

3 types of linguistic variation in the English language: regional/social/stylistic

- Social variation (sociolect)
- Stylistic variation (idiolect)

(Halliday, 2003) 3 meta-functions

- 1) Textual: relates to mode; the internal organisation and communicative nature of a text
- 2) Ideational: choosing words that represent people, things, concepts and words about what these participants are doing to, with, or for one another (social practices and social identities)
- 3) Interpersonal: texts promote ideology in the way language is used to represent relationships between two people who are communicating

In a wedding ceremony, an officiator says: "I pronounce you man and wife. You may now kiss the bride." which are fixed expressions. The speech act "pronounce" and the modal auxiliary verb "may" is a politeness and formality marker that also shows the power of the officiator. Additionally, the phrase "man and wife" implies that the man is dominant in the relationship and, "the bride" is the recipient of the material verb "kiss" with the husband as the agent, reflecting a patriarchal ideology.

Language variation

(Grafmiller, 2019) Language variation is synchronic (during a specific period of time), influenced by factors such as region, class, gender setting

- Speech community: any social or regional group in which the members share a number of linguistic characteristics
- Social practice (Eckert, 2000): what speakers share when they take part in an activity together (purpose)
 - Introduced when people questioned Labov's focus on demographic categories (age, gender, ethnicity, social class) as the biggest influence on language use (audience)
- Social network (Milroy and Milroy, 1980): an abstract mechanism that denotes the social relationships an individual contracts with other individuals in a society; structure of the network defined by density and multiplexity (How many members know each other? How well do they know each other?)
 - Multiplexity refers to any factor or link that can deepen a social relationship, or how many layers are there to a relationship (e.g. three-way multiplex: two people are not only sisters, but are also each others close friend and colleague)

Sociolect: language used by a particular social group, influenced by social variables to signal the users' identity and their membership of particular groups

(Dent, 2016) “...our lingo is our identity.”

“If language is used to signal aspects of our identity and our desire to show affiliation towards, or distance from, other groups of people, it is important to think about how and why this is done”

- Example for class: The social stratification of English in New York City
(Labov, 1966) Rhoticity had been a feature of prestige in New York City since the 1940s, Labov hypothesised that rhoticity would feature more heavily in the speech of those with higher socio-economic status. He selected 3 department stores that served as an index of social stratification and asked questions to first elicit the answer “fourth floor” as a natural response, he then pretended to mishear to elicit a more carefully spoken and emphasised response of fourth floor; in this way, Labov could record 4 occurrences of /r/ pronunciation.
 - Labov’s results showed generally more occurrences of rhoticity among those representative of the higher class as compared to the lower class, confirming the prestige value of rhoticity and its class stratification
 - He also found that there is greater /r/-stress when the speaker repeated, and was more emphatic and self-aware
 - More interestingly, among those representative of the middle class there was a much stronger emphasis on the final /r/ than expected from the steadily rising scale from lower to higher class; this group also showed a heavy emphasis on /r/-pronunciation when they were more aware of their own usage
 - Labov noted the same phenomenon in his larger New York study and **termed the over-compensation in pronunciation as hypercorrection** – a manifestation of linguistic insecurity in the lower-middle social group (a tendency to try and emulate the *prestige variety*)
- Example for influence of degree of relationship: **Milroys’ Belfast Study**
(Milroy and Milroy, 1980) Tested for correlation between linguistic variations and a speaker’s integration in a social network, the social relationships an individual contracts with other individuals in a society; determined the structure of the network by factors of density and multiplexity (How many members know each other? How well do they know each other?). Hypothesised that the more an individual is integrated into a social network, the more they will adhere linguistically to the existing norm and values of the network, including its linguistic norms
 - Degree of integration into the network can give their members an “insider” (core member) or “outsider” (peripheral member) status
 - Multiplexity: determined by how many layers there are to a relationship
 - Gave a Network Strength Score based on a person’s knowledge of other people in the community workplace and at leisure activities, then she measured each person;s use of several linguistic variables

- Found that a high Network Strength Score was correlated to with the use of vernacular or non-standard forms
 - Tight-knight networks exerts pressure on its members as seen in the case of young Clonard women who all worked together, meaning they lived, worked and amused themselves together creating a dense and multiplex network
 - They were found to be linguistically homogeneous
 - **Apparent time hypothesis: supposes that older people will manifest earlier forms of language learnt in their youth**
- **Example for influence of shared social practice: High School Ethnography** (Eckert, 2000) Eckert defined groups in terms of social practices – common activities a group did together. She identified 2 very different friendship groups, the Jocks and the Burnouts; both groups contained individuals with a mix of social class based on parental occupation, housing, etc. The Jocks actively engaged in and enjoyed school life, characterised by being school-oriented, showing respect for authority and taking part in school activities and clubs. On the other hand, the Burnouts were the opposite, they chose not to be involved in school activities and engaged in reckless behaviour; they were described to be anti-school, anti-authority, and often showed involvement in bad behaviour through drinking, drugs and sex.
 - Eckert's results showed that people tend to speak more like their friends who they shared social practice with, rather than people in the same demographic (in this case, social class)
 - Investigated sound change focusing on the backing and lowering of (uh) where the Burnouts' had an overwhelming lead which proved her hypothesis since the Burnouts' had more contact with peers closer to the city while the Jocks' were limited mostly to peers from their community
 - Adolescence the stage where there is an societal expectation to separate from the nuclear family and develop individual identity, for most this separation happens communally within the age cohort as it provides the social structure for identity development independently from the family structure
 - Adolescent conformity / "peer pressure" results from the high stakes of peer interaction for adolescents because these relationships become the main alternative to family. Additionally, the anxiety over separation from the security of the family contributes to the emotional investment in the evolving substitute. This surfaces as a careful monitoring of all aspects of social behaviour and an intense involvement in such systems of identity symbols as adornment and

musical taste; so the emotional investment in social identity during adolescence far surpasses that at any other life stage

- It is reasonable to assume that the rapid development of social structure in preadolescence and adolescence is intimately associated with the development of patterns of linguistic variation, and that the social significance of variants for adolescents would be associated with the system of social differentiation arising within the cohort

- **Example for style-shifting based on audience (ethnicity)**

(Rickford and McNair-Knox, 1994) Foxy Boston's case study

Compared Foxy's use of a number of sociolinguistic variables when she was talking to Faye, an African-American, and when she was being interviewed (on very similar topics) by an Anglo-American interviewer, Beth. The hypothesis was that, by audience design, Foxy would accommodate to the norms of the different groups when her addressee is a member of one or other of these groups.

- In particular they looked at the absence of the verb "be" or the absence of third-person -s agreement in verbs that has been proved to be reliable markers of AAVE (African-American Vernacular English) distinguishing it from WAVE (White American Vernacular English); they made sure that the recorded occurrences of these variables were in the same linguistic contexts
 - Results showed that she did have more occurrences of these markers when speaking to Faye than when talking to Beth
 - Gaps in the Foxy Boston study: Foxy knew Faye before the interview and thus had a closer relationship with Faye than Beth who she met for the first time for the interview; the difference in closeness of relationship may then have had a stronger influence on Foxy's linguistic choices than differences in ethnicity of audience
- However, Bell's audience design theory made a stronger claim that the range of variation covered by a single speaker's accommodation to different addressee will be less than the range of variation between the groups that these addressees represent (speaker will still show markers of personal style or variety choice despite some alteration due to audience design)
 - The Foxy Boston study proved this where the difference between group averages for AAVE and WAVE speakers in the absence of the verb "be" and the absence of third-person -s agreement, is greater than the range Foxy shows in her speech to an African-American and then a White American addressee

- **Example for style-shifting based on audience (closeness of relationship)**

(Bailey and Culor-Avila, 2001) Springville study

Found themselves in a situation to analyse the gap in the Foxy Boston study where they were integrated into the Springville community, whose residents were mostly African-American so the same variables could be compared, and so they were familiar with the relationship between speakers in Springville. They interviewed:

- Two African-American teenagers who were interviewed by an African-American and a White interviewer, both of whom they have known for a long time so familiarity was high
 - There was no evidence that when talking to the White interviewer, they attuned their speech so as to use more variants typical of WAVE. Familiarity of the interviewer appears to have overridden any effect that her ethnic identity might have had
- An elderly African-American woman when interviewed by her nephew and then two White fieldworkers she had not met before
 - However, she did exhibit style-shifting similar to Foxy suggesting that relationship between interlocutors is likely to be the more salient factor influencing Foxy's style-shifting than Beth's ethnicity

(Chomsky, 1972) Competence in and performance of a grammar

- Competence: to have knowledge of the grammar
- Performance: the way individual speakers use the grammar in the context of social rules, relationships, taboos and other cultural conventions
 - A speaker can then have the grammatical competence of a language but lack communicative competence

(Halliday, 1976) Anti-language: a minority dialect or method of communicating within a minority speech community that excludes members of the main speech community

- Understood as “extreme versions of social dialects”
- “Tend to arise among subcultures and groups that occupy a marginal or precarious position in society, especially where central activities of the group place them outside the law...”

Polari, considered a sociolect, an English-based language variety used by mainly gay men, women impersonators, and sex workers in Britain to avoid imprisonment and detection under anti-homosexuality laws; Particularly used to disguise themselves from hostile outsiders and undercover policemen, though it was also used by seafarers and theatrical performers, many of whom were part of the gay subculture. It comprised borrowings from languages such as Italian, French and Yiddish, it also included influence from other sociolects such as circus slang, sailors' slang, and thieves' cant. Although Polari constantly evolved, a core lexicon remained mainly for morally dubious acts such as sexual acts and gossip to hide the discussion of such topics from outsiders. An example of Polari is “Oh hello Mr

Horne! How bona to vada your dolly old ekk.” which meant “Good to see your nice old face!”, where “dolly” was semantically broadened to mean pretty and “bona” is a borrowing from Latin. This is a line from the popular BBC radio comedy “Round the Horne” with its iconic gay characters, whose soaring popularity pushed Polari into disuse. Many Polari terms became public knowledge, losing its effectiveness as an anti-language, and there was also a lesser need for a secret language because of the later partial decriminalisation of adult homosexual acts.

“The ideological and sociolinguistic status of Black English is reminiscent of (though not identical to) an anti-language. This is a linguistic system that reinforces group solidarity and excludes the Other. It is the speech characteristic of a group which is in but not of a society. As an anti-language, BE emerges as a counter-ideology; It is the language of rebellion and the symbolic expression of solidarity among the oppressed.” (Geneva Smitherman, 2000)

Hip-hop slang: hip-hop refers to a subculture that originated in the black and Hispanic youth of America’s inner cities, especially New York, specifically the South Bronx, in the late 1970s. Hip-hop slang is anti-language, a language spawned in anti-dominant culture elements. Hip-hop has a culture of anti-society or confronting societal issues and norms, where words and phrases are given different meanings. Originating from AAVE, terms such as “sick” and “bad” mean good, and “gangsta” has no negative judgement of a youth gang member and actually connotes implicit admiration

Idiolect:

(Clayton and Drummond, 2018) Variation in the language use associated with an individual’s personalised “speech style”

- Style-shift: a change in style during a verbal or written communication using the same language or language variety; often takes place when a speaker reassess PPACC

Speech accommodation theory:

(Giles, 1971) How people adjust their speech behaviours to match others; this can be aspects of accents, grammar, vocabulary and even the style of speech delivery

- Convergence
 - Upwards convergence: speaker’s emphasis on standard aspects of speech that emphasises the overt prestige of standard forms
 - Downwards convergence: emphasis on non-standard aspects that emphasises the covert prestige of non-standard forms

(Grice, 1975) Cooperative principle: when people talk with each other, they generally cooperate in making their utterances understandable by conforming to expectations of about the conversation

- Related to politeness and face
- Turn-taking, adjacency pairs, sequences

Informalisation of discourse: process by which language forms traditionally used for close personal relationships are now used in much wider social contexts

(Fairclough, 1994) “Professional encounters are increasingly likely to contain informal forms of English; they are now becoming conversationalised”

Formal US President Donald Trump is known for his posts on social media platform Twitter, now renamed X. During his presidency, White House press secretary said that Donald Trump’s tweets were considered official statements from the US government due to his status as President. Usually, social media accounts of prominent leaders or public figures are moderated for the same reason since posts are then treated as official statements which means the posts are written in the formal register. In a 2018 tweet Donald Trump posted: “To Iranian President Rouhani: NEVER EVER THREATEN THE UNITED STATES AGAIN OR YOU WILL SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES THE LIKES OF WHICH FEW THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAS SUFFERED BEFORE.” Communication and building relations with other world leaders are arguably one of the more important responsibilities but the example is typical of tweets posted by Donald Trump as US President, featuring the use of exclamations and speech-like features such as capitalisation to mimic raising one’s voice.

Jargon:

- In itself, specialist terminology to name technical concepts that usually have little interest to outsiders, can be innocuous
 - A specialised term may be more precise and free of any other surplus meaning than any existing alternative

- Argument that it actually makes things more confusing because they are usually in the form of noun or noun phrases that do not show the relationship between mentioned nouns; no prepositions

In psychology, “infant perception” and “object perception” are syntactically parallel with perception as the main noun pre-modified by nouns “infant” and “object” respectively. Grammatically, they refer to perception by infants or perception of infants, and the perception of objects. Psychologists know that “infant perception” actually refers to perception by infants, not from intrinsic knowledge of the terminology but their own contextual knowledge.

- Acronyms that are assumed knowledge in a particular field
 - In academic writing, acronyms and initialisms are used almost exclusively for noun phrases with reasons that they are easier to remember and to save typing space
 - It is also proposed that another reason is to emphasise the importance of the concept mentioned, for authors to promote their academic products

Commonly used fixed expressions in academic writing are not turned into initialisms or acronyms, “more research needs to be done” does not become “MRNTBD” and when offering conjectures “IMHO” is not used. However, acronyms for Latin phrases and clauses have been consistently used in academic prose, “e.g.” “i.e.” “n.b.”, but no new abbreviations for phrases are being developed popularly even at a period of time where it is multiplying in academic writing. So, acronyms and initialisms are likely to serve other purposes.

- The issue is that professionals sometimes use technical language for other “extra-linguistic” purposes, such as to promote group solidarity or baffle outsiders – the terminology then becomes simply a badge of in-group identity or a language of exclusion
 - Can also be used for euphemisms, to make a process or event less objectionable

Useful for members of a profession that is involved in what is considered morally problematic behaviour. An example is management consultants that have created “management jargon” in order to camouflage their actions; cutting of jobs became “downsizing”, removal of layers of management became “delaying”, and contracting out of work became “outsourcing”

- Coinages of terms that are semantically poor but rhetorically weighty
 - Usually involves nouns, noun phrases and abstract nouns (nominalisations) to make it sound more official and formal
 - Recently became a norm in academic writing
- “Autocondimentation” is a term coined by the hamburger industry that is hard to understand, with the prefix auto- and the nominalisation of the word condiment. It simply refers to customers putting the sauce on their hamburgers themselves but by using such a word, the managers are said to confer dignity upon themselves and their industry.
- Conversion of a verb, adjective or adverb into a noun with definite article “the”, with “the” it becomes an abstract concept that carries intellectual profundity
- Unlike everyday language, specialised registers of English tend to become more complex over time. In the past, the term “methodology” referred to the study of methods – different ways of collecting evidence and arranging classifications. In contrast, “methodology” is used synonymously with “method” today where it refers to a particular way of study that a researcher has used.
 - The opposite happens in everyday discourse: “bicycle” is shortened to “bike”, “refrigerator” is back-clipped to become “fridge”, and television becomes “TV”
 - Status and power is involved in this: ordinary people use methods while only academics have methodologies

Other registers or areas of discourse:

- Legal discourse (legalese): language inaccessible to ordinary people, kept this way by legal professionals who aim to safeguard their legal positions, and used to create and solidify group cohesion within the profession
 - Reflects asymmetrical power relationships and the supremacy of the law; law has instrumental power that regulates behaviour
 - The law and institutions of the law have more power than those they seek to regulate and enforce their laws upon
 - Can be seen in the use of modal verbs and the declarative mood
“The Board shall have a common seal and that seal may from time to time be broken, changed, altered and made anew as the board considers fit.” The use of the declarative mood and modals of obligation is to provide instructions on what the Board should have – in this case, a seal – and that the Board was empowered to change the seal if they wish to do so. This exemplifies the instrumental power the law has in regulating behaviour, with the law and institutions of the law having more power than those they seek to regulate and enforce their laws upon.
- Law discourse is always formal, written or spoken; reflected the formality of law procedures itself
 - Marked by specialist lexis in the field of law, complex grammatical structures, archaic expressions, and limited punctuation
 - Includes highly formulaic structures that have been predefined and pretested, using jargon that only experts can decode
 - Highly codified because the same kinds of legal transactions occur regularly, linguistic formulae has been developed
 - The complexity and precision of legal discourse grants clarity to legal experts but obfuscates the content for the ordinary person, perpetuating the power of legal experts; led to the rise of the Plain English movement
 - There is also argument against Plain English that the content of law is too complex for ordinary people to understand or use it responsibly, so people should not be enabled to use it without legal assistance (exclusion)
 - Impersonal and objective
 - Avoidance of pronouns, using noun phrase or proper nouns in full instead for clarity
 - Passive voice: to show that the law is infallible as it occurs without the influence of the human agent

- Law is conscious of the precedent, conservative, and slow to change
 - Idea underlying law is that it changed organically from generation to generation, building on tradition; there is continuity in the law
 - Borrowing: use of latin and latin-based lexis, e.g. French
 - “Ceteris paribus” – with other variables being equal or unchanged
 - “Ex parte” – without notice
 - French: judge, quash, void, tort
 - Binomials: sets of paired often synonymous words that become fixed expressions
 - “Assault and battery”, “aid and abet”, “to have and to hold”, “legal and valid”
 - Archaic English: deem, bequeath, aforesaid, witnesseth, proclaimeth
 - Therefore, it retains phrases and formulas that have fallen into disuse in everyday language making it a highly specialised discourse community – language of exclusion
- Specificity: legal language must be explicit to prevent loopholes in the law form being exploited
 - Must cover all related circumstances and events, using multiple listings with “and” or “or” to cover all possibilities
 - Decisions about what counts semantically as what, and most particularly what belongs to which category
 - Hyponymy: murder and manslaughter are hyponyms of homicide
 - Synonyms: signed, agreed, consented, contract
 - Many qualifying phrases and dependent clauses to express a concept with necessary precision
 - Sentences are usually complex, compound, or compound-complex with intricate coordination and subordination
 - Almost all phrases contain an adverbial and almost all sentences start with adverbials to clarify meaning
 - Nominalisation: certain lexis hold specific technical meanings
 - Lawyers do not say “to arbitrate” but “to go onto arbitration”, because arbitration is a legally defined procedure and should be considered as such
- Spoken legal language is more accessible than written legal language because the jury is made up of ordinary people and witnesses, not all legal experts
 - A jury trial is guaranteed in America’s bill of rights, where everyday citizens are called to serve on a legal panel in court. Jurors are

usually not lawyers, and the obfuscation created by legal discourse (civil-jury instructions are written by lawyers) may lead them to conclude a different outcome due to intelligibility from the perspective of the juror

- Jurors will often not want to admit that they do not understand because they are eager to end the trials and get back on with their live