Social Variation

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Social Variation

Variation linguistics
An example: Fronting of /aw/

The grammatical structure of the speech community
Style levels
I-Language vs. E-Language

- A useful distinction to be made here is the Chomskyan dichotomy between:
  - *I Language*: ‘internal/intensional’ language, roughly (and among other things) the language system as it is represented in the individual speaker
  - *E Language*: ‘external/extensional’ language, roughly (and among other things) the language corpus as it is produced by the language community
There has been much impassioned controversy about [...] the question of how languages should be studied. The controversy is pointless, because there is no right answer. If we are interested in how bees communicate, we will try to learn something about their internal nature, social arrangements, and physical environment.

These approaches are not in conflict; they are mutually supportive. The same is true of the study of human language: it can be investigated from the biological point of view, and from numerous others. Each approach defines the object of its inquiry in the light of its special concerns; and each should try to learn what it can from other approaches.
Since judgments of acceptability differ radically and unpredictably across individuals, it is normal [within the idealist approach] for any disagreement about data to be answered by narrowing the unit of description to the 'dialect' of an individual, usually the theorist. Since each individual derives the rule system from fragmentary data, it is generally held that the community is an inconsistent mixture of consistent individuals.
Labov (1993) (2)

The materialist position begins with the study of the heterogeneity of the speech community, and reduces this variation to a series of regular quantitative patterns controlled by social factors. Early statements about the speech community emphasized this ‘structured heterogeneity’ as the fundamental feature of the speech community, maintained by a uniformity of social evaluation. More recently, the uniformity of these variable patterns has been found to be also based on a structural homogeneity. In cities of a million or more population, the basic categories ands rules that define the variables are almost constant across social class, sex and age. This reinforces the position that the fundamental unit of description should be the language of the speech community, and that the speech of an individual can only be understood against this background.
Observer’s Paradox

- When observing or interviewing people to find out about their spontaneous speech, researchers will, by their own presence and participation, influence linguistic behaviour that is observed.
Qualitative vs. quantitative analysis (1)

There is [...] a marked asymmetry between the two bodies of linguistic activity: those doing empirical analysis can use the formal, qualitative analyses developed under an idealist program, but not visa-versa. The latter are satisfied to construct rule schema without testing for validity against the data of speech production, while the former are not.
Qualitative vs. quantitative analysis (2)

This transition from qualitative to quantitative analysis is a familiar one in the development of science. But the qualitative model of linguistics is not easily displaced. Many forms of linguistic behavior are categorically invariant. Furthermore, the number, variety and complexity of linguistic relations are very great, and it is not likely that a large proportion can be investigated by quantitative means. At present, we do not know the correct balance between the two modes of analysis: how far we can go with unsupported qualitative analysis based on introspection, before the proposals must be confirmed by quantitative studies based on observation and experiment.
Gradual change

An example: Fronting of /aw/

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Social stratification

An example: Fronting of /aw/
An example: Fronting of /aw/

Social stratification (2)
An example: Fronting of /aw/

Men and women

![Graph showing the variation in F2 constant + age coefficient across generations and age groups for men and women.](image-url)
Social Variation

An example: Fronting of /aw/

The grammatical structure of the speech community

Style levels
Shared Constraints Hypothesis

The members of a speech community share common values for the probabilistic constraint effects on variable linguistic processes.
t-deletion in two American cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C &gt; V</th>
<th>C &gt; ∅</th>
<th>V &gt; ∅</th>
<th>Preferred order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia (N=19)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>C &gt; V &gt; ∅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York (N=4)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>C = ∅ &gt; V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Constraints

- **NOCODA**: Syllables should not end in a coda
- **FINALC**: Syllables should not end in a coda
- **NOHIATUS**: Two vowels should not occur adjacent to each other.
## Grammars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><code>FINALC &gt;&gt; NOHIATUS &gt;&gt; NOCODA</code></td>
<td>No deletion except before consonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><code>FINALC &gt;&gt; NOCODA &gt;&gt; NOHIATUS</code></td>
<td>No deletion before pause; deletion elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><code>NOCODA &gt;&gt; FINALC &gt;&gt; NOHIATUS</code></td>
<td>Deletion everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><code>NOHIATUS &gt;&gt; FINALC &gt;&gt; NOCODA</code></td>
<td>No deletion except before consonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><code>NOHIATUS &gt;&gt; NOCODA &gt;&gt; FINALC</code></td>
<td>No deletion before a vowel; deletion elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><code>NOCODA &gt;&gt; NOHIATUS &gt;&gt; FINALC</code></td>
<td>Deletion everywhere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Philadelphia and New York

1. Philadelphia: $\text{FINALC} \gg \text{NOHIATUS}$, with floating NOCODA

2. New York: constraintNoHiatus$\gg$FinalC, with floating NOCODA
Floating constraint generalisation

- The conditions to which a phonological process is subjected are ranked in the same way in a speech community, even though the process itself may be variable.
Differences between styles of speech

- It is obviously necessary to restrict the ways in which two styles within one language system can differ from each other.
- In many rule-based theories of phonology two styles A and B can differ from each other because
  - A has more rules than B, or
  - because the forms of some of the rules in A is more general (contains a smaller number of specified feature values) than the form of those in B,
  - or because A and B have the same rules ranked in different orders.
Hypothesis

The more formal the register, the higher ranked the faithfulness constraints.
## Turkish vowel epenthesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Formal Form</th>
<th>Less Formal Form</th>
<th>Informal Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘fetters’</td>
<td>pranga</td>
<td>pıranga</td>
<td>pıranga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘prince’</td>
<td>prens</td>
<td>pirens</td>
<td>pirens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘test’</td>
<td>prova</td>
<td>pırova</td>
<td>purova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘announcer’</td>
<td>spiker</td>
<td>sıpiker</td>
<td>sipiker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘cruiser’</td>
<td>kruvazor</td>
<td>kıruvazor</td>
<td>kuruvazor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Constraints

- **SPREAD-F**: If a feature F is linked to one segment in a word, it should be linked to all segments in that word.; the relevant instances for this constraint scheme in Turkish are SPREAD-[front] and SPREAD-[round].

- **NOCLUSTER**: \( C_1 C_2 \) in the onset

- **NOEPENTHESIS**: A vowel in the output form should be present in the underlying form.

- **NOSPREADING**: An autosegmental association between a feature and a segment in the output form should be present in the underlying form.
Grammars

- careful register:
  \(\text{NoEpenthesis} \gg \text{NoCluster}\)
  \(\text{NoSpreading} \gg \text{Spread}\)

- less careful register:
  \(\text{NoCluster} \gg \text{NoEpenthesis}\)
  \(\text{NoSpreading} \gg \text{Spread}\)

- colloquial register:
  \(\text{NoCluster} \gg \text{NoEpenthesis}\)
  \(\text{Spread} \gg \text{NoSpreading}\)