound changes similarly seem to show less social force. Mergers are one such class of changes that generally go unremarked, whereas lexical differences are almost always noticed. It may also be that some variables are not as cognitively available in some way for social work. Further research should focus not only on how social differentiation works, but on what variables are more likely to develop social meanings such as stance meanings.

2. These decisions are not necessarily “conscious” in the sense of being open to reflection, in the same way that we do not calculate all of the actions necessary and do calculus in order to catch a ball.

3. There was also a section after the regular meeting known as “gavel” that I did not include in these data; see Kiesling (2002).

4. By using this term I am not suggesting that actors have some stable personality that is simply expressed linguistically, but I am suggesting that because people tend to experience the self in this manner, we might try to understand how this consistent personality project is continually created.

5. The patterning of this variable—the migrant version of which I called “new (er)” —was complex, and there is not space here to recapitulate the entire analysis. However, there were linguistic constraints, including the length of the segment and its co-occurrence with phrase-final rising intonation in declarative clauses, called high rising tone (HRT) following Guy et al. (1986).

6. Ten instances of different words, if possible, were coded for each speaker. No more than three repetitions of the same word were used for any speaker. The first two formants were measured in the center of the vowel, using LPC analysis. The length of the (er) segment, and the preceding and following phonetic environments were also recorded. For more details, see Kiesling (2005).

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