Advice to students registered on the following programmes – BA English (New Regulations), Diploma of Higher Education in English and Certificate of Higher Education in English: This subject guide is for a Level 5, 30-credit course offered as part of the University of London International Programmes in English.
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This is one of a series of subject guides published by the University. We regret that due to pressure of work the authors are unable to enter into any correspondence relating to, or arising from, the guide. If you have any comments on this subject guide, favourable or unfavourable, please use the form at the back of this guide.
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This course explores how and why language is used differently in a range of contexts. Students will examine the variation of spoken language in relation to region, gender, ethnicity, age and social class; students will see that individuals are able to shift their style of speaking from one situation to the next and we will explore the attitudes that people have towards different varieties of English. The course also examines a range of tools and methodological frameworks that linguists use to analyse both spontaneous spoken interaction, written media and advertisement texts/discourses. The questions that will be addressed may include the following:

- Do women and men speak differently?
- What is slang?
- How and why do adolescents speak differently from adults?
- What are the public stereotypes about speakers with ‘non-standard’ accents?
- What is Standard English?
- How do language choices influence the representation of social groups (e.g. women, asylum seekers) in the media?
- What are the language strategies employed by politicians?
- What is the difference between spontaneous talk and scripted drama/soap opera interaction?

The course builds on theoretical knowledge and analytical skills developed in Introduction to English Language (EN1023) at Level 4. Students who complete this course may also wish to take Language and Gender (EN3117) and/or Language and Media (EN3118) at Level 6.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course you should:

- have become familiar with regional, socio-cultural and situational language variation
- have acquired a range of analytical frameworks and tools and empirical research from linguistics and discourse analysis
- be able to transcribe and analyse spontaneous spoken language
- have analysed spoken language as well as examples of media and political discourse
- have explored the representation of language variation in a range of texts
- have studied language variation in relation to social, political and philosophical issues
• have investigated the role language plays in constructing social identities and realities.

**Mode of assessment**

One three-hour unseen examination.

**Assessment criteria**

You will be assessed according to your ability to:

• identify and describe a range of different varieties of spoken English
• use sociolinguistic concepts confidently and critically
• demonstrate understanding of linguistic theory and research
• analyse transcriptions of spontaneous spoken language
• apply analytical tools from a range of discourse analytical frameworks to spoken and written texts
• analyse the relationship between content, form and function of language on the basis of extracts from spoken and written texts
• demonstrate a critical awareness of the relationship between language use, representations of reality and social/political power.
Chapter 1: Introduction

How to use this subject guide

This subject guide is not designed as an overview of the whole field of sociolinguistics. It will largely be up to you to structure a course of study for yourself which will consist of topics or issues outlined in this subject guide. The guide is not, therefore, the subject itself, but a guide to how an appropriate course of study could be constructed by you. The range of material outlined in the guide is the minimum needed for you to sit the examination with confidence.

Simple regurgitation in the examination of the illustrative material in this subject guide constitutes plagiarism (academic dishonesty) and as such will be heavily penalised. You must adapt the material in ways appropriate to the syllabus you have decided to follow, which will be based on this guide. Examiners always look unfavourably at examination answers that consist solely of the illustrative material presented in this or any of the other subject guides.

This guide is intended as a model of how you might organise your programme of study, but you will be expected to adapt the model to suit the programme you have decided to follow. Each chapter focuses on a selection of topics, some of which you may like to study in depth. But you are not limited only to the topics discussed. There may be others connected with a particular area that you will decide to focus on. This will become apparent to you during your own study and research for this course.

You should organise your course of study around sociolinguistic theory and research, but this should be backed up by your own independent research on various topics and issues. You will draw on the data and research findings from sociolinguistic research to form your own independent and critical perspective. You are required to familiarise yourself with terms and concepts introduced on the course and others you will come across during your study. You should ensure that, in addition to the sociolinguistics books suggested for this course, you also have access to introductory books on linguistics, for example Yule (2010) or Fromkin et al. (2010) and a linguistics dictionary such as Swann et al. (2004).

Suggested study syllabus

Below is a suggested 22-week outline which gives you an idea of how a syllabus could be constructed for this course:

Weeks 1–2

Introductory readings on linguistics, language, sociolinguistics, linguistic variation. Become familiar with terms and concepts, e.g. language varieties, accents, dialects, regional and social variation, linguistic and social variables.
Weeks 3–4
Focus on language standardisation, the Standard English debate and attitudes to (non-standard) linguistic varieties.

Weeks 5–6
Language and ethnicity: Pidgins and creoles, London Jamaican (LJ), African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

Weeks 7–8
Study the concepts of monolingualism, bilingualism, multilingualism and code-switching.

Weeks 9–10

Weeks 11–12
Analysing spoken discourse: The Ethnography of Speaking; Interactional Sociolinguistics; how are transcriptions represented?

Weeks 13–14
Analysing spoken discourse: Conversation Analysis.

Weeks 15–16
Language, thought and representation: Saussure; Sapir–Whorf, sexist language.

Weeks 17–18
Hands-on analysis of language: recording, transcribing and analysing spoken language; analysing extracts of written language.

Weeks 19–20
Analysing written discourse: rhetorical strategies, political and media language.

Weeks 21–22
Revision and review: draw up a schedule of topics to revise and study the sample examination questions.

**Reading and reading lists**

Key texts for this course are:


Introductory books on linguistics:


You will need a linguistics dictionary, such as:


Other texts and sample examination questions can be found in each chapter of this subject guide.

You should ensure you have access to these books, but you will need to make use of many others which will be suggested in the individual chapters, and there will be those you will come across during your independent study of particular topics.

The examination

**Important:** the information and advice given here are based on the examination structure used at the time this guide was written. Please note that subject guides may be used for several years. Because of this we strongly advise you to always check both the current Regulations for relevant information about the examination, and the virtual learning environment (VLE) where you should be advised of any forthcoming changes. You should also carefully check the rubric/instructions on the paper you actually sit and follow those instructions.

You will be assessed by one three-hour examination. In it, you will have to answer **three questions** selected from around 10 to 15 questions. The examination paper will be quite wide-ranging, and will contain questions on a selection of topics from the course as a whole. **You should not present substantially the same material in any two answers, whether on this paper or in any other parts of your examination.** This illustrates that it is important for you to prepare to answer questions on a range of topics: we suggest at least six. You will find sample examination questions attached to each chapter.

**How to approach the examination**

If you have followed the instructions offered in the subject guide, have read as much of the suggested syllabus as possible and engaged with the topics under consideration, you should be well prepared for the examination. However, to do justice to yourself and the subject on the day of the examination, it is useful to think about your examination technique. Certain basic procedures should be followed.

- If possible, read a sample examination paper from a previous year so that you are familiar with the range and type of questions you might expect to encounter. (See the sample examination paper at the end of this guide, and remember to check the VLE regularly for the Examiner’s report for this course.)
- Use the sample paper to practise writing timed examination answers.
In the examination read the rubric carefully twice and follow the instructions given.

Read the whole paper through before choosing which questions to attempt.

Leave yourself sufficient time to answer all the questions you are asked to complete. If you do run out of time, write down in note form all the points you would have included. (You may be given credit for an outline of an answer which you have not had time to write in full.)

Proofread it! At the end of the examination, read through what you have written, correcting spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. and check titles and names of authors for inaccuracies. Simple errors or slips can detract even from a good answer. This advice may seem obvious, but following it is essential for a good examination performance in any subject. To further develop and improve your examination technique in relation to this paper, you should read the Examiners' report from previous years and consider the following additional points.

**Choosing the question**

One of the most useful examination techniques is the ability to choose the kind of question that you are well equipped to answer, that will enable you to demonstrate the particular knowledge and skills you have acquired during your course of study. For instance, if a question asks you to discuss and evaluate attitudes towards Standard English you will need some historical knowledge of the development of the Standard variety in the British Isles to answer this question adequately. You are completely free to organise the essay in whatever way you consider appropriate to answering the question, but a good answer will always include the historical background in the discussion. A first-class answer will always show some independence of thought and so this would be your chance to develop your own arguments on the topic you are discussing. In relation to a question on attitudes towards Standard English, this might include comparing and contrasting opinions and research, critically engaging with the material you are discussing before coming to an informed judgment of your own.

**Reading the question**

To answer questions effectively, it is important to understand what you are being asked to do, so look at the terms of the question (i.e. to ‘consider’, ‘compare’, ‘contrast’, ‘define’, ‘evaluate’ or ‘discuss’) and make sure you do what the question asks you to do. If you are asked, for example, to ‘consider the relationship between ‘gender’ and language use’, it is not sufficient to list the differences in the ways that men and women speak. To describe or list is not to ‘consider’. The question is asking you to critically engage and evaluate the issues surrounding language use and gender, drawing on the research that has been done in this area.

You may like to begin by saying that the relationship is a complicated one in that it is difficult to generalise about language use and gender. For example, one common point often made is that women use more tag questions than men (tag questions are questions which are ‘tagged’ onto the end of declaratives or statements, for example, ‘The lecture
starts at midday *doesn’t it*?). This, according to Robin Lakoff (from her observations and intuition), is because women tend to be more indirect and less forthright than men. However, other scholars have shown that, in certain situations, men use more tag questions than women and that women tend to use tag questions more to facilitate the conversation with others, whereas men tend to use them more when they are lacking information. You could also consider whether the postulated differences are merely stereotypical differences or whether there is real linguistic evidence to support them.

How you choose to answer this question will depend, to a large degree, on the texts you use and the arguments you wish to construct, but the important thing is to engage with the question asked and to develop an answer which is clearly and consistently relevant to the question. Therefore, when writing your answer, it is useful to begin with a (brief) definition of the key terms. You should also pay special attention to terms which are in quotation marks: this may signal that these terms require definition or discussion.

Remember, it is important to check the VLE for:

- up-to-date information on examination and assessment arrangements for this course
- where available, past examination papers and *Examiners’ reports* for the course which give advice on how each question might best be answered.

**General matters: essays**

In selecting topics on which to write practice essays, remember that your essays will prepare you to answer examination questions, and therefore you should select essay topics that relate to the questions you will revise for.

**Online resources**

Please note that additional study resources may be available to you for this course. A particularly important resource is the virtual learning environment (VLE) for the English programme, which you can access via the Student Portal – see the *Student handbook* for details of how to log in.
Chapter 2: What is language variation?

Essential reading


Further reading


Other works cited


In this chapter we start by considering what sociolinguistics is and what sociolinguists study. Next, we move on to think about language variation and linguistic varieties and what we mean by these terms. Then we outline some definitions, starting with accent, dialect and language varieties, before moving on to consider what grammatical, phonological and lexical variables are. The last section in the chapter deals with some classic sociolinguistic studies, which as a student of sociolinguistics you are expected to be familiar with. We draw on the groundbreaking work of William Labov, Peter Trudgill, and James and Lesley Milroy.

What is sociolinguistics?

Whereas linguistics is, broadly speaking, the study of language (rather than the study of a particular language), sociolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between different social and cultural contexts and identities on the one hand, and the way that people speak on the other. Sociolinguistics is a descriptive discipline, and this means that sociolinguists are concerned with describing language variety rather than prescribing how language should be used. So as a student of sociolinguistics, you are going to be interested in the relationship between language and society. One of the core texts (Holmes, 2008, Chapter 1) explains sociolinguistics with examples of language use and variation, which you may want to reflect on before you continue with your reading. It is as well to remember, however, as Coupland and Jaworski (2009, p.2) point out, that ‘sociolinguistics is now a broad and vibrant interdisciplinary project…’. This means that the field cuts across academic disciplines, using theories and methodologies from several disciplines, for example, anthropology, education, social psychology, and media and cultural studies.

Linguistic varieties

Language varies according to who is using it and in what situation or context it is being used. The significant factors which may cause language to vary can be geographical or social and, moreover, languages also change or vary over time. In addition, you should note that sociolinguists often use the term ‘variety’ to describe the linguistic features used in particular geographical regions or in other social or situational contexts. This is because it is a somewhat more neutral and broader sociolinguistic term than others that could be used. In fact, we can use the term linguistic variety to refer to a language, a dialect, an accent, to different languages and even to language styles. Here are some examples of linguistic varieties:

Introduction


Chapter 2: What is language variation?

- Bokmål/Ranamål in Norway
- The accent, Received Pronunciation (RP) (see Chapter 3)
- The dialect of Standard English (see Chapter 3)
- London Jamaican (see Chapter 4)
- legalese
- cocktail party chitchat
- different geographical varieties of English.

**Activity**

Can you think of some geographical varieties of English? There may be those associated with different countries and those associated with different regions within a particular country (for example, the UK).

**Activity**

The variety you use will also depend on your age, sex, ethnicity or social group. In addition, your use of language will also vary according to the situation or context you find yourself in (for example, in a lecture or seminar, at a family dinner, with friends at a social gathering, at a job interview). Think about these different factors and make a list of how these affect the way that you speak.

**The terms ‘accent’ and ‘dialect’**

At this point, it is useful to think more closely about two terms listed above: **accent** and **dialect**. As Freeborn et al. (1993, p.59) observe, they are often used as if they mean the same thing. As they point out, you often hear people say things like:

- ‘She has a broad northern accent’ or ‘She speaks a strong northern dialect’.

In sociolinguistic terms, however, accent is a (regionally or socially distinctive) variety of language identified by particular features of pronunciation (phonology). It is a defining feature of a dialect but may be separated from it. The other point to remember is that everyone speaks with an accent: it is impossible to speak without one, even though a lot of people think they don’t have one.

Dialect, on the other hand, is a (regionally or socially distinctive) variety of language identified by a particular set of words (lexis), grammatical structures (syntax and morphology) and pronunciation (phonology). It can also mean any subdivision of a language associated with a particular geographical area and/or an identifiable group of people. Dialects tend to be mutually intelligible with other dialects of the same language. Here are some examples of variation in different dialects of English:

- **Negation:** Nobody wants any sweets/Nobody don’t want no sweets
  I haven’t done anything/I haven’t done nothing
  I don’t want any/I don’t want none

- **Present tense:** Jane runs every morning/Jane run every morning

- **Past tense:** I did it last night/I done it last night
I gave it to him yesterday/I give it to him yesterday
We were hot/we was hot

– Pronouns: Can I have those books?/Can I have them books?

It is important to bear in mind that while there may be sociolinguistic definitions of the terms accent and dialect, there are also non-linguistic criteria. These include political, cultural and religious reasons as well as issues of identity, national or otherwise. Languages and dialects can be markers of similarity between people or markers of difference. Consider, for example, groups of speakers in the UK who speak with Scottish accents (whether those associated with Edinburgh or Glasgow) and use certain words such as bairn (to mean a young child). Another example might be an American accent, perhaps the one associated with educated New York speakers that is rhotic (r pronouncing) or the lexical differences associated with American English; for example, sidewalk is used where British English speakers would say pavement.

Activity
List a number of English language varieties, highlight some of their features and think about whether you would classify them as accents, dialects or according to some other criterion. In addition, think about general perceptions towards those varieties. For example, are they highly valued or are they stigmatised varieties? You may need to do some research and reading into these varieties to help you.

Overt prestige and covert prestige

If a language variety is highly valued within a society and is generally admired or evaluated highly, it is said to have overt prestige. The standard variety in a society has overt prestige. For example, the list providing examples from different dialects of English that we presented in the previous section contains some forms from what sociolinguists call the ‘Standard English dialect’, which has overt prestige. There are, however, large groups of speakers (in the UK for example) who speak non-standard varieties (that is, they use many non-standard or vernacular forms of language). They are not publicly prestigious and are often stigmatised varieties. An example of this might be Cockney, a variety associated with working class London English speakers. But even though these varieties are not publicly prestigious and are often negatively evaluated, even by their speakers, they continue to be used. There is a prestige value attached to them which is labelled covert (or hidden) prestige.

Activity
Why do you think low or ‘covert’ prestige varieties of language continue to exist? What value do you think they have to their speakers?
You will find out more about the debate around standard and non-standard English in Chapter 3 of this guide.
Chapter 2: What is language variation?

The linguistic variable

Sociolinguists investigate linguistic variation by analysing the linguistic variable. As Coates (2004, p.48) puts it: 'A variable... is something which varies in a socially significant way'. So a linguistic variable is a linguistic feature with various realisations which are known as variants. These variants (look at the examples below) are linguistically equivalent but socially different ways of saying something.

Example of phonological variables:
- (ng) with its two variants [ŋ] in fishing and [n] in fishin’
- postvocalic (r ) with its two variants [Ø] and [r ]
- (h) with its two variants [h ] and [Ø] as in house, hospital
- (t) with its two variants [t ] and [ʔ] as in butter, bet, better
- (u) with its two variants [ʌ] and [u ] in pub, but, drunk
- (a) with its two variants [ɑ:] and [æ] in dance, laugh, path

Activity

One of the variants associated with the variable (u) is associated with Southern British English speakers and the other is associated with Northern British English speakers. Research the historical development of English so that you can see how this difference came about. You may want to begin your research with Chapter 9 in Holmes (2008) (see Essential reading).

Activity

Carry out some reading and research into the other phonological variables mentioned to see if you can ascertain which groups of speakers the variants of these variables are associated with.

Examples of grammatical variables:
- absent (s) and present (s) in third person singular present tense: she go rather than she goes
- was with plural subject: you was rather than you were
- negative concord or multiple negation ('double negatives'): I can’t do nothing right rather than I can’t do anything right
- demonstrative pronouns: look at them cats rather than look at those cats
- negation: I cannae go rather than I can’t go.

Activity

Try to identify what the grammatical variables in each example vary according to. Is it according to region or to some other factors?

Examples of lexical variables:
- blackberries or brambles
- hot water bottle or piggy
- girl or lass or wench
- lavatory or toilet
Varieties of English

- lounge or sitting room
- single parents or solo parents
- toilet or loo or bog
- pavement or sidewalk.

Activity

Carry out some reading and research into the types of variables mentioned above and try to determine the reason for the variation. Begin your research with the essential reading indicated at the beginning of this chapter.

We have made the point that variation may occur in any speech community depending on regional or geographical factors or due to social factors; for example, class, ethnicity, gender or age. You will need to carry out in-depth and extensive reading on various other types of language variation because it is not possible to deal with all of these within this subject guide. For example, both Holmes (2008) and Mooney et al. (2011) have dedicated chapters and/or sections on each of these, including one concerned with language and age.

Activity

Read Holmes (2008, pp.173–81) and Peccei’s chapter ‘Language and Age’ in Mooney et al. (2011, pp.146–53) to consider linguistic theory and research on age-graded features of speech as well as on the similarities between Child Directed Language (CDL) and Elder Directed Language (EDL).

This subject guide also gives several examples of language variation that are relevant to age as well as to other socio-cultural variables in later chapters. See, for example, the section on crossing or London Jamaican in Chapter 4. In the remainder of this chapter, however, we will concentrate on some studies which have looked at the effect of class. Two other chapters within this subject guide consider the co-variation of language and ethnicity and language and gender.

Language and social class: the UK and the USA

Let us start by considering some populist work on language and social class, followed by some of the early, classic sociolinguistic studies where researchers considered language variation by looking at linguistic variables and how these varied according to social class.

The first example concerns the British linguist Alan Ross, writing in the 1950s. He wrote an article which provoked a lot of public reaction in which he classified what he described as ‘U’ and ‘Non-U’ usage in relation to language forms, including vocabulary. ‘U’ terms were those used by the higher social classes (upper classes) and ‘Non-U’ terms were used by the lower social classes. After reading Ross's article, Nancy Mitford wrote a response which was published in Stephen Spender's magazine Encounter in 1954. The response was also published, along with contributions from others, including a version of Ross's article, in a book edited by Mitford in 1956. We reproduce some of the items which upper class speakers apparently had different names for in comparison with the names other speakers used:
Chapter 2: What is language variation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘U’ terms</th>
<th>‘Non-U’ terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rich</td>
<td>wealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luncheon</td>
<td>dinner (also U-children and U-dogs!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing paper</td>
<td>note paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spectacles</td>
<td>glasses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lavatory</td>
<td>toilet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>false teeth</td>
<td>dentures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>die</td>
<td>pass on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sofa</td>
<td>settee/couch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>napkin</td>
<td>serviette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegetables</td>
<td>greens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mad</td>
<td>mental</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity

Which of these words do you use? Do you think usage of any of these would be a reliable indicator of social status today?

Many of the examples seem quite dated some 60 years later. Moreover, it is questionable whether using a particular term instead of another would be a reliable indicator of social status today. The other point to remember is that although lexical items, such as those above, can be a potent marker of social class for older speakers, lexical items go in and out of fashion, and often quite quickly. As we will see in the next chapter, the English language has undergone a process of language standardisation, which has had several consequences. Since around 1800 the structure of the language has changed very little. In the main, changes have been in the area of vocabulary. For example, one item which has been omitted from the list above is ‘wireless’ (U term) and ‘radio’ (Non-U term). Nobody uses the term ‘wireless’ to mean a ‘radio’ these days, but the term has come back into usage in the last few years to describe a concept related to internet technology. It can be more productive, therefore, to look at grammatical features and pronunciation features, as these tend to be more stable, reliable indicators of social class: there are features which repeat themselves across the generations. So let us turn to some studies which have considered these types of features.

William Labov: the department stores and postvocalic (r)

Labov carried out an extremely simple but successful pilot study in the 1960s where he researched the use of postvocalic (r) in New York. Postvocalic (r) is the sound that occurs after vowels in words like car, floor and heart. We summarise here drawing on Mesthrie et al (2009, pp.82–83) and Labov’s (1972) work itself. He carried out his study in three department stores in New York which were quite different in terms of status and prestige: Saks, Macy’s and Klein’s. Saks, the upper class store, was roughly equivalent to Harrods in London; Macy’s, the middle class store, is similar in status to John Lewis, and Klein’s, the least prestigious store, to Woolworths (interestingly, neither Klein’s nor
Varieties of English

Woolworths are trading today). Labov determined the prestige and status of the store by the newspapers they advertised in and how they priced and advertised their products. The pronunciation of /r/ after vowels is the prestige pronunciation and Labov hypothesised that employees’ pronunciation would reflect the social status of the store:

... our population is well defined as the sales people (or more generally, any employee whose speech might be heard by a customer) in three specific stores at a specific time.

(Labov, 1972, p.49)

Labov asked the sales staff where to find an item which he knew was sold on the fourth floor (postvocalic (r) occurs in both these words). So, for example, he would ask: ‘Excuse me, where are the women’s shoes?’ Next, he pretended he hadn’t heard and asked people to repeat what they had said. In this way, he was able to elicit four examples from each person of the postvocalic (r). Moreover, the second elicitation would be a more careful pronunciation, as this is what people do when they are asked to repeat something someone appears not to have understood the first time around. Next, he moved out of sight of the informant to make a written record of the data. This included details of pronunciation, the estimated age of the informant, their gender, their ethnicity and their occupation within the store. He also went up to the fourth floor and asked the staff there what floor it was. In six- and-a-half hours he managed to ask 264 people which gave him over 1,000 examples of the postvocalic (r).

Labov found that the higher the class of the store, the more people pronounced the /r/. The percentages were approximately 62 per cent for Saks, 51 per cent for Macy’s and 20 per cent for Klein’s. Moreover, in the second elicitation, which he gained by pretending to the staff he asked that he had not heard the first time, in all the stores there was an increase in the use of /r/. The greatest increase, however, was to be found at the middle class store, Macy’s, even more so than at Saks, the more prestigious store. When Labov carried out his larger study, which involved detailed linguistic interviews involving a variety of tasks, a similar phenomenon occurred with his lower middle class informants. They used a higher percentage of prestigious variants than the classes above them when they were asked to do formal tasks as part of the interview.

The use of prestige variants among the upper working classes and lower middle classes which is greater than the percentage used by the groups above them can be described as hypercorrection. Social insecurity is a characteristic of the lower middle classes, who can be described as being on the borderline between the middle classes and the working classes. They are concerned about others’ judgments and perceptions of them, including evaluations about their speech. Hypercorrection involves using variants that a speaker would be unlikely to use if they did not feel they were being evaluated, but that they are using because of the situation they find themselves in (for example, in a linguistic interview). Peter Trudgill (1974), a sociolinguist in Britain, found something similar, although he focused on different features in his work in Norwich. You should note that in Norwich, Trudgill found that upper working class speakers also hypercorrect in
careful (that is, self-conscious) speech. This suggests that the upper working class/lower middle class boundary is very sensitive and speakers are more anxious about their social position and how they are perceived. This makes them more self-conscious when they feel they are being judged on their speech. Some of Trudgill’s findings in Norwich are reproduced in Figure 8.4 of Eppler’s chapter ‘Language and social class’ in Mooney et al. (2011, p.167.)

**Activity**

Note the absence of the upper classes in Trudgill’s study. Can you think of some reasons why this might be the case?

**Activity**

Both Labov’s and Trudgill’s studies do not only reveal interesting patterns of variation with regards to speakers’ social class background, but they also show how speakers have a range of different styles, from very informal to very formal. Labov’s observation was that the more speakers pay attention to their speech, for example, when they have to read out passages aloud, the more standard pronunciation features they use. There are, however, also other explanations for why and when speakers’ styles vary. Read Chapter 10 ‘Style, context and register’ in Holmes (2008) and consider the range of explanations given for speakers’ variation of style.

### James and Lesley Milroy: social networks

The Milroys approached the study of language variation differently from the way in which Labov and Trudgill studied it, making use of the concept of **social networks**. A social network is like a map depicting the relationships between individuals in a social group. A person whose personal contacts all know each other is said to belong to a **closed network**, whereas someone whose personal contacts tend not to know each other is said to belong to an **open network**. Closed networks are described as being of high density; open networks as being of low density. People can be linked in various ways: through family relationships, through friends or acquaintances, through their workplace and through other social activities. Links between people may be **multiplex**, meaning they are linked in several ways, or **uniplex**, meaning they are linked in only one way (for example, this describes people in many work places in Western societies).

There is often a social class dimension attached to the types of network as this table indicates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Lower working class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>most open</td>
<td>most closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loose</td>
<td>dense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uniplex</td>
<td>multiplex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionals, socially mobile</td>
<td>working class, often rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>less education, less mobility, but can also characterise upper class ties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Milroys carried out fieldwork in Belfast in 1975–76 where they
studied three lower working class inner-city communities, all of which were characterised by unemployment, crime and illness (‘social malaise’). However, there was increased solidarity between members of the communities:

- **Ballymacarret** (East Belfast, Protestant): Although the male informants in Milroy’s study who were from Ballymacarret were not skilled tradesmen, they could usually find work in the area and they had all been connected to the shipyard. The women, on the other hand, travelled outside of Ballymacarret to work. Their social networks were not as dense and multiplex as the men’s were.

- **Hammer** (West Belfast, Protestant): This was an area which had been subject to large-scale urban redevelopment resulting in the residents being moved into flats, maisonettes or housing estates which disrupted their social networks. Unemployment in West Belfast was very high (about 35 per cent.). This was due to the decline of the linen industry which the population had depended on for work. Social networks were less dense than in Ballymacarret.

- **Clonard** (West Belfast, Catholic): Many factors affecting this area were similar to those of the Hammer, except people were not being moved elsewhere due to a redevelopment programme. There was high male unemployment, but the female informants in Milroy’s study all worked. Some were shop assistants in the same store. The women’s social networks were dense and multiplex, like those of the men from Ballymacarret.

Good summaries of the Milroy’s work can be found in many of the introductory sociolinguistic textbooks such as Mesthrie et al. (2009). In addition, you can also read about it in Milroy (1987).

There are several important factors about the Milroys’ study which you should be aware of and which we outline here. The political and social situation in Belfast was very difficult at this time. It was the height of the ‘Troubles’ between Protestant unionist and Catholic nationalist communities in Northern Ireland. (If you do not know anything about this period it would be a good idea to do some research to find out more about this period and the reasons for the ‘Troubles’.) Outsiders were viewed suspiciously. The research methodology involved Lesley Milroy being a participant observer. The researcher in this study had to be a woman and she had to go into the communities alone. This was because of the tense political situation in Belfast at the time: a male researcher would not have been able to gain access to the communities under study. Milroy gained access to the communities as ‘neither an insider nor an outsider’, but as a ‘friend of a friend’ who, in Ballymacarret, for example, was a student who had lived there. The initial contact allowed her to make further contacts. People felt obligated to help her because she was introduced as a ‘friend of a friend’ and also because she assisted people (helping people to fill in official forms and giving lifts to people and their work equipment in her van). Moreover, her small children were invited to parties and other events and were looked after by local people.

In the three communities under study, ‘extended visiting’ was normal.
If the front door of a house was open, neighbours and friends were free to walk into the house and join the others. On the basis of her contacts, Lesley Milroy was able to participate, which allowed her to gather tape-recorded data consisting of formal interviews and spontaneous conversations. In addition, she was able to observe the interactional norms of these communities (see Milroy, 1987, Chapters 3 and 4).

The Milroys devised a six-point scale which allowed them to determine how strongly an individual was integrated into their social networks and how this correlated with their linguistic behaviour. They researched how vowels were pronounced in certain words and demonstrated that, particularly in Ballymacarrett, there was a clear relationship between the variables and network strength. They demonstrated that in close-knit working class communities such as those they studied in Belfast, certain vernacular (that is, non-standard) features are maintained and this is related to the cohesive ties within the networks.

**Activity**

We have referred to the term *vernacular*. Sometimes non-standard language varieties are called vernacular varieties but the term has several, related meanings in sociolinguistics. See if you can research and ascertain what these are.

**Activity**

Research and evaluate the Milroys’ work. Do you think that the concept of social networks is important in establishing and maintaining norms of behaviour including linguistic behaviour?

**Activity**

After researching and studying some examples of social network diagrams, draw a diagram of a social network you are involved in. You will have to decide how to limit it in some way. When you have drawn it, describe and analyse it, considering what makes it a network and how it affects the members’ behaviour, linguistically and otherwise.

**Constructing social positioning in ‘Communities of Practice’**

Whereas most of the studies introduced above argue that speakers’ social class background is reflected in their speech, more recently, so-called constructionist theories argue that speakers contribute to the construction of their social class, gender and other identity. This means that speakers use language as a resource to present themselves in certain ways, either as posh, or as tough and cool, and these stances are linked in interesting ways to social class (or gender, or any other aspect of identity). This does not mean that speakers are fully aware of their linguistic ‘choices’ or that there are no constraints on those choices, but speakers are not seen as being pre-determined to speak in a specific way.

A lot of the research drawing on social constructionist theory investigates language use in specific, local contexts as part of an ethnographic project, which is based on long-term fieldwork and observation. One famous study was conducted by Penelope Eckert in a US high school context in the 1980s and 1990s. She observed that in this context two main groups, or ‘Communities of Practice’, as
she refers to them, stood out: the Jocks and the Burnouts. The Jocks identified with school and middle class values and aimed to be seen as popular whereas the Burnouts resisted school/middle-class norms and presented themselves as tough in many ways. Eckert argued that this differentiation between Jocks and Burnouts, which was affected by wider social class norms but did not reflect them exactly, was much more relevant to the speakers’ identities than social class per se. Most importantly, in order to present their membership in the Jock or Burnout groups, boys and girls would use a range of linguistic and non-linguistic markers and practices (hence, ‘Community of Practice’).

**Activity**

We return to Eckert’s research in Chapter 6 of this guide, but for now read Holmes (2008, pp.198–200) and answer the following questions. Which Communities of Practice are described and how do their members signal their group membership and identity?

In this chapter we have introduced you to many terms and concepts which are central to the field of sociolinguistics. In addition, we have also summarised several ‘classic’ sociolinguistic studies where variation has been researched, making use of variables and their variants. Variation may be according to class, ethnicity, gender or age. While we have focused mainly on social class in this chapter, gender and ethnicity are covered in Chapters 4 and 5 and we have drawn your attention to the relevant chapters in Holmes (2008) and in Mooney et al. (2011) so that you can research age as a social variable.

**Learning outcomes**

Having worked through this chapter, and done a substantial amount of reading on the topic as well as the activities, you should:

- be able to explain what is meant by *linguistic variety*
- be able to use terms such as *accent, dialect, variable* and *variant*
- have become familiar with the work of Labov, Trudgill, the Milroys, Penelope Eckert and others
- have started to grasp some of the (social, cultural and situational) factors which are responsible for linguistic variation.

**Sample examination questions**

1. Discuss why sociolinguists often use the term ‘variety’. Illustrate your discussion with examples.

2. Labov and Trudgill and others have demonstrated the way in which language varies according to social class by focusing on a number of features. Critically examine the research carried out by these scholars, comparing and contrasting their work and their findings.

3. Draw a diagram of a social network you belong to. Discuss and analyse this network according to social network theory. Explain how the network is relevant in terms of aspects of your behaviour and speech.
4. What is speaker’s style and what explanations are there for variation in individual speakers’ style? Give some examples from research and your own observations.

5. Which linguistic resources do adolescents use to construct their identities in spoken interaction? Your answer needs to be informed by research as well as your own observations.
Chapter 3: Standard English

Essential reading


Further reading


Other works cited


Introduction

In Chapter 2 we defined some key terms and concepts. We noted for example that, in sociolinguistics, an *accent* refers to pronunciation, whereas a *dialect* refers to the words or grammar someone uses. It is worth noting, however, that even among scholars there is debate as to whether accent forms part of dialect. In this chapter we will build on the knowledge we have gained thus far by thinking about the relationship between language, region and social class. We will consider Standard English, a dialect of English, and also Received Pronunciation, an accent of English. As well as asking ourselves if there is a connection between the two, we will also investigate the debates and attitudes which have been associated with these two varieties of English.

In any consideration of Standard English and the debates surrounding this variety, you should note that the situation is further complicated by the fact that English is a global language, with second language speakers outnumbering native speakers by around three-to-one. English is often used as a *lingua franca* (a common language), a means of communication between people who cannot speak each other’s native or first language (what we refer to as a person’s *L1*). In addition, worldwide, there are many Englishes and many standard Englishes; for example, Indian Standard English, American Standard English, South African Standard English, Australian Standard English and others.

Another area is that of differing styles: do we write ‘Standard English’ or ‘standard English’? Some writers choose one; some the other. Sometimes the difference will be linked to whether they consider that the standard variety of English holds the most importance or whether it is just simply ‘another dialect of English’. As you can see, we have adopted ‘Standard English’ in this subject guide and have often shortened it to ‘SE’.
Chapter 3: Standard English

English through the ages: a short timeline for contextualisation

It is worth considering how the English language has evolved over the centuries in the British Isles. This allows us to see that the English we use today is very similar to the English that was used in the 1800s but somewhat different from the periods before that, and this can be linked to the standardisation process. Scholars (such as Fennell, 2001, p.1) who take a socio-historical and cultural approach to the history of English sub-divide it into four stages:

- **Old English**: 500–1100. Difficult for the modern reader; needs to be learnt.
- **Middle English**: 1100–1500. Still difficult for the modern reader (e.g. Chaucer).
- **Early Modern English**: 1500–1800. Some difficulties, but getting easier (e.g. Shakespeare).
- **Modern English**: 1800–today. Few comprehension problems (e.g. Jane Austen).

Defining the periods in this way can be problematic, however, because there is no exact time when one period stops and another starts. The approach that Fennell takes involves marking each period by a historical event. The impact of language standardisation, a process which began in the British Isles in the late 1400s, means that there are fewer comprehension problems, particularly from the 1800s onwards, as language standardisation slows down the rate of language change, a point we will discuss later.

Language standardisation

Einer Haugen (1966) identified four key steps in the process of language standardisation. These steps take place in one form or another in relation to any variety that undergoes standardisation:

- **Selection**: choosing a language variety to be the standard
- **Codification**: codifying it in dictionaries and grammars
- **Elaboration**: broadening the range of contexts in which it is used
- **Acceptance**: being accepted by the speech community even though many speakers continue to use non-standard varieties.

With regard to English in the British Isles, there were a number of factors influencing the development of a Standard English. For example, when William Caxton brought the printing press to Britain in 1476, this had a major impact on literacy, spelling and the standardisation process. By Shakespeare's era, it is thought that around half the population could read. In addition, there was greater access to education: the seventeenth century saw the rise of the middle classes, increased leisure and reading time and a greater interest in education generally. The printing press meant that books became cheaper. You can read about these points in Blake (1996). All of these factors contributed to the standardisation of English in the British Isles. Here are the four steps in relation to the evolution of a standard in the British Isles:
Varieties of English

Selection: Standard English is based on the South-East Midlands dialect. In the fifteenth century, the South-East Midlands was a wealthy area of Britain, with a dialect which achieved prominence because of its use in London, at the Court and in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Codification: Codification began in the eighteenth century: dictionaries and grammar books appeared (e.g. Dr Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language, 1755).

Elaboration: Elaboration involves broadening the range of contexts in which the selected variety is used, and so it has much more functional use (for example, in government, public office, print material and education). The expansion occurred in the centuries following the evolution of the print process and involved borrowing extensively from Latin and French. Latin and French had been the prestigious varieties, while English had been seen as inferior. However, as the range of functions in which English was used grew, it gradually displaced the status of French and Latin, although Latin continued to be used in certain domains (for example, science) until relatively late on in the standardisation process.

Acceptance: Acceptance means that the standard variety is accepted by most as the prestige variety, even by those who do not use it. In public institutions in the UK Standard English is the norm (for example, within education, media news reporting, government, etc.)

Einer Haugen (1966, p.348) states that the goal of standardisation is ‘minimal variation in form, maximal variation in function’. This means that once a standard variety emerges there is less variation in the forms that are used, but the variety can be used in many contexts, far more so than non-standard varieties.

Activity
Consider what this goal described above might involve in practice, thinking of examples from everyday life.

Activity
What effects do you think the emergence of a standard has on other dialects or language varieties? Why? Make a list of the positive effects and the negative effects.

We can say that Standard English evolved ‘naturally’ (Holmes, 2008, p.77) in the fifteenth century as a result of a variety of factors (some of which are listed above), but in other contexts (such as Norway in the late 1800s or Tanzania in the 1960s) there was a clear, conscious decision to undertake a language planning exercise. The four steps will have taken place but the processes would have taken different forms.

So what is the definition of Standard English?

As we are starting to discover, a language standardisation process is clearly an important linguistic and public phenomenon. Despite this, however, the consensus among linguists is that it is actually quite difficult to describe or define what we mean when we talk or write about Standard English. Here is a selection of different points of view:
1. It isn’t a straightforward or easy language variety to define: there is much confusion as to what it is: ‘A widely used term that resists easy definition but is used as if most educated speakers nonetheless know precisely what it refers to’ (McArthur and McArthur, 2005, p.576).

2. It is often used to describe educated use in Britain, and sometimes to describe the speech of educated people in Britain and North America.

3. Honey (1997) believes it is self-evident as to what it is: ‘By Standard English I mean the language in which this book is written...’ (p.1).

4. Trudgill (1999) argues that it easier to say what it isn’t than what it is. Standard English can include both formal/informal vocabulary; only a few grammatical features separate Standard English from other varieties. Trudgill has written extensively in this area and we reproduce another quotation from his work:

   Standard English is that variety of English which is usually used in print, and which is normally taught in schools and to non-native speakers learning the language. It is also the variety which is normally spoken by educated people and used in news broadcasts and other similar situations. The difference between standard and non-standard, it should be noted, has nothing in principle to do with differences between formal and colloquial language, or with concepts such as ‘bad language’. Standard English has colloquial as well as formal variants, and Standard English speakers swear as much as others.

   (Trudgill, 2000, pp.5–6)

**Activity**

Think about the issues that these points raise. How would you define Standard English?

**The differences between spoken and written language**

When thinking about what Standard English is, it is also worth considering some differences between speaking and writing. You should note, however, that the distinction between speaking and writing has in itself become more problematic and increasingly blurred, especially since the advent of the newer modes of communication; for example, text messaging, emails, forum chat, MSN and social networking sites such as Facebook and so on. Twenty years ago or so, these modes were non-existent or certainly not relevant in the way they are today. Nevertheless, it is still useful to consider some of the more general differences between speaking and writing, and especially how these relate to discussions of Standard English.

To begin with, we can suggest that it is less easy to ‘fix’ the boundaries of spoken language: codification has the effect of stabilising a language variety, but this is easier to do with its written forms. This is why written English has changed very little (relatively) from around the 1800s onwards. The spelling system is fixed and changes very little. The greatest changes (as we have pointed out) have occurred in the area of vocabulary.
Speaking, on the other hand, isn’t subject to the same constraints as writing: it usually involves other people. Spoken language can be negotiated by those taking part in a conversation. This contrasts with writing, which is often a solitary activity, involves only the author and where there are often opportunities for editing and revision. Speakers often judge their usage (that is, what counts as ‘Standard English’) by the speech of those they consider to be educated, but variation occurs even among this group and, in any case, how do you decide whether someone is ‘educated’ and whether they are using ‘Standard English’? Many of these (and other) points are considered in detail by Milroy and Milroy (1999) and it would be extremely useful to follow up their work.

In ‘Standard English: What it isn’t’, Peter Trudgill (1999, pp.117–28) attempts a characterisation of Standard English, highlighting some of the difficulties involved in its definition. He argues, for instance, that all of the following are Standard English even though the first is excessively formal and the third is very colloquial:

- Father was exceedingly fatigued subsequent to his extensive peregrination.
- Dad was very tired after his lengthy journey.
- The old man was bloody knackered after his long trip.

He also makes the point that the following is a non-Standard English sentence using the technical register of physical geography: ‘There was two eskers what we saw in them U-shaped valleys.’

Obviously, he has constructed that sentence in order to make his point, which is that the difference between what counts as ‘Standard English’ or ‘non-Standard English’ is not one of formality or informality. Further on in the same chapter, he lists eight grammatical idiosyncrasies (as he refers to them) of Standard English. It is these distinguishing features which, according to Trudgill, separate Standard English from other dialects of English.

**Activity**

Read ‘Standard English: what it isn’t’ by Peter Trudgill. It can be found in Bex and Watts. (You can also find a copy of the chapter at www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/dick/SEtrudgill.htm) Do you agree with the points that he makes with regard to arriving at a definition of Standard English?

**Activity**

What are the merits of having a written standard? Are there any drawbacks? For historical linguists, there has been one!

**Activity**

Are the distinctions between written and spoken language so clear cut? Think of different examples/contexts, particularly the examples we have given of the newer communication forms. You might want to follow up on David Crystal’s work: he has written extensively about the internet and also about text messaging (see Further reading).
Language change and attitudes to language variation

According to the Milroys, language standardisation involves the ‘suppression of optional variability’ (Milroy and Milroy, 1999, p.6). The point is that living languages are always evolving. So standardisation can slow down the rate of language change but it’s impossible to stop it. People can become quite upset, however, by language change/variation and complain publicly (in articles, letters to newspapers etc.). Milroy and Milroy (1999, p.24) refer to this as the ‘Complaint Tradition’.

Some people complain about usage they don’t believe is part of Standard English. They consider Standard English to be ‘correct’ and therefore unmarked, while non-standard varieties are considered to be ‘incorrect’ and marked (that is, noticed and hence complained about). According to Milroy and Milroy (1999, p.40) complainants often cite some past era, when things were so much better, perhaps when they were young. But Milroy and Milroy believe that there was no ‘Golden Age’: things were not better; they are just imagined to have been better. An additional aspect is that (so-called) linguistic decline also becomes associated with moral decline:

(I)If you allow standards to slip to the stage where good English is no better than bad English, where people turn up filthy… at school… all those things tend to cause people to have no standards at all, and once you lose standards there’s no imperative to stay out of crime.

(Norman Tebbit, 1988, quoted in Milroy and Milroy, 1999, p.41)

The linguist Laurie Bauer (1994) remarks that complaints about the state of the language are indicative of language change in progress. Let’s look at the changing meaning of the word ‘decimate’. This is an example which upsets John Honey (1997). If you look up the word ‘decimate’ in a dictionary you will see that the definition is something like ‘to kill every tenth man’. It is a Latinate word. However, many people today use this word to mean ‘destruction’ generally. What has happened is that the influence of Latin has declined substantially. It is taught far less in schools than it used to be. So people start to use Latinate vocabulary in spoken contexts perhaps without having any knowledge of its Latinate roots (its etymology). And the meaning shifts slightly. What is worth thinking about is whether you consider it problematic that the original meaning has shifted or whether you take the view that, unlike in the Roman era, we no longer need a word to describe the killing of every tenth man because situations and contexts have changed. You might then consider that languages evolve to suit the needs of their speakers.

Activity

Can you suggest some reasons why people might get upset about language change?

Activity

Read sections on language attitudes in LaBelle (2011) and Holmes (2008, Chapter 15). Then list a number of the languages and language varieties mentioned in these two chapters and critically discuss the attitudes towards these varieties.
Received Pronunciation (RP)

Someone can speak Standard English (if you can define it in the first place!) with any accent. Listen to British news reporters on the BBC. You hear a variety of accents, although not heavily localised ones, but the dialect will always be the standard. But there is one accent that is not tied to any region or area. It is the socially prestigious accent which we call Received Pronunciation or RP, learnt, for the most part, in public (that is, fee paying) schools in Britain. It has other names, for example, the Queen’s English, Oxford English or BBC English, because although we stated that you will hear a variety of accents if you listen to the news on the BBC, this was not always the case. Fifty years ago, the news would almost always been spoken by a news reporter with an RP accent. BBC news reporting today reflects the situation generally with regard to RP. It is an accent used by perhaps 3 per cent of the population and, moreover, it has changed in the last fifty years. If you listen to older members of the Royal Family or old BBC recordings it is evident that the accent has become modified and is a mixture of RP and regional varieties (‘modified RP’).

Although Standard English is a dialect and RP is an accent, the two are connected because although, as we noted, you can speak Standard English with any accent, if you speak with an RP accent, you are unlikely to speak any dialect other than Standard English. As Mesthrie et al. (2009, p.24) remark, some scholars contend that accents are part of what constitutes Standard or non-Standard English. Would you agree with this view? It is perhaps persuasive if we think of teaching English as a foreign language. The target is always Standard English and the target accent is mostly RP, at least outside of the Pacific Rim. In many people’s minds, therefore, RP is a ‘standard’ accent and part of what constitutes ‘Standard English’.

Activity

Read the following article by Amelia Hill, which appeared in the Observer (a UK Sunday newspaper) on 21 July 2002. What values are being linked with different accents? Is it the language and the way it sounds that is the problem or is the wider issue more to do with attitudes towards speakers using those accents?

Accent blocks business success, say bosses

It’s good to talk. Unless you are from Wales, Birmingham, Liverpool or east London: regional accents have been bad-mouthed again as Britain’s leading businesspeople admit to firmly associating them with dishonesty, lack of success, laziness and unreliability.

Those with a cockney accent were considered to be the least honest and trustworthy people in Britain, according to a survey of top directors, with 83 per cent of business leaders admitting they linked the East End twang with overall failure – the lowest rating of all regions.

‘I spend half my life trying to persuade people that there is no connection between accents and intelligence, social situations or criminality,’ said professor David Crystal, a linguistics expert at the University of Wales. ‘Despite the shake-up in class and
society over the years, it is remarkable how the gut feeling has lingered that accents are indicative of deeper truths.’
More than one in five directors claimed businesspeople with a cockney accent were less likely to be successful than those from anywhere else in Britain, with a further 13 per cent admitting any hint of the chirpy patois indicated a low level of general honesty.
Welsh businesspeople were at the greatest disadvantage, according to the Aziz Management Corporation’s survey, with only 10 per cent of directors believing their lilt indicated success.
‘The fact remains that it is not what you say but how you say it,’ said Khalid Aziz, chairman of the Aziz Corporation, which interviewed 100 leading directors. ‘As a nation, we are still obsessed with accents and what we think they tell us about other people; these results prove that popular preconceptions still exist.’
However, Scots, those with a Home Counties accent and businesspeople from the West Country were widely assumed to be on the fast-track to success, with 28 per cent of respondents saying the Scottish burr indicated above-average honesty, reliability and an inclination to work harder.
More than one in four directors associated the Liverpudlian lilt with corporate failure; 85 per cent of directors believed the Brummie accent conveyed dishonesty and below average intelligence; and just 17 per cent of directors assumed those with a Geordie accent were unlikely to ever be successful.
Half of all directors associated the American twang with success and one-third favoured an accent from Continental Europe.

What is the relationship between language, region and social class?
The section above demonstrates that there is a connection between language and social class that is also tied into geographical regions.

Activity
Study Figures 8.1 and 8.2 in Eva Eppler’s chapter ‘Language and social class’ in Mooney et al. (2011, p.159). Is there more or less variation in higher social classes? Why is there a plateau on the diagram capturing Standard English but not on the one capturing RP?

These diagrams represent the relationship between language, region and social class. What they show is that the higher up the social scale you go, the less variation you will find in how people speak, what their speech sounds like and the words and grammar that they use. So there is a lot of variation at the lower end of the scale and less variation further up. The pyramid with the plateau on top also suggests that there is some variation in what counts as the dialect of Standard English (which hinders our attempts at a definition), and the other pyramid shows us that there isn’t much variation in the accent called
Received Pronunciation. But is this true? The pyramid was originally devised by Peter Trudgill to reflect the relationships in 1975 and, some 35 years later, the situation has changed to a certain extent. If you were redrawing the pyramid to reflect accents today, you would probably put the ‘RP accent’ label at a similar point to where the label ‘Standard English dialect’ occurs. There is more variation within that accent than there used to be. Recall that we noted that RP has become ‘modified’ in the last 50 years or so, and older members of, for example, the Royal Family sound different from younger people who perhaps go to fee-paying schools in the UK today (institutions where, traditionally, the RP accent has been learned).

Activity

Do you think definitions of Standard English should include systems of pronunciation or accent? Why or why not?

English as a world language

We have spent the majority of time in this chapter concentrating on English as used in the British Isles. But as we noted at the beginning of the chapter, English occupies a prominent position in the world today as it is a world or global language, spoken far beyond the shores of Britain. In fact, there are far more people who speak English as a second or subsequent language than as a native language. It is prioritised as an essential language to learn in many countries worldwide. It is a prerequisite for many occupations: for example, aviation personnel are required to have a certain level of competence in English: all international pilots and air traffic controllers must be able to speak and use English while at work. We also drew attention to the fact that there are many Standard Englishes worldwide. Although there is not space to include an extensive discussion of the position of English in the world today, as well as reading the section in the chapter on language standardisation by Suzanne LaBelle in Language, Society and Power, you should consult books such as Jenkins (2009), which will enable you to increase your knowledge in this area.

Activity

Can you think of some reasons why English has acquired its status in the world today? Some areas you might think about to help you (among others) include economic factors, innovations and the history of the British Empire.

As we have indicated in this chapter, there are many aspects to consider in a discussion of Standard English. There is the historical development of English, the emergence of a standard variety, the difficulties of definition and attitudes towards it and non-standard varieties. More recently, there is the phenomenal rise in the number of English speakers in the world today. There is a vast amount of scholarly work you can read on all of these areas and many articles (including work by Peter Trudgill) are available on the internet.
Learning outcomes

After working through this chapter, and having done a substantial amount of reading on the topic as well as the activities, you should:

• be able to explain the language standardisation process
• have some knowledge of the historical development of English and what we mean by language change
• be able to discuss the debates and attitudes surrounding standard and non-standard/vernacular English.

Sample examination questions

1. Discuss the difficulties involved in defining Standard English.
2. Discuss the relationship between accent, dialect and social class, giving examples to illustrate your answer.
3. What do we mean by language change and how does this impact on standardisation? Use examples to illustrate your points.
4. What, if any, role should non-standard varieties of a language play in educational contexts?
5. How and why do attitudes to language (varieties) emerge, and what are their effects? In your answer discuss a range of examples, drawing on sociolinguistic research and theory.
Chapter 4: Language and ethnicity

Essential reading


Further reading


Other works cited


Introduction

In this chapter we will consider some of the ways in which language interacts with ethnicity. We will approach this topic from two angles: language used by different ethnic groups; and language that is used to represent different ethnic groups. First, we take a look at what we mean by ‘ethnicity’ before moving on to think about how many speakers and ethnic groups use more than one language, frequently switching between them. We then turn our attention to pidgins and creoles, which are languages which develop when different ethnic groups come into contact. Two (non-standard) varieties of English are next considered: African American Vernacular English (AAVE), followed by London Jamaican (LJ). These two varieties are associated with minority ethnic groups in the USA and in the UK. After this, we briefly mention the emergence of Multicultural London English, before considering language representation, that is, how we talk about, write about and describe ethnic groups. First of all, however, what exactly do we mean by ‘ethnicity’?

Defining ‘ethnicity’

To get you thinking about what is meant by the term ‘ethnicity’ and other terms it is linked to, we offer a selection of definitions:

Common usage tends to associate ‘race’ with biologically based differences between human groups, differences typically observable in skin color, hair texture, eye shape, and other physical attributes. ‘Ethnicity’ tends to be associated with culture, pertaining to such factors as language, religion, and nationality.

(Bobo, 2001, p.267, cited in Fought, 2006, p.10)

Joseph gives the following three definitions to differentiate between ethnicity, nationality and race:

ethnic identity is focused more on common descent and on a cultural heritage shared because of common descent, than on political aspirations for autonomy

national identity is focused on political borders and autonomy, often justified by arguments centred on shared cultural heritage, but where the ethnic element is inevitably multiple

racial identity – now a concept virtually taboo in American discourse […] is focused, like ethnic identity, on common descent and cultural heritage, but conceived on a grander scale, for example, ‘black’ identity as opposed to Wolof identity.

(2004, pp.162–63)
Finally, an observation from Edwards:

Ethnic identity is allegiance to a group – large or small, socially dominant or subordinate – with which one has ancestral links. There is no necessity for a continuation, over generations, of the same socialization or cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. This can be sustained by shared objective characteristics (language, religion, etc.), or by more subjective contributions to a sense of ‘groupness’ or by some combination of both. Symbolic or subjective attachments must relate, at however distant a remove, to an observably real past.

(1994, p.128)

It is worth thinking about the way in which ‘ethnicity’ seems to be tied into culture, shared bonds and a sense of ‘groupness’. This, according to Edwards must also be linked into something real and tangible, even if that bond or link is from a long time ago or from many generations previously. ‘Nationality’, on the other hand, has a sense of the political attached to it. ‘Race’ may refer to biology. Race may also be, as Joseph details in the quote above, a pejorative term which is no longer ‘politically correct’ to use. The other thing to consider is how we only label minority groups ‘ethnic’. That’s not the way minority groups talk about themselves. As Talbot et al. (2003) remark, in the UK, we don’t refer to the Women’s Institute as an ‘ethnic group’, fish and chips as ‘ethnic food’ or to a bowler hat as ‘traditional ethnic headgear’.

Activity

What is your ethnic background? Is it straightforward for you to answer this question? What factors do you need to consider?

Activity

Research the three terms we have referred to: ‘ethnicity’; ‘race’; ‘nationality’. Use online sources, dictionaries and scholarly works to help you. Make a list of the similarities and differences between the terms: the things that unite them and the things that differentiate them. Is your interpretation of ‘ethnicity’ and your interpretation of your own ‘ethnicity’ any different now from what it was before you started to think about the terms?

How is language linked to ethnicity?

Most people would agree that language is a very important marker of ethnicity. In fact, it may be the key defining feature in determining someone’s ethnicity, although this is not true in every case. For example, in Northern Ireland, Protestants and Catholics are not defined by language. So for those groups, religion is the marker of ethnicity. Or take the case of Wales and Welsh. Only 21 per cent (2004) of those who live in Wales speak Welsh, but it would be difficult to argue that the person who speaks no Welsh, whose family has lived there for generations, is any less ‘Welsh’ than someone who speaks Welsh all the time. On the other hand, we can consider the case of many immigrant groups. In London, for example, there are sizeable immigrant groups, such as those from Poland or other Eastern European countries. Sometimes their children attend schools at the weekend to ensure they
do not forget their native language skills, despite the fact that they are spending most of their time using and speaking English in their everyday life.

**Monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism**

There are many ethnic groups that speak more than one language or language variety. This may appear odd at first to people living in countries such as the UK or the USA which we can think of as predominantly monolingual countries. This will mean that a large percentage of the population speaks only one language and to speak more than one is quite unusual. However, we have made the point that many immigrants in, say, the UK, want their children to speak not only the host language but to be able to communicate in their native language as well. In other countries and continents (Africa, for example), speaking more than one language is something that most people have to do to be able to communicate with those they come into contact with. Being bilingual describes the ability to speak two or more languages, although as Mesthrie et al. (2009, p.37) point out, many writers use the term multilingual to mean the same thing. It can usually be ascertained from the context, however, how the terms are being used.

**Code-switching and language contact**

Language can be linked to ethnicity in other ways too. For example, people who speak more than one language may switch between languages during a conversation, or even within one utterance (code-switching). Code-switching may occur for a variety of reasons: perhaps someone joins the conversation who does not speak the language of the other participants. It may be that the topic under discussion motivates or even necessitates a switch. Relationships between participants in a conversation may be another factor. It is also the case that, sometimes, when different ethnic groups come into contact with one another, there isn't a language they all share that can be used. When these situations arise, a hybrid language sometimes develops.

**Activity**

Read Chapter 2 'Language choice in multilingual communities' in Holmes (2008), focusing particularly on the section on code-switching. Then sum up some of the different types of code-switching and reasons for and/or functions of code-switching. Consider the examples provided by Holmes as well as your own observations of multilingual language use.

**Pidgins and creoles**

We will now take a look at the type of languages which emerge as a result of contact between different ethnic groups who do not share what is known as a lingua franca. A lingua franca is a common language used between groups of people for communication. The contact between these different ethnic groups may have arisen for a variety of reasons: wars, trading, colonialism and slavery are some examples. In these situations, the different groups of people need to
communicate but may be unable to if they cannot speak one another’s language. Sometimes a **pidgin** develops. There are some common features of pidgin languages. To begin with, they have no native speakers and they develop to enable contact between people who do not have a common language. They are often short-lived (for example, a pidgin developed between the American soldiers and the Vietnamese during the Vietnam war but it has died out as it is no longer necessary).

Pidgins are made up by taking features of two or more languages (some theories say at least three languages: two plus one dominant language). They are usually simplified or reduced in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary. There is a low prestige value associated with pidgins and many negative attitudes expressed towards them as we can see in this constructed example:

**Young visitor to Papua New Guinea:**

> When I first heard Pidgin English I just thought it was baby-talk. I thought anyone can do that. It had words like *liklik* for ‘little’ and *cranky* for ‘wrong’ and *nogut* for ‘bad’. It just made me laugh. Then I began to realise it wasn’t as easy as I thought. People kept correcting me when I tried, and they got annoyed if I didn’t take it seriously. I soon learned better.  

*(Holmes, 2008, p.86)*

**Activity**

Research and consider other attitudes (both positive and negative) linked to ethnic groups and their language varieties. You can use Holmes (2008) to help you.

**Creoles** emerge when the pidgin becomes the first language of the children of pidgin speakers so, unlike pidgins, they have native speakers. They become much more elaborate so that they can be used in many domains and for many functions. Attitudes towards creoles may still be very negative, even though they are more complex than their pidgin source and, indeed, they function just as any other language does. **Tok Pisin** is an example of a pidgin which (some say) has developed into a creole. It has many first language speakers and has developed to meet the needs of its speakers. Tok Pisin is viewed very positively by its speakers. It has status and prestige in Papua New Guinea and is often used for debate in its parliament.

We have noted that pidgin vocabulary is often quite small. This is because pidgin languages only extend themselves as far as they need to to cope with the demands of those that use them. The following observations and examples illustrate some features of pidgins and are taken from Mesthrie et al. (2009, pp.281–83), who cite both Todd and Tok Pisin (1994, p.3, 178) and Holm (1988, p.73):

1. Many pidgin words are **polysemous**. This means they can mean several things, each of which can be worked out in the context (Cameroon Pidgin English):

   - **Shado**  shadow, soul, reflection
   - **Bif**  meat, animal
Varieties of English

2. **Multifunctionality**: this describes how one word might have several grammatical uses. In Tok Pisin a word like *sik* is a noun and an adjective, for example, *Mi sik* (I’m sick) (adj.) and *em i gat bigpela sik* (he has got a terrible disease).

3. **Circumlocution**: this describes the ‘roundabout’ way in which some concepts are expressed in pidgins. In these examples the word *bilong* functions as a preposition meaning ‘of’ (Tok Pisin):

   - Gras bilong fes beard
   - Gras bilong hed hair
   - Gras bilong ai eyebrow
   - Wara bilong skin sweat
   - Pinga bilong lek toe
   - Pela bilong op bottle, bottle opener

4. **Compounding** is often used in the formation of abstract concepts (Tok Pisin):

   - Big maus conceited (literally big mouth)
   - Drai bun tough toughness (literally dry bone)
   - Tu bel in two minds, doubting (literally belly)

   Here are some examples of compounding to indicate gender of nouns:

   - Hos man stallion
   - Hos meri mare
   - Paul man rooster
   - Paul meri hen

**Activity**

Research pidgins and creoles and contact languages. You can find sections in Mesthrie et al. (2009) or Romaine (2000), in addition to Holmes (2008, pp. 83–93). After studying these topics, offer some possible explanations for the development of pidgins in the areas of the world where they have developed (there are some maps showing where some pidgins and creoles are to be found in Romaine (2000, pp. 170–73).

**African American Vernacular English (AAVE)**

We will now move on to consider a language variety which is associated with African American speakers in the United States. This language variety is especially prevalent in Northern cities of the United States. It is a very contentious language variety which has been relabelled many times as the following list demonstrates:

AAVE has a number of features which differentiate it from mainstream American English, some of which we list below:

**Absence of the verb be in certain contexts:**

In SE, most speakers use reduced forms of the verb *be*: When people say: ‘she’s very nice’ rather than ‘she is very nice’, the *is* becomes *s*. AAVE speakers omit the verb *be*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AAVE</th>
<th>American standard English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She very nice</td>
<td>She’s very nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He a teacher</td>
<td>He’s a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That my book</td>
<td>That’s my book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beer warm</td>
<td>The beer’s warm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using ‘be’ for repeated actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AAVE</th>
<th>American standard English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She be at school on weekdays</td>
<td>She’s always at school on weekdays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children do be messin’</td>
<td>The children do mess around a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>around a lot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I run when I bees on my way school</td>
<td>I always run when I’m on my way to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beer be warm at that place</td>
<td>The beer’s always warm at that place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Negative concord or multiple negation:**

In Standard English only one negative is allowed. Most non-standard varieties can have two or more and this is called ‘negative concord’ or ‘multiple negation’. As Holmes (2008, p.150) tells us, multiple negation occurs in all English-speaking communities but is linked to the lower social classes rather than the middle classes. Examples of multiple negation are:

‘We didn’t have nothing to talk about.’

‘Nobody don’t want no ice cream.’

The data and features on AAVE have been drawn from Holmes (2008, pp.186–88). Make sure you read this section where further examples and explanations can be found.

Children who speak AAVE often perform very badly in school. In two communities in the USA proposals were put forward in an attempt to address this which attracted a great deal of publicity. The first was a court case in 1979 in which parents took the school their children attended and the Board of Education to court and the second concerns the proposals put forward by the Oakland school board in 1996. We outline the details of both, drawing on Mesthrie et al. (2009, pp.364–68) and Crystal (2003, p.97).

- **The Ann Arbor trial**: Parents of children who were pupils at the Martin Luther King Elementary School took the Ann Arbor School District Board to court. The parents represented the 13 per cent of black children at the school. They claimed that their children were underperforming at school because they spoke in a language variety which was different from that used at the school. Linguists such as William Labov testified on the parents’ behalf. The judge
found that the children were hindered because teachers did not take their language variety into account when teaching Standard English. The school board was ordered to help teachers identify those speaking ‘Black English’ and help them apply their language skills when learning Standard English.

- **Ebonics**: African Americans were still being classed as ‘learning disabled’ in American schools 15 years later. The Oakland School Board (California) therefore proposed ‘bilingual education’ in its schools. AAVE speakers would start their education in the language they already knew and move to Standard English after they had learnt it as an L2 (second language). The School Board argued that AAVE could be traced to West African languages and that the students’ language was Ebonics (this word is blended from two words: Ebony + Phonics). There was a great deal of controversy surrounding these proposals, forcing the School Board to revise its plans. A selection of the public reaction can be found in Mesthrie et al. (2009, p.367).

**Activity**

‘If you use AAVE, you won’t get a good job’ seems to indicate that if you use Standard English you will get a good job. But consider whether it is a person’s ethnicity or the language variety that they use that prevents them from getting certain jobs. Is the problem prejudice/racist attitudes or linguistic deficit? (adapted from Holmes, 2008, p.416).

We turn now to consider a language variety associated with certain ethnic groups which has been used in some areas of London (most notably the East and South East). It was studied extensively by Mark Sebba (1993).

**London Jamaican (LJ)**

Based on Jamaican Creole, this variety has mainly been used by Black British adolescents in the London area, many of whom have Caribbean, but not necessarily Jamaican, ancestry. Most of them were born in Britain, indeed, some users of LJ features are Anglo (white) or Asian British adolescents. The following are some of the distinctive features of this variety and are taken from Jenkins (2009, pp.112–14) and Sebba (1993, pp.146–59). The features are divided into four groups: the first, second and third list some grammatical, phonological and lexical features of Jamaican Creole which are also found in LJ, while the fourth lists some features of LJ which are also part of London English (or Cockney). Therefore Sebba’s observations suggest that this variety of English draws both on local (London) features of English, as well as on (stereotypical features of) Jamaican Creole.

**Jamaican Creole grammatical features in LJ:**

- use of present tense for both present and past, e.g. ‘an I se’ meaning ‘and I said’;
• elimination of tense suffixes ‘–s’, ‘–ed’, ‘–t’ and participle endings ‘–\textit{ing}; ‘–ed’, ‘–en’, for example: ‘yu bret stink’ for ‘your breath stinks’;
• negation with ‘no’, often with phonological changes, e.g. ‘no bret stink’ for SE ‘my breath doesn’t stink’;
• lack of inversion in question forms, as in ‘im did phone you?’;
• absence of the copula for Standard English ‘noun – to be – adjective’ constructions: as in ‘dis party well rude’
• use of suffix ‘–dem’ added to a noun to indicate plurality: ‘man-dem’ meaning ‘men’, or a large quantity as in ‘kaan-dem’ (‘a lot of corn’).

**Jamaican Creole phonological features in LJ:**
• substitution of /ð/ and /θ/ with /t/ and /d/, e.g. ‘bret’ for ‘breath’ and ‘dis’ for ‘this’;
• labialisation when the sound /b/ is followed by certain vowels, e.g. ‘boys’ is pronounced ‘bwoys’;
• dropping of word-final consonants, e.g. ‘bulleh’ for ‘bullet’
• realisation of the vowel sounds /ɒ/ and /ɛ:/ as /a:/ so that ‘cloth’ becomes ‘klaat’
• lack of weak vowels especially schwa, so that the word ‘rapper’ is pronounced /rapa/ rather than /rapә/ and ‘the’ is regularly pronounced /da/ and /di/.

**Jamaican Creole lexical features of LJ:**
• ‘mash-up’ (destroy)
• ‘picky-picky’ (frizzy, of hair)
• ‘duppy’ (ghost)
• ‘bombklaat’ (toilet paper).

**Features of London Jamaican which are also markers of London English but not Jamaican Creole:**
• the glottal stop /ʔ/, for example, ‘ghetto’ is pronounced /gheʔo/
• vocalisation of dark ‘l’ (the RP sound when it does not occur before a vowel), e.g. ‘tell’ as ‘tew’, whereas in Jamaican Creole it is pronounced as clear ‘l’ (the RP sound when it occurs before a vowel)
• substitution of /ð/ and /θ/ with /f/ and /v/ (London) alongside /t/ and /d/ (Jamaican)

**Activity**

Analyse the extract below which comes from Sebba (1993, p.20). It is a transcript of two girls having a conversation. See if you can identify which features belong to London English and which features belong to LJ. A further point you might want to think about in relation to this extract is that the two girls were asked to have a conversation in LJ. What effect might this have had on the conversation that they produced?
Extract 3: Catford Girls’ Possee

1 J did you go to Jackie’s party?
   (1.0)
C who Jackie Lomax
J yeah
C no one never invite me

5 J I heard that she had a really nice party and Cheryl said there was a lot of boys there (0.6) you know and they (were) playin’ pass the parcel and that
C is it?
yeah

10 C she invite you?
J no
C she never invite me neither and Leonie have one
as well never invite never tell me not in’ (0.4) me no
business too!
J Leonie have party?!
15 C man (1.0) Leonie have party (0.4) when? (1.2)
don’t remember when it was but she tell all o’ dem
no fi-ty say not in’ (0.6) cau she no wan’ too much
Catford gyal de dere (1.0) an’ Jackie ‘ave one too
(0.4) never say not in’

20 J yeah Jackie’s one was only meant to - meant to - meant to be for about ten gels (0.6) you know, get-together part’y sor% of fing (0.2) but I heard that
the G-Fours Possee did go ‘n’ quite a lot of uver people did go

25 C me no business (1.0) ’im never say not in’ to me about i
(0.4) an’ every day see me (’im) (0.4) ’im never
say not in’ so me no care (2.0) don’ really business
(but) yeah, cause it was on the fifteenth innit (0.4)
that time I was goin’ out (to the ) Bouncing Ball so (.)
30 even if she did invite me me wouldn’t a go

(Sebba, 1993, p.20)

Language crossing

Language ‘crossing’ is the term which describes how language varieties are used by speakers who don’t belong to the groups that traditionally use a particular language variety. It was coined by Ben Rampton (2004) who carried out ethnographic research with teenagers in a south Midlands town in England, looking into the contexts and situations where people used varieties which did not belong to them. He analysed crossing into Punjabi, creole or stylised Asian English (a parody of a stereotypical Asian English speech style). The contexts where crossing occurred seemed to be when the teenagers were talking to adults, when they were with their peers or at times when they were listening to a type of Punjabi music called bhangra. Crossing seemed to have a variety of functions including resistance to adult norms, identity construction and was also about challenging expectations.

As Fought (2006, p.205) points out people who cross need access to the codes that do not belong to them. A person might have a network of social contacts from different ethnic backgrounds, providing access to different codes or varieties or, on the other hand, they might only know one person. They may also have access to codes or varieties via the media in its various forms (newspapers, internet, radio or television).
Indeed, the media can be considered as very influential in determining how different ethnic groups are represented in ways which influence how people think about those groups.

**Multicultural London English (MLE)**

Researchers (see Cheshire et al., 2011) have recently identified a number of language features that occur, particularly among young people, in multi-ethnic parts of inner city London. They differentiate this variety from London Jamaican discussed by Sebba (1993) which we have just described. Cheshire et al. (2011) detail the emergence of MLE and the features associated with it. After the Second World War, large numbers of people from developing countries emigrated to the UK, settling in some urban areas such as Hackney or Tower Hamlets in East London. By contrast, many of the indigenous population moved out to the suburbs or to the surrounding counties. **Language shift** to English occurs quickly among immigrants, but native speakers of English may be in the minority in some areas or there may not be much mixing between the immigrants and those already living there. Consequently, English is frequently learned informally from other second language speakers. This **language contact** situation has resulted in a number of interesting language features, two of which we list below:

- A new **quotative**: *this is them* ‘what area are you from?’, *this is me* ‘I’m from Hackney’
- A new use of **definite and indefinite article**: in Standard English it is usual to say: *a* pear, *an* apple or *thuh* pear, *thee* apple, but the researchers found variability in the use of articles among younger speakers in places like Hackney with some speakers saying *‘a apple, thuh apple’*.

**Activity**

At the time of writing (April 2012), academic research into Multicultural London English has only, relatively recently, started to appear in the published literature. Carry out some investigation to see what you can find out about this variety, using the internet to help you. You may come across academic work or news articles, for example.

**Representing ethnicity, ‘race’ and nationality: the construction of otherness**

In this section, we consider the ways in which we represent, write or talk about different ethnic groups. The scholar van Dijk has carried out a great deal of research into the way different ethnic groups are discriminated against in the language that is used to describe them, constructing them as the Other: those who are ethnically different from the perspective of the writer or speaker. He identifies three topic classes: difference; deviance and threat (van Dijk, 2004, pp.352–53). In earlier work, he also demonstrated how people went to considerable lengths to avoid the charge of racism. They did this by presenting themselves positively in conversations or in newspaper reports. One tactic was to explicitly deny they were racist: ‘I’m not racist, but . . . ’ and then a negative portrayal of an ethnic group would follow. Here is one...
of his examples from the *Daily Mail* (28 November 1985) concerning immigration:

> Our traditions of fairness and tolerance are being exploited by every terrorist, crook, screwball and scrounger who wants a free ride at our expense ... Then there are the criminals who sneak in as political refugees or as family members visiting a distant relative.

*(as quoted in van Dijk, 1992, p.103)*

In the above extract, notice how *fairness* and *tolerance* are associated with the group the writer belongs to (signalled by the use of *our*). By contrast, those who do not belong to our group are represented very differently. Moreover, ethnic minorities are associated with ethically questionable and often illegal activities.

**Activity**

Van Dijk’s example comes from the 1980s. Are ethnicity, nationality and race still prominent in our newspapers today? Study some newspapers over a period of about a week, perhaps two aimed at different readerships. For example you could keep an eye on how the Guardian and the Sun (UK newspapers) choose to represent various groups. Can you find any articles where ethnicity is a factor?

In Chapter 7 we will also consider how individuals and groups are labelled, focusing this time on women and sexist language. In Chapter 8 we will introduce one methodological approach, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which has produced a lot of research on racial discrimination in language (van Dijk’s work, which we introduced above, is based on CDA).

In this chapter we have considered the topic of ethnicity from a variety of angles. We have investigated what we mean by the term and how language is linked to it. We considered how and why languages develop when different ethnic groups come into contact with one another. In addition, we also introduced some non-standard English varieties which are linked to sizeable ethnic groups in the USA and in the UK. Lastly, we considered how ethnic groups are labelled and represented, looking at examples from newspaper reporting.

**Learning outcomes**

After working through this chapter, and having done a substantial amount of reading on the topic as well as the activities, you should:

- be able to discuss the term ‘ethnicity’ and how it is linked into ‘race’ and ‘nationality’
- be able to explain what language contact refers to and how pidgins and creoles sometimes develop as a result
- have developed an awareness of the existence of non-standard varieties of English which are associated with ethnic groups that are often viewed pejoratively
- have developed an awareness of the (negative) ways different ethnic groups are sometimes represented in the press and by other ethnic groups.
Sample examination questions

1. How is language linked to a person’s ethnicity? You may choose to look at the language a person/group uses to express their ethnic identity, or you may choose to look at how language is used to represent people or groups. In either case, provide examples and refer to research in this area.

2. Discuss why pidgins and creoles are often considered as substandard varieties of the languages they are related to, although sociolinguists (see Romaine, 2000, p.174) argue that they are language varieties in their own right. Support your discussion with examples and reference to linguistic work in this area.

3. What are the similarities and differences between code-switching and crossing? In your answer consider the speakers, contexts, linguistic forms and functions. You must support your answer with references to research.

4. Does a speaker’s ethnic identity predetermine the way they speak or does language help speakers to construct their identity as ethnic?
Chapter 5: Language and gender

Essential reading


Further reading


Other works cited


Introduction

In this chapter, we consider how language interacts with another social variable, that of gender. Researchers have studied language and gender from a number of angles. For example, do women and men speak differently and if they do, how does this manifest itself? And do women and men speak differently in single sex and mixed sex groups? Some researchers look at attitudes to and perceptions of women's language and men's language. In other studies the concept of linguistic sexism is explored.

In this chapter we shall begin by thinking about the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ and the differences between them. Next we will go on to consider stereotypes and folklinguistic beliefs about language and gender, before considering empirical research on gender differences in language use and the question of how language use of women and men varies across cultures. Finally, we will outline the theoretical models that researchers have put forward to explain differences in the way women and men speak. There is a section about linguistic sexism in Chapter 7 which deals with language, thought and representation.

The concepts of ‘gender’ and of ‘sex’

Within linguistics ‘gender’ is a grammatical category, but it is also a social category. Gender is socially and culturally constructed; sex is biologically constructed. This quote from Martin Montgomery highlights the distinction:

Arriving at any social gathering we identify those already present in various ways – as strangers or friends, as young or old, and as male and female. We make these judgements continuously, if unconsciously, in most social settings. We may typify others...as male and female partly on the basis of physiological and anatomical cues (e.g. this person looks pregnant, that person has a beard); but our typifications are primarily informed by our tacit knowledge of the codes of social behaviour appropriate to the sexes – particularly the codes of dress and demeanour…The genetic code may determine our sex; but social codes provide us with a repertoire of behaviour which defines our gender.

(Montgomery, 2008, pp.173–74)

Activity

Think of a film which features a man pretending to be a woman or a woman pretending to be a man. For example, you could do some research on the internet on Dustin Hoffman’s role in the 1980s film *Tootsie*. Then consider which social cues, including dress code, behaviour patterns and linguistic features these actors use for their (stereotypical) performance of gender.
Stereotypical views on women’s and men’s talk

**Folklinguistic beliefs** describe stereotypical or popular views about language. These are a little like proverbs, or sayings and beliefs we acquire from our community or culture. They are based on anecdotal evidence and many people believe them to be true. An example might be the belief or idea that women gossip more than men, or that men swear more than women. To begin with we can travel as far back as 1922, to consider the work of Otto Jespersen, a Danish professor of English Language. He wrote a chapter called: ‘The Woman’ in his book, *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin*, in which he describes women and the language that they use in what we would now consider to be a sexist and outdated way.

Deborah Cameron (1998, p.216), who included Jespersen’s chapter in her collection *The Feminist Critique of Language*, states in her introduction to this chapter that Jespersen is cited by many early feminists in their discussions to ‘stand[..] for a whole discussion of patronizing and sexist commentary by male linguists before [the advent of] feminism’. We list below some of the features and views that Jespersen discussed:

- men produce more lexical innovations than women
- women’s vocabulary is much smaller than men’s
- women speak softly
- women’s speech is particularly rich in adjectives such as ‘pretty’ and ‘nice’
- women use hyperbolic adverbs, e.g. ‘vastly’, ‘terribly’, ‘awfully’
- women use diminutive words like ‘teeny weeny’
- women don’t like to swear and are fond of euphemisms
- women’s language is ungrammatical:
  - women often leave their sentences unfinished
  - women’s syntax is marked by the use of parataxis (clauses linked by coordinating conjunctions such as ‘and’, ‘but’) and men’s by the use of hypotaxis (clauses linked by subordinating conjunctions such as ‘after’, ‘when’, ‘because’)
- women jump from topic to topic
- women are more verbose than men (stereotype of the unstoppable female chatterbox).

For a critical discussion of this list as well as of other stereotypes and folklinguistic beliefs about language and gender, read Coates (2004, Chapter 2) and Talbot (2010, Chapter 3).

If we now fast-forward around 50 years or so, to 1975, we can consider a paper written by Robin Lakoff, entitled *Language and Woman’s place* in which she listed a range of features she described as typical of the language women used. Her approach to women’s language has often been described as the **deficit** approach because the language that women use (or that they supposedly use) is seen as weak. As Coates (2004, p.6) says, this type of approach implies that there is something
wrong with the way women speak and they should speak more like men to be taken seriously; it presents a view of women’s language as powerless language. The other major point about Robin Lakoff’s work is that it was not informed by any empirical evidence; that is, by actual research that she carried out. Instead her claims about ‘women’s language’ are based on her own observations and intuitions. Nevertheless, her work remains highly important as she pioneered sociolinguistic interest in language and gender, and as Lakoff, as a feminist, was actually concerned about what she saw as the powerlessness of women. Lakoff triggered a wide range of empirical research that set out to investigate her claims, usually with the help of recorded and transcribed conversations. Here are some features, which according to Lakoff, are part of the way women speak (see Lakoff 2004, 2011):

- Women’s ‘language’ contains a large stock of words related to their specific interest, for example ‘magenta,’ ‘shirr,’ ‘dart’ (in sewing).
- Women’s ‘language’ contains many ‘empty adjectives’ like ‘divine, charming, cute, adorable, sweet, lovely…’
- Women use ‘question intonation where we might expect declaratives’.
- Women’s ‘language’ is characterised by the use of hedges such as ‘well; y’know; kinda’.
- Women often make use of intensifiers like ‘so’.
- Women use hypercorrect grammar.
- Women’s ‘language’ is more polite.
- ‘Women don’t tell jokes’ […]’Moreover, they don’t “get” jokes.’
- ‘Women speak in italics.’

If you would like to read more about Lakoff’s claims, see Holmes (2008, Chapter 12), Talbot (2010, Chapter 3), or Coates (2004, Chapter 2).

Lakoff believed that these differences arose because of the way women and men were socialised from childhood and the resulting consequence was that women had no access to power.

[...] the overall effect of ‘women’s language’ […] is this: it submerges a woman’s personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject matter and uncertainty about it […] The ultimate effect of these discrepancies is that women are systematically denied access to power.

(Lakoff, 1975, pp.243–44 in Cameron, 1998)

Activity

Think about the characteristics attributed to women’s speech by Jespersen and Lakoff. How is women’s speech portrayed by these scholars? What does this portrayal tell us about attitudes to women’s way of speaking (and perhaps attitudes to women themselves)? Are these attitudes still prevalent in the society in which you live? If so, which ones and (why) does it matter?
A criticism of Lakoff’s work is that she assumes a given language feature will have only one function. This is not the case. For example, **tag questions**, such as ‘isn’t it,’ ‘don’t you’ can be used for a variety of reasons and do not always signal tentativeness and uncertainty. Tag questions are structures where one or more than one word is tagged onto a sentence or utterance to turn it into a question. Often the tag reverses the polarity of the main clause, as the examples below demonstrate. Although some aspects of Lakoff’s work suggest that she is aware of the ‘multi-functionality’ of tag questions, she nevertheless expresses a concern that women use tags more than men and that this suggests to others that women are less sure of themselves. Subsequent language and gender research has demonstrated that it is important to differentiate between the different functions of linguistic devices such as tag questions.

For example, Holmes (1984) distinguishes between **modal tags**, i.e. those which show the speakers’ (lack of) certainty towards what they are expressing, and **affective tags**, which can be **facilitative**, and tags which **soften** the force of something. Here are some examples (see Holmes, 1984, in Coates, 2004, p.54 for further reading):

**Modal tag:**

It’s your auntie’s birthday tomorrow, isn’t it?  (husband to wife)

**Facilitative tag:**

The cow likes to eat grass, doesn’t she?  (teacher to pupil)

**Softening tag:**

You did not want to hurt your sister, did you?   (mother to child)

**Activity**

Consider the different functions of the above examples of tag questions. In which of the above examples is the speaker unsure of him/herself because he/she is missing information? In which other ways are tag questions used in the other examples? Is there any other information that would be necessary to determine the function of these tag questions?

Many of the stereotypical views people have about women’s and men’s ways of using language refer to their conversational practices; for example, to the use of tag questions and modal verbs, to the amount of talk, levels of politeness and (in)directness. However, a couple of the features cited by Jespersen and Lakoff hint at stereotypes about gendered use of grammatical and pronunciation features. Before we turn to consider the findings of empirical research on conversational features, which constitute the main focus of this guide as well as of subsequent language and gender research, we will briefly consider some of the findings on women’s and men’s use of syntactical, morphological and phonological features, which are at the core of variationist studies.
Varieties of English

Variationist studies on gender differences

In this section we will consider so-called variationist sociolinguistic research which investigates the relationship between specific grammatical and pronunciation features of language and social ‘variables’ such as social class or gender. Traditional variationist studies show that the use of standard grammar and pronunciation does not only vary according to social class and the formality of a speech situation, but also according to gender, or ‘sex’, as this was the term used at the time (Labov, 2011; Trudgill, 1974, 2011). Moreover, several of these variables interact with one another. For example, Peter Trudgill (1974) showed that speakers who were most likely to use non-standard pronunciation (for example, ‘walkin’, ‘laughin’) were working class men, whereas women from middle class backgrounds were most likely to use standard pronunciation (‘walking’, ‘laughing’).

Activity

In order to gain a more in-depth and extensive understanding of variationist studies of language and gender read Chapters 4 and 5 in Coates (2004) and/or Chapter 2 in Talbot (2010). For further reading you can also turn to Chapter 10 in Meyerhoff (2011). What evidence is there in these chapters to confirm or challenge the claim that women tend to use more standard grammatical or pronunciation features than men?

There are various explanations that tend to be offered for women’s more frequent use of standard features of grammar and pronunciation. One explanation is that women are more status-conscious and because of this they tend to use the more prestigious varieties. Many women still do not have the same status as men so the use of standard language becomes an important means to acquire status. According to another explanation many women aim for overt prestige in the form of standard language as this allows them to present themselves as traditionally feminine, and many men for so-called covert prestige in the form of vernacular or non-standard language forms as this allows them to index toughness and masculinity. A third explanation points to women’s social roles as caregivers in society; as mothers, they model how children should speak and behave.

Activity

Read the section on ‘Explanations of women’s linguistic behaviour’ in Holmes (2008, pp. 164–73) (see Essential reading) and carefully consider the explanations offered for the linguistic behaviour of women. Do you find some of these explanations more convincing than others, and if so, why?

Newer variationist studies have often reiterated the finding that women use more standard forms (e.g. Nordberg and Sundgreen, 1999 in Romaine, 2003), although others have pointed out that the picture is more complex and that we have to look at other factors that interact with gender, depending on the type of ‘networks’ (Milroy, 1980) or ‘Communities of Practice’ (Eckert, 2011; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2011) that speakers belong to. For example, Penelope Eckert’s now famous study of two US high school Communities of Practice (CoPs) shows that linguistic choices made by students are not only due to
gender. The Jocks, who identify with school values and orient to middle classness, and the Burnouts, who resist school and middle-class norms, use both linguistic and non-linguistic resources to signal their group membership, with the former group frequently orienting to more standard forms than the latter. Interestingly, however, Eckert shows that Burnout girls can even outdo Burnout boys in their use of non-standard features, as the girls have to rely on the symbolic capital of their language choices to signal their toughness, whereas the boys can and do rely on actual physical displays of toughness such as street fighting. So gender here interacts with the local identities of Jocks and Burnouts. This, more flexible view of gender as something being constructed in specific local contexts (such as US high schools) will be discussed in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

Differences in women’s and men’s conversational practice

Lakoff’s and Jesperson’s lists which we discussed above capture many claims about the differences between how women and men are said to conduct conversations. But these have, in recent decades, been the targets of research by scholars interested in discovering what women and men actually do when they speak to one another, either in same-sex groups or in mixed-sex groups.

Let’s first consider the claim that women talk more (verbosity). Victoria DeFrancisco (2011) studied married couples at home. She asked seven married couples to record themselves at home and subsequently interviewed each partner on their own. She found that women did talk more. However, this was not because they were more dominant or because they were simply chatting away aimlessly. Often, they tried to introduce new topics to keep the conversation going but they were not always successful in getting these goals realised. This showed that women were doing a lot of what Pamela Fishman (1980; see also 1983) had called ‘interactional shitwork’. So on the one hand, we can say, yes they did talk more, but their partner’s non-cooperative strategies meant the men achieved conversational dominance.

In public or institutional contexts, such as during school lessons, staff meetings, television panel discussions and mock jury deliberations the situation appears to be reversed and men have frequently been found to talk more (see also Coates, 2004, p.117 for a summary). For example, Joan Swann (2011) found that boys take more turns than girls in the classroom. In a task that was set up involving a pendulum, the boys chipped in more than the girls. Boys were also selected to talk by the teacher more often than girls because the teacher was looking more often towards the boys when asking a question. This showed that the conversational dominance (see below) was co-constructed by boys and the teachers alike. In other research, Dale Spender (1980) found that at academic seminars, women took the floor only 30 per cent of the time (see also Holmes, 1992). Spender’s research, however, was published in 1980 and it would be interesting to see if women take the floor more substantially in these contexts some thirty years later. In a more recent study, conducted in the brave new world of electronic communication, Susan Herring and her colleagues (2011) undertook an investigation of a small, more woman-friendly email discussion list, to see whether
patterns of interaction were symmetrical or not; that is, to see if women and men made an equal number of contributions. But they found that women still only contributed 30 per cent of the discussion. However, during the five weeks of discussion chosen for analysis, there were two days when women’s contributions exceeded men’s. As Coates and Pichler (2011, p.140) describe it: ‘The resulting disruption, with men claiming they were being ‘silenced’ and threatening to ‘unsubscribe’ from the network, suggests that there is an underlying cultural assumption that women and men do not have equal rights to speak’.

Another conversational feature that is discussed frequently in language and gender research, particularly in studies investigating mixed-sex interaction, is **interruptions**. The most famous and now classic studies on interruptions were conducted by Zimmerman and West (1975) and West and Zimmerman (2011). They studied both acquainted and unacquainted students in coffee bars, shops and other public places. In same-sex interactions, the interruption rates were similar, but in mixed sex interactions, the interruption rates were far higher. It was men who interrupted the majority of the time, which led Zimmerman and West to conclude that men exert conversational dominance.

When conducting research on whether people wait their turn in conversations or whether they don’t it is important to differentiate between real interruptions (intended to disrupt and/or take over from the previous speaker before he or she has finished) and **simultaneous talk** which is intended to support the flow of the current speaker. For example, in same-sex talk, research by Coates (1996; 2011) has found that women produce a lot of highly supportive simultaneous talk which cannot be classified as an interruption. This includes minimal responses such as ‘mhm’, and ‘yes’ (see below) as well as longer instances of simultaneous speech during which women are looking for the same word together or make comments or ask questions which show their interest in what the speaker has to say without wanting to take over. This type of simultaneous speech is not an interruption but it is a way of showing cooperation and collaboration between speakers. There is some evidence that women are more happy with this type of non-disruptive simultaneous speech than men (see Coates, 2004; Edelsky, 1993). For examples of interruptions as well as collaborative simultaneous talk see Pichler and Preece (2011, section 3.1.2 ‘Turn taking and interruptions’).

Another conversational feature that has been discussed frequently, particularly by researchers interested in the conversational work that is done by speakers, is **minimal responses**. There is plenty of evidence that minimal responses are used more by women than by men (Fishman, 1983; DeFrancisco, 1991; Holmes, 1995; Preisler, 1986). This research shows that women use minimal responses as a type of support work to encourage their interlocutor’s development of topics. As we explained above, Fishman refers to the work that women do in this respect as ‘interactional shitwork’, it describes the division of labour in conversation which supports women and men’s power and powerlessness (Coates, 2004, p.88). Some scholars have argued that when men use minimal responses they frequently delay them or they use them to signal agreement with what the speaker is saying rather
than simply signalling attentive listening (DeFrancisco, 1991; Maltz and Borker, 1982; Tannen, 1992). However, Reid-Thomas (1993, cited in Cameron, 2001, p.118) finds no such gender difference in the use and interpretation of minimal responses in her own data, suggesting that minimal responses serve different functions, depending on the context in which they are used.

As we already pointed out above, it is important to remember that the conversational features that have been studied by language and gender scholars, such as simultaneous talk, minimal responses or hedges (such as ‘well,’ ‘sort of,’ ‘perhaps,’ ‘I think’) or tag questions such as ‘isn’t it,’ ‘aren’t we’ (see above), can perform multiple functions. It is therefore problematic to claim that people who speak at the same times as others are always dominant or that people who use hedges or tag questions are always uncertain of what they are saying. For example, Coates’ (2004, pp.88–92) summary of language and gender research shows that hedges are used by women more to negotiate sensitive topics and to encourage others to join in and that women use tag questions more in their facilitative function, which is also intended to encourage contributions by others.

**Activity**

There are many other conversational features that have been studied by language and gender scholars. These include questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo language, compliments and other politeness features. Some of the findings confirmed stereotypical views of women and men’s conversational practice, but many others either contradict stereotypes or offer a much more complex picture. Consult your essential and further reading to find out more about these features and if (or in what way) they are used differently by women and men.

**Different approaches to language and gender**

There are several ways of explaining gender differences in language use, and studies of language and gender make use of three main theories to explain these differences. One is the dominance model, which argues that conversation reflects and reinforces social power asymmetry between the sexes. Research aligning itself with this model shows that male speakers more than women tend to draw on a range of non-cooperative strategies to control conversation: no-response, interruption, inadequate or delayed response, and silence (see Coates, 2004). This manifests itself in the marital home, at work, in meetings, in the classroom and even in Parliament (see, for example, Zimmerman and West, 1975; DeFrancisco, 2011; Holmes, 1995; Swann, 2011; Shaw, 2011). For example, when Zimmerman and West (1975) observe that women are interrupted systematically by their partners in mixed-sex interaction they argue that this is due to the fact that men dominate women in these private interactions just as much as in society at large. Although few researchers have explicitly aligned themselves with the dominance model since the 1980s, considerations about male conversational/societal dominance remain highly relevant, as for example Sylvia Shaw’s 2011 study of Parliamentary Debates in the British House of Commons shows (see further reading).
The **difference model** does not present men as oppressors and women as victims of their inferior social position, which is why many popular books are attracted to this model. It suggests that boys and girls are socialised into different verbal and non-verbal behaviours as they tend to interact with one another mainly in same-sex groups in childhood. Whereas boys are said to interact more in hierarchical groups which require competitive (verbal) behaviour, girls are said to interact more in egalitarian groups which require more collaboration. Women's and men's informal conversational behaviour is attributed to these early socialisation processes. Consequently they are supposed to use language differently; for example, make their requests more bluntly in the case of men, or in a more mitigated way in the case of women. These gender differences in conversational style are also said to be the reason for conversational misunderstandings between women and men. For example, Maltz and Borker (2011) argue that for women minimal responses indicate they are following the conversation; for males they indicate that they agree with what is being said (but see previous section on minimal responses for counter-evidence). All explanatory models have been critiqued in some ways, but the most popular accounts of the difference model, including John Gray's infamous *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, as well as linguist Deborah Tannen's popular *You Just Don't Understand* (1992; see also Tannen, 2011), have received particularly fierce criticism, mainly because they gloss over issues of power and status which many feminist linguists consider to remain highly relevant for mixed-sex interaction. However, another consequence of the difference approach was a move away from research into mixed-sex interaction and a surge in interest in research on all-female and all-male talk (see for example Coates, 1996, 2003, 2011; Pichler, 2009; Johnson and Meinhof, 1997; Kiesling, 2011). Note, however, that many of these more recent publications would not align themselves with the ‘difference paradigm’ but instead with the social constructionist approach which we shall turn to next.

The **social constructionist** approach to language and gender has dominated research and theory, particularly in the last couple of decades.

The social constructionist model to language and gender:

- moves language and gender research away from focusing upon binary notions of gender
- links language and gender research to (postmodern) theories and research on identity
- views gender identity formation as not restricted to childhood (like the difference approach)
- views gender identity not as fixed but as constructed in interaction and discourse
- talks about ‘performing’ or ‘doing gender’
- views gender as interacting with other socio-cultural and situational aspects of identity
- frequently investigates gender identity construction in ‘Communities of Practice’.
This approach, which can also be referred to as ‘postmodern’, ‘performatve’ or ‘dynamic’, opposes essentialist approaches to language and gender; that is, claims that all women speak in one way and men in another. It challenges the dichotomy of women’s speech as collaborative and men’s as competitive, pointing to many examples which show that women can use competitive language strategies, and men can use linguistic features usually associated with women. For example, Deborah Cameron (2011) shows that men can gossip, and that they can also use features of conversational support. Marjorie Goodwin (2011) shows that although girls do use more mitigated ways of directing others to do something for them, they can also use very bold directives, the way boys do, whenever the context requires them to. Nevertheless, gender norms remain important for this approach – it argues that women and men speak the way they do not because they are women and men (biologically) but because they use language as a resource to present themselves as masculine and feminine. Thus, when a woman seeks to present herself as traditionally feminine she will avoid swearing, perhaps use more standard features of pronunciation and grammar and engage in a collaborative, mitigated conversational style. However, women can also present themselves in opposition to these gender norms, as for example the Burnout girls in Penelope Eckert’s (1995, 2011) research, who use many features of non-standard pronunciation to help them to construct themselves as tough and cool.

Postmodern theories on ‘identity’ are important to this approach not only because they highlight the agency (as well as dominant constraints on this agency) of speakers in accomplishing their identities in everyday interaction. That is, they say that we are not pre-determined to speak in a specific way because we are either men or women. Moreover, they also see that gender is only part of speakers’ identities, and other aspects of socio-cultural identity interact with gender, including the regional, cultural and social background of the speaker, their ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, sexual orientation and sexual identity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Pichler, 2009, 2011).

Situational roles and contextual identities are also important, as a woman may choose different linguistic strategies to present her identity differently depending on whether she is speaking as, or to, the boss at her workplace or to her partner, friends or children in a private context. It is, however, not all down to the individual. Not only because gender norms restrain this ‘choice’ as we have argued in the previous paragraph, but also because individuals are usually part of groups, or Communities of Practice, such as the Jocks and Burnouts in Eckert’s research, or such as the sports, music, reading, friendship or family groups that you would be a member of. Language and gender research in the last decades has investigated a wide range of context and Communities of Practice in which gender is being performed. These include British Members of Parliament (Shaw, 2011), teenage girls from a range of ethnic and social class backgrounds (Mendoza-Denton, 2008; Pichler, 2009) as well as US fraternity men groups (Kiesling, 2011) or male and female business leaders in New Zealand (Holmes, 2006, 2009).
These studies are not only interested in the grammatical, phonological and conversational features that we have discussed so far. They are also interested in discourses; that is, ways of using language that reflect and maintain ideologies. Some of these discourses are more traditional, but others draw on alternative or resistant ideologies, such as feminist discourses. The discourses speakers draw on and negotiate in their talk also constitute important resources for their construction of (gender) identities. For example, although Deborah Cameron’s (2011) study on male college students in the US found that men’s conversational strategies can be quite similar to women’s, she also found that the discourses they used; that is, the derogative ways they spoke about women and ‘gay’ men, allowed these college students to construct gender identities as red-blooded heterosexual males for themselves. A different example is provided by Pichler (2011), who investigates the talk of a group of British Bangladeshi girls and finds that they negotiate discourses of romantic love, sexual experience and arranged marriage in a way that their gender identities emerge as both British and Bangladeshi. These last examples by Cameron and Pichler also show how language and gender studies have been interested in the relationship between gender and sexuality in the last decade.

The social constructionist approach therefore highlights the multiplicity and heterogeneity of gender identities. As Jennifer Coates puts it:

...there is no single unified way of doing femininity, of being a woman. In the contemporary developed world, many different versions of femininity are available to us. More mainstream discourses position us in more conventional ways, while more radical or subversive discourses offer us alternative ways of being, alternative ways of doing femininity. We are unwittingly involved in the ceaseless struggle to define gender...

(1996, p.261)

**Learning outcomes**

After working through this chapter, and having done a substantial amount of reading on the topic as well as the activities, you should:

* have an understanding of the ways in which language and gender interact
* have an understanding of the main theoretical models to explain gender differences in language (e.g., the deficit, dominance, difference and constructionist approach)
* be able to differentiate between folklinguistic or stereotypical features associated with women’s and men’s talk and what the research actually tells us
* have developed an insight into the way that the social constructionist approach has changed our understanding of the relationship between language and gender.
Sample examination questions

1. What is the evidence for and against claims that women speak differently from men? Draw on examples from research to support your discussion.

2. Critically discuss and compare the deficit, the dominance, the difference and the social constructionist model in language and gender.

3. To what extent does subsequent research support or refute the claim of Robin Lakoff (1975) that women’s language is unassertive?

4. What does research on specific Communities of Practice have to offer to our understanding of language and gender?

5. What evidence is there from language and gender research to show that gender interacts with other sociocultural or situational factors?
Chapter 6: Approaches to spoken discourse

Essential reading


Further reading


Other works cited


Introduction

In this chapter we outline some approaches sociolinguists use when analysing spoken discourse. There are several approaches, but we will consider three of the most well known: Conversation Analysis, the Ethnography of Speaking (sometimes referred to as the Ethnography of Communication) and Interactional Sociolinguistics. Each of these approaches may be used by analysts as their sole approach, but they may also be used in combination, depending on the source material and the background of the analyst. This will become clearer as you work through the chapter and start to make your own study of work that has been done.

In addition to outlining theoretical and methodological approaches to the analysis of spoken discourse, we will reproduce some transcriptions of spoken conversation so that you can become familiar with the way they are represented. We will start, however, by considering what we mean by ‘discourse’, a term which can be applied to either spoken or written texts.

The term ‘discourse’

The term ‘discourse’ is not straightforward or easy to define. It is what is known as a contested term within the social sciences, which means that it has different meanings attached to it because it is used in different ways and within several academic disciplines. Linguists use the term to refer to language, spoken or written, which extends beyond a sentence or utterance. Some researchers, however, particularly those from other academic disciplines, use the term ‘discourse’ to refer to the way in which knowledge and social relations are structured in any given society. The French philosopher, Michel Foucault, has been very influential in this conception of discourse. Some sociolinguists, for example, Norman Fairclough (2001) have been heavily influenced by Foucault’s work. Fairclough has developed an approach known as Critical Discourse Analysis which is dealt with more fully on another module, Language and the Media, and also referred to briefly in Chapter 8 of this guide. In this chapter, however, we concentrate on the three approaches we have referred to in the introduction.

Activity

Read Cameron (2001) Chapter 4 and carry out some further research into the term ‘discourse’, in books or on the internet. Summarise the similarities and differences in the meanings of the term that you come across.

Now we outline three ways of analysing spoken discourse. There are others (such as pragmatics) which are also outlined in Cameron (2001), but we will not deal with them here. First, we look at an approach called Conversation Analysis, which was developed by sociologists and now used by sociolinguists and social psychologists. It is what is known as a micro or bottom up approach because it involves analysing in great detail everything that occurs within a stretch of talk. In addition, the analyst will focus on how we manage conversations using a number of strategies that we may not be consciously aware of, even though we automatically follow the rules that those strategies involve.
Conversation Analysis

Harvey Sacks was a sociologist who, through his work in Los Angeles in the 1960s, gained access to tape recordings made to a telephone suicide helpline, which were then analysed. In a seminal paper, Sacks and his fellow researchers, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson (1974), proposed the following:

- In conversations speakers take turns.
- There are rules that speakers follow which determine how those turns are organised and how speakers select who speaks.
- Usually only one person speaks at a time.
- If more than one person speaks at the same time, this does not last for very long.
- The transition from one person speaking to another person speaking is very often made seamlessly.
- Turn taking is not fixed beforehand so there must be some way of allocating and distributing turns.
- Conversation is **locally managed** by those involved who make their contributions relevant for their interlocutors. This is known as **recipient design**. As Sacks et al. put it:

> By 'recipient design' we refer to the multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants.

(Sacks et al., 1974, p.727)

The rules that speakers unconsciously adhere to in the way they structure their talk and select who can talk at any given time can be outlined as follows:

Speakers know where it is possible for speaker change to occur because participants in a conversation speak in **turn construction units** or TCUs. Speakers know that a turn consists of one or more TCUs and we can recognise the end of a TCU. This marks what we call a **Turn Transition Relevance Place** or a **TRP** and it is at this point that a change of speaker can occur.

In addition to grammatical cues that speakers recognise, there are also non-linguistic signals which tell participants where a change can occur; for example, gaze, posture, gestures and so on. Cameron (2001, p.90) gives the example of someone saying ‘and that’s what I did today’ with falling intonation and a pause which shows it’s likely to be interpreted as a TRP. On the other hand saying something like ‘And do you know what she said to me?’ would show by the rising intonation pattern and interrogative structure that that was not the end of the turn and the speaker will be allowed to continue to hold the floor until they have finished telling whatever it was that ‘she said to me’.

When a TRP is reached and speaker change occurs, either:

- the current speaker selects the next speaker (this may be explicit; for example, ‘So what happened then Gina?’)

or
• the next speaker selects themselves
  or
• the current speaker continues.

As we have noted, more than one person could self-select (that is, more than one person could begin speaking at the same time) but if that situation arises it is usually the case that someone gives way quite quickly and only one speaker continues to hold the floor.

In addition, Sacks et al. observed that conversations are structured according to certain sequences. An extremely important and common sequence is known as the **adjacency pair structure**. This describes two utterances by two speakers which are related and adjacent to one another. What is known as the **second pair part** (that is, the second utterance) is related to and dependent on the **first pair part**. Some common adjacency pair structures are Question/Answer; Greeting/Greeting and Offer/Acceptance or Refusal.

Here are some examples of types of adjacency pairs and their first pair parts with possible second pair parts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An offer:</th>
<th>acceptance</th>
<th>refusal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question:</td>
<td>relevant answer</td>
<td>irrelevant or non-answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeting:</td>
<td>greeting</td>
<td>no response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity**

The most frequent type of adjacency pair structure used in conversation is **Question/Answer**. Why do you think this might be?

For some adjacency pairs there could be more than one relevant or related response that could be made. However, one second pair part may constitute what is called ‘the preferred response’, while the other may be the ‘dispreferred response’ (see Cameron 2001, p.97, for a critical discussion of these terms, and Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008, for further reading).

**Activity**

If someone asks another person to do something, that person may agree and accept or disagree and refuse to do what has been asked. Which is the preferred response and which is the ‘dispreferred’ response?

The dispreferred response, for example, a refusal of an invitation, is often elaborated on, so if someone asks another person out for dinner and that person is unable to go or doesn’t want to go, they may refuse (or decline) but rather than simply say, ‘No thanks’, there will probably be an explanation as to why the invitation is being refused (for example, ‘No thanks, I can’t come because I’ve got to visit my mother this evening’).

Sometimes it isn’t that easy to pick out adjacency pairs because they have insertion sequences within them as in the following example:

| A: May I have a glass of red wine please? | Q1 |
| B: How old are you? | Q2 |
| A: Eighteen. | A2 |
B: No, sorry, I'm afraid you have to be 21 to drink here. A1

Activity
In addition to the fact that the answer to Q1 comes after an insertion sequence, what else is apparent about the A1 response?

Additional points about Conversation Analysis

Conversation Analysis as theory and method can be used to analyse any type of talk from casual talk, transactional encounters through to institutional discourse (the type of conversations that may take place in societal institutions, for example, in a courtroom, in politics or in the workplace).

Scholars who practise what is known as a ‘pure’ CA approach in their analysis of talk disregard anything outside of the talk itself. This means they do not consider contextual factors such as gender, age, class and so on unless the participants within the stretch of talk that is being analysed highlight the relevance of such factors explicitly. For CA scholars, the analysis derives only from the talk itself. Other researchers argue that a ‘pure’ approach is short-sighted and it is impossible to ignore contextual factors. This does not mean that researchers who take the latter stance will ignore CA completely as a method. On the contrary, often the ‘tools’ from CA about the turn-taking mechanism will be used alongside other frameworks (some of which we will discuss shortly). The work that Sacks et al. have carried out is important and ground-breaking in our understanding of the structure of talk and the way in which participants organise themselves in conversations, no matter which approach we are using to analyse conversations. As Eggins and Slade (1997, p.31) put it, ‘The debts owed to early CA by all subsequent approaches to Conversation Analysis (and to discourse analysis more generally) cannot be overstated’.

Activity
Watch some talk show programmes, celebrity or politician interviews on television (or listen on the radio). Focus on how the question and answer adjacency pair structures the conversations. Consider the concept of conditional relevance and also the part that recipient design plays.

Activity
Read the section in Cameron (2001, pp.98–100) on telephone conversations. Next time you are on the telephone, or you hear someone on the telephone, think about the way openings and closings are managed.

We turn now to consider two other approaches to analysing talk. It is possible to combine these approaches with the tools from CA in an analysis.

The Ethnography of Speaking

The Ethnography of Speaking is an approach which was developed by Dell Hymes in the 1970s. Hymes is sometimes viewed as the founder of sociolinguistics. He was an anthropologist. Anthropology and linguistics were, however, at that time, seen as quite separate
Varieties of English

disciplines. Until the 1970s Chomsky had been the dominant figure in linguistics but Hymes and other scholars reacted against what they saw as the idealised way that language was studied at this time. Chomsky had made a distinction between competence and performance. While competence refers to what people (subconsciously) know about their language and how to use it, performance refers to how they do actually use it.

Hymes was interested in what he termed as communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). Not only do speakers have knowledge of how their native language works, but they also have knowledge of the social and cultural rules of a language. As speakers we generally produce the ‘right’ utterances at the ‘right’ time. If we don’t it’s noticed and seems odd. Producing the right talk at the right time involves sociocultural knowledge. In order to research how people use their sociocultural knowledge when speaking, Hymes developed what became known as the Speaking Grid. This is an aid to analysis for the ethnographic researcher who may be analysing talk in cultures other than their own (although ethnographers do also research their own cultural practices). The Speaking Grid is used to analyse speech events which can only take place through the use of talk. A speech event will take place within a speech situation (speech situations provide a context for communication or talk). Cameron (2001, p.55) illustrates this with the example of a speech situation such as a family dinner. Arguments and discussions are two types of speech event that might occur during a family dinner, but other things may happen which do not involve talk (kicking people under the table, for example).

Hymes listed a number of components of speech events, which provide a descriptive framework for the Ethnography of Speaking (or Communication). This is an eight part mnemonic based on the word SPEAKING: the Speaking Grid. These components help ethnographers to analyse and understand the speech event and the language choices made by speakers in the speech event. You should note that there is no theoretical significance as to why the word SPEAKING is used: it is simply an aid to remembering. Here are the components and the description of what to apply them to in an analysis:

**Situation**: setting (physical; temporal) and scene (psychological – cultural definition of occasion as formal or informal, serious or festive etc.)

**Participants**: who takes part in the speech event and in what role: speaker and addressee but also addressee (originator, source) and audience (who can evaluate)

**End**: goal/purpose of exchange, e.g. compliment (expression involving positive politeness)

**Act sequence**: message form (how things are said; which speech acts and in which order) and content (what is said; topic); and the relationship between the two

**Key**: manner or spirit in which it is carried out, e.g. mocking or serious

**Instrumentalities**: which channel is used (writing, speaking, etc.) and which language variety is selected from speaker’s repertoire
Norms: of producing and interpreting interaction/speech acts (this involves ‘reading between the lines’)

Genres: what ‘type’ (poems, proverbs, sermons, lectures, conversation) does a speech event belong to and draw on?

You should be aware of the fact that it is not always easy to fit the data you may be analysing into the framework, but rather than ‘forcing it’ it might be more productive to consider why it does not fit (Cameron, 2001, p.57). A further point is that it is often the case that students using this framework for the first time will describe the data, fitting it into the categories without explaining what this shows or indicates about the speakers and their use of language. In all your work, you should ensure you analyse rather than simply describe.

Activity

Read the analysis of the Pentecostal meeting in South London in Cameron (2001, pp.58–65) and the Kros in Papua New Guinea. Then consider an event you are familiar with and analyse it using the categories provided by the Grid.

Activity

The Ethnography of Speaking seems to provide a useful framework for analysing speech events in cultures other than one’s own. Can you think of some reasons why it might also be a useful aid to an analysis of speech events within the researcher’s own culture?

Interactional Sociolinguistics

The last approach we will consider in this chapter was developed by John Gumperz, who, like Dell Hymes, was one of the founders of the discipline of sociolinguistics. In fact, Gumperz’s approach developed out of the Ethnography of Speaking framework, but Gumperz was also concerned with the way in which people interpret conversation, which he believed (and, in fact, demonstrated) was culturally specific.

Interactional Sociolinguistics shares some of the interests with CA with respect to turn–taking mechanisms. However, while the ‘pure’ CA analyst will disregard context, the Interactional Sociolinguist will regard the sociocultural context in which a conversation takes place as an essential component in an analysis. Indeed, the cultural background of participants in a conversation will determine how they make inferences and interpret what Gumperz called contextualization cues. Contextualization cues refer to the ways in which we signal to listeners how they should interpret our words and utterances. These cues may take a number of forms: they may consist of laughter, teasing, rising or falling intonation. They may consist of facial expressions, sighs, gestures and even silence. Contextualization cues therefore provide crucial information in our understanding of what is being said to us.

As Cameron (2001, p.107) points out, the interesting aspects of conversation that interactional sociolinguists focus on are often those things of which speakers are unaware such as their minimal responses (for example: mhm, yeah, right). In some contexts, these can signal attentive listening; in other situations, the manner in which they are uttered can indicate dismissiveness. Discourse markers (for example:
Varieties of English

**Activity**

Study the research summarised by Cameron (2001, pp.112–21) on the case of ‘uptalk’ and on minimal responses. What observations can you make about the way the talk was analysed? What is different about the analysis compared to a possible analysis made using a CA approach?

**Representing speech in writing**

Despite their differences, practitioners using Conversation Analysis, The Ethnography of Speaking or Interactional Sociolinguistics are all interested in finding out more about how speakers actually use language in real life situations. If you are going to analyse spoken language of any kind, however, it needs to be recorded and written...
down. The process of writing down natural, spoken language is frequently referred to as ‘transcription’ by sociolinguists. As Cameron (2001, p.31) observes, no matter how much you wind and rewind, or go back over a recording you have made, you cannot really begin to analyse it unless you have made a written transcript. To begin with, it would be highly unlikely that you would remember a whole two minutes of conversation that you had heard, even if you have heard it many, many times. If you produce a written version of the talk you have recorded, it will then be possible to move towards an analysis of it, using the frameworks we have outlined above. This section concentrates on how you might approach this task.

There are different ways to transcribe and researchers will have to make important choices according to the data they are transcribing and what they will be focusing on in an analysis. You can familiarise yourself with the different ways analysts represent speech by looking at transcripts and their analysis in sociolinguistic textbooks. There is only one real way, however, to learn how to make a transcription: you have to record some talk and transcribe it! Here are some guidelines to get you started:

Transcription techniques

- do not use capital letters at beginning of utterances (but do use capitals for proper nouns; ‘I’; etc.)
- do not use any punctuation like commas, full stops, question marks, etc. unless they are used to signal pauses or intonational patterns
- you can use apostrophes for contractions, e.g. ‘can’t’
- use conventional spelling as far as possible, unless other forms have been established e.g. ‘wanna’, ‘dunno’
- you should mark pauses and differentiate between:
  - micropauses (under a second): (.) or (–)
  - long pauses (measured in seconds): (1), (2), (3)
  - pauses accompanied by an intake of breath: .hhh
- if you can’t understand something on your recording, you must be honest about this; use (..) or similar to enclose any bits that are doubtful
- layout: your transcription must be easy to follow and must mirror accurately what’s on the tape
- number the staves or lines (depending on which transcription system you use)
- you must include a transcription key at the beginning of your transcript, explain what symbols you have used and what they mean
- you must include non-fluency features, including:
  - non-fluent pausing – occurs in the middle of a structure where no punctuation would occur in writing: ‘it’s (–) your turn’
  - hesitation sounds – sounds which aren’t words like ‘er’, ‘um’
• record nonverbal information (e.g. laughter); paralinguistic information (volume; voice quality – for example laughing) and prosody (stress, intonation).

This list was in part informed by a section on transcription in McDonald (1992, pp.32–34).

Activity
Consider the guidelines outlined above. Why do you think capital letters, commas, full stops and question marks are often avoided in transcriptions?

More terminology to use in an analysis

Sociolinguistic and discourse analytic transcripts of natural spontaneous language will also record the following features:

• discourse markers: these are features such as ‘oh,’ ‘well,’ ‘like,’ ‘sort of,’ ‘y’know,’ ‘I mean’ which are inserted within and in between utterances and function in different ways, for example as hedges (which reduce the force of an utterance), as pause fillers (filling silence to give time to think). With discourse markers, like so many other linguistic features, their function needs to be determined in context, for example, ‘well’ can function as an initiator (to mark the beginning of a turn: well, I don’t know) or as a hedge/marker of a dispreferred response ‘well, I’d love to join you but…’

• false starts: this describes an utterance which is started one way but is unfinished and then abandoned for another structure: ‘I wanted to (.) I wish I could have…’

• repetitions: this is self evident: ‘I wanted to (.) I wanted to talk to you…’

• recycling: this is similar to repetition but involves a hitch in production; the initial sounds are repeated before the speaker manages to get the word out. This is not the same as stammering/stuttering, ‘I w. wanted to talk’

• self-corrections: a speaker realises that s/he has made some sort of (grammatical) mistake and corrects it: ‘I wants (I mean) I wanted to…’

The previous two sections demonstrate that, unlike drama, film or soap opera scripts of conversations, nothing is edited out in linguistic transcripts of conversations, as every little detail, including repetitions, pauses and discourse markers, can be significant in an analysis.

Lastly in this section, we reproduce below an example of a transcription key. When you practise recording and transcribing a conversation, you can construct a transcription key similar to the following one, perhaps modifying it to include features that are particularly relevant to your transcription.

Example of a transcription key (see in Mooney et al. 2011, p. XVII)

| {laughter} | non verbal information |
| xxxxxxxxx[laughing] | paralinguistic information qualifying underlined utterance |
| [.....] | beginning/end of simultaneous speech |
| (xxxxxxx) | inaudible material |
Chapter 6: Approaches to spoken discourse

In the activities section that follows, we start with an activity which should ensure you are familiar with the three approaches we have discussed. Next, we move on to helping you put your knowledge into practice. You will have to obtain some sort of recording device for these activities. We recommend some method of digital recording equipment which can be downloaded to your computer so that it can be played back for transcribing. You may be able to make use of a mobile phone or an MP3 player for this purpose.

Activity

Summarise and compare the three approaches to analysing spoken discourse outlined in this subject guide. Identify different situations (types of conversation) where you think it would be appropriate to use each of them.

Further activities (based on those found in Cameron, 2001):

1. Record around 15 minutes of conversation.

   For your initial attempts, don’t record more than three people talking, otherwise it will be extremely difficult to transcribe. You may be one of the speakers although you might like to consider how this may affect what you talk about.

   You must not record people without their knowledge, because it is not ethical to do so. The British Association of Applied Linguists (see www.baal.org.uk) provides strict guidelines about this, even for student projects.

   Choose your recording context carefully. Recording friends at the pub or in a restaurant, for example, may be problematic due to background noise. On the other hand, friends and family are a good choice because it is often easier to get permission and you can record them at home or somewhere similar. In addition, you may well be able to negotiate permission to ‘record them at some stage over the next two weeks’ without specifying exactly when. This will allow you to make a recording without your informants knowing.
exactly when, minimising the impact of the Observer’s Paradox. The Observer’s Paradox is a term coined by Labov (1972, p. 209) and refers to the point that researchers are aiming to capture ‘natural’ speech, but there are difficulties involved in this if you are collecting data following ethical guidelines. This is because if people know they are being recorded, they may modify their behaviour and their speech in various ways.

Record on a device that will make it relatively easy to transcribe. Although tape recorders and cassettes will do the job, digitally recording conversation which can be downloaded for transcription to your computer will make your life easier. Your mobile phone may, for example, have a recording device which is suitable for this exercise.

2. Transcribe around two minutes of your recording, then think about the following:
   - What did you include apart from the words? Any or all of the features listed in the section entitled Transcription techniques?
   - What was difficult about this activity? Did you find it more time consuming than you expected?
   - What features did you notice particularly in the talk you transcribed?
   - In what ways is your transcript different from representations of speech you have come across in books, play scripts, newspapers etc?

3. Analyse your transcript.
   This will involve finding a focus for your analysis. You may want to focus on discourse markers. Or perhaps you are interested in seeing whether men interrupt women in conversation (see Chapter 5). It could be that you are interested in studying how those you have recorded use the quotative ‘be like’.
   You will not be able to do any substantial analysis on your extract without doing a certain amount of reading. This will involve researching articles and books about the features you are interested in and reading books about spoken discourse analysis more generally.

**Learning outcomes**

After working through this chapter, and having done a substantial amount of reading on the topic as well as the activities, you should be able to:

- discuss different definitions of ‘discourse’
- write about the differences between naturally occurring spoken language and written language
- discuss the different theoretical and methodological approaches that can be used in an analysis of spoken discourse
- reflect on a recording, transcription and analysis of naturally occurring spoken language that you have carried out yourself.
Sample examination questions

1. What does Conversation Analysis contribute to our understanding of how spontaneous language works?

2. What are some of the meanings of ‘discourse’? Compare and contrast the different definitions critically and consider their applications.

3. It is correct to claim that spoken language is unstructured?

4. Study and analyse the following transcript (from Pichler, 2009, pp.51–52), using any method or approach that seems reasonable to you. You may use more than one approach, as long as it is made clear within your analysis that you are doing so and that you are able to apply theories to the data systematically. (Note: in this transcript a ‘?’ in front of the name refers to doubt about the identity of the speaker. (For all other symbols, please see the sample of a transcription key above.)

Transcript: My friend Kate

(1) Roberta I was speaking to my friend Kate and she was going (-)

(2) Roberta she said to me “so so are you doing A-levels then” Jane (1)

(3) Roberta hhh [and I was] like “yeah” and she’s like “yeah Jane (yeah) so [(xxxxxxxx)]

(4) Nicky it’s so weird

(5) Roberta yeah me too” (-) and that was like– (-)

(6) Nicky to think we could (. ) like (. ) physically [leave] (-) ?Jane [yeah]

(7) Nicky [but-] Jane =that[we] can do A-levels which (. ) I mean no-one

(8) Jane doesn’t do A-levels but (. ) when I just think about

(9) Nicky them assuming that we are gonna get As (. ) [you know]
(10) Jane and then you think that some people aren’t even **doing**

(11) Nicky [yeah] (ah) it’s just so weird
Roberta GC[SEs] d’you know what I mean
?Elizabeth [yeah]
Chapter 7: Language, thought and representation

Essential reading


Further reading


Other works cited


Introduction

In this chapter we consider whether the labels we have for concepts and things; that is, the words which we use, actually matter. We will think about whether they affect our perception of reality and the way we look at the world. To do this, we will consider some of the theories that have been put forward to describe the relationship between language and thought. First of all, we will look at the work of Ferdinand
de Saussure, a Swiss linguist (1857–1913). Saussure believed that language was a system of signs and that linguistics should be a study of that system of signs (semiology). Saussure didn’t write any books in his lifetime, but his students gathered his lecture notes together after he died and published them.

In addition, another key theory we will consider is one that has become known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. This is based on the work of Edward Sapir (1884–1939) and his student, who had been a chemical engineer, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897–1941). The work of all of these scholars has been extremely influential in considerations of the relationship between language, thought and representation.

Finally, we will also consider whether a language can be sexist and whether using particular words and phrases in our writing and in our speech means that we think in particular ways about men and women. We will think about whether the language that we use contributes to societal attitudes and perceptions.

### Saussure and semiology

Saussure distinguished between langue and parole. **Langue** is our mental template of how our language works, acquired by maturity. This template is shared by other members of our speech community. Saussure distinguished this from parole – the actual words or utterances produced by speakers (which may include mistakes, hesitations etc.) Saussure considered this template of language (that is, langue) to be a system of signs.

A sign consists of a signifier (the form; that is, a sound image or letter combination) and a signified (a concept). Saussure believed that the sound and the concept were inseparable and that each triggered the other. The association that binds signifier and signified together is called a linguistic sign. The association becomes natural to us and we don’t usually notice it, except if something happens. For example, if a person suffers brain damage and loses their ability to use language (that is, they become aphasic), we will notice the loss of that association.

The sign: an association between signifier and signified:

```
Signified (Concept)
B-O-O-K /bʊk/

Signifier 
(Label)
(Sounds/ Letters)
```
Saussure also introduced the concept of **arbitrariness**. This relates to the point that there is no reason why, for example, the concept of a book must be signified by the sounds/letters: $b\text{--}o\text{--}o\text{--}k$. As you can see from the diagram above, there is a concept that English speakers call a *book*. French speakers, however, would refer to the same concept as *livre*. **Arbitrary**, according to Saussure, means ‘no natural or straightforward connection’ rather than ‘just something you like’. The fact that there is no inherent link means that things can and do change. Sometimes words change their meaning over time, or sometimes we need a signifier for a concept. In these cases, a new link may become established. For example, think of the word *gay* which has changed in meaning over the years. You can look it up in a dictionary. Fifty years ago, *gay* meant *bright* or *happy*. Now, the main association of *gay* is with homosexuality, although recently the term has acquired a new, more general but negative meaning in English: slang phrases such as *this is so gay*, for example, can mean *this is so stupid*. It is, of course, important to reflect on why the slang usage of the term expresses such negative meaning, but this consideration of language in its sociocultural and ideological context goes well beyond what Saussure had in mind.

Although the example of *book* and its French counterpart, *livre*, illustrates that there is no inherent reason for the association between any particular signifier and signified, individual speakers are not easily able to change these associations. This means that if a person sees or hears the word *book*, a particular concept is evoked and vice versa. **Sound images evoke concepts and concepts evoke sound images.** Signifier and signified are inextricably linked: the linguistic sign is indivisible. It is impossible to conceive of one without (at some level of consciousness) thinking of its signified.

**Activity**

Is the link between signifier and signified always arbitrary? It might help you to think of compound words such as blackbird, ice-cream, screwdriver, bookcase etc. How do we understand the relationship between signifier and signified of the complex sign?

**Activity**

A small set of words in languages may be onomatopoeic, words like ding-dong, tick-tock, bang, zing, swish and plop. Does this indicate that, in some cases, there does seem to be a connection between sound and word meaning?

**Activity**

Research languages such as American Sign Language (ASL) or British Sign Language (BSL). Does there seem to be a link between the signifier (in sign languages this will be hand shapes and movements) and what is signified?

Using the example of *book/livre*, we have made the point that in different languages there will be different signifiers for the same concept. Cultures will have different concepts which they will encode in their language, things that are relevant to a particular culture and world view (or ideology). For example, in the UK we might differentiate methods of transport into: *car, van, lorry, bus, motorbike, coach, train,*
plane and so on. Another culture may not need to do this because those distinctions are less important, or not relevant. There are two more points worth considering:

1. Linguistic signs are dependent on one another for meaning – the distinctions between them give them meaning. For example, coach is different from a motorbike.

2. Meaning is not always stable. If a new sign is introduced then the meaning can shift but not always in a predictable way. For example Ms was introduced into the address system in many English speaking countries to act as the equivalent of Mr (with no indication of marital status). But speakers continue to use Mrs and Miss, adding Ms to make a three-way distinction which, it can be argued, increases rather than decreases asymmetry. Ms is often perceived (in the UK at least) as indicating that the speaker is a feminist or divorced. In a consideration of examples such as this, language needs to be considered in relation to societal context: in this particular case the roles of women and men in any given society. These are not issues that Saussure was concerned with, but later approaches to analysing language, such as Feminist Stylistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, which are inspired in part by his thinking, have taken up issues such as these (see also Chapter 8).

**Activity**

Are you aware of the Ms/Mrs/Miss divide? What are your observations on how women refer to themselves? Do you consider the term Ms is as neutral as Mr? How would you refer to yourself when filling in forms, introducing yourself and so on? How do these titles in English compare to the titles used for women and men in other languages?

To summarise:

1. We have a linguistic sign, in which the associated concept and label is indivisible and invisible.
2. The choice of label for the concept is arbitrary.
3. The choice of concept we choose to label is also arbitrary.
4. The arbitrariness of both is invisible.

If we don’t think of our language as arbitrary but as natural, then it becomes a powerful tool which can affect our perceptions. Building on what we have outlined thus far, we can now take a look at another theory which also considers the way things are represented and how this affects our perception. This theory will move us closer to an analysis of language in its sociocultural context.

**The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**

Benjamin Lee Whorf was an anthropological linguist, but he was also employed as a chemical engineer in a fire insurance company, where he dealt with insurance claims. As is detailed in Holmes (2008, p.335), while at work, Whorf observed that certain labels for objects affected the way people thought about those objects and how they perceived things like danger. For example, gasoline drums, which no
longer had any petrol in them and were labelled empty, were often not considered to be dangerous (people would smoke near them and also throw their cigarette butts in them). In actual fact, they were much more dangerous because of the infl ammable vapours. If you have a car you will know that when you go to the petrol or filling station, you are prohibited from smoking or doing anything that might cause a spark and hence the risk of a fire to develop. As a result of Whorf’s observations and his work as an anthropologist he and his teacher, Edward Sapir, developed what is now known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. There are two forms, a strong version and a weak version.

**Strong form: the theory of linguistic determinism.** People from different cultures think differently because of differences in their language. Language determines the way we think or conceptualise our world.

**Weak form: the theory of linguistic relativity.** Different cultures encode their differing world perceptions in different ways. Thus, language reflects those different perceptions as relative and variable.

There have been a variety of experiments which aim to show how far the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis holds true. Holmes (2008) Chapter 13 refers to a range of examples from different cultures which try to test this. Holmes (2008, p.337) observes that most studies concerning shapes/colours and the differing ways certain cultures have of expressing these concepts support the weaker claim (linguistic relativity), which is that the categories you have in your language make it easier to make conceptual distinctions.

**Activity**

After reading Chapter 13 in Holmes (2008) summarise different factors which might be used in experiments designed to explore to what extent the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis holds true. What is your view on the relationship between language, thought and representation? Give reasons for your position.

You might also want to follow up on the work of Carol Cohn (1987). Cohn spent a year as a visiting scholar at an American university’s defence studies centre, so she could understand how nuclear defence intellectuals think in ways which could have extremely grave consequences. She found that the language and terminology this group used, supported the view that nuclear weapons were safe. It encoded their ideology. The defence intellectuals regarded nuclear power very positively. This was evident in the many euphemisms Cohn found that they used. When we use euphemistic words and expressions, we make something unpleasant sound less unpleasant. Cohn also drew attention to the many metaphors (representing one thing in terms of another), often sexual, that the group used. She concluded these sorts of abstract terms allowed the group to think in the way they did because it removed them from the terrible things that they were actually describing. As she spent more time with them she found that she started to use the group’s terminology and she started to think like them some of the time. Moreover, the learning process (being introduced to new terms; learning the language of the group) obscured the reality of war.
Activity

Read Cohn's article online: there is a reference to it in the further reading section. To what extent do you think that using figurative language (such as euphemisms or metaphors) can determine or at least influence a person's thinking?

We can explore the relationship between language, thought and representation further by considering whether societies perpetuate discrimination against certain groups through the use of language. We will investigate whether our use of particular language forms shapes or influences our way of thinking about women and men in society. To do this, we will now consider the concept of sexist language.

Sexist language

To begin with, then, what do we mean by ‘sexism’? The term refers to prejudice based on sex and is usually associated with discussion of the marginalisation or discrimination of women. When we refer to ‘sexist language’ we are concerned with exposing how language systematically reproduces gender stereotypes (see Pichler and Preece, 2011, p. 92). But can we describe a language or words and phrases within a language as ‘sexist’? Or are we referring to the speakers of those words? To consider this idea, think about these two words:

*bachelor*

*spinster*

On the one hand, we could say that each describe a similar state of being (someone who isn't married or in a relationship), except that one describes a man (bachelor) and the other describes a woman (spinster). The connotations (or associations), however, attached to each term are somewhat different. The term for a male (bachelor) comes with connotations (or associations) of being single, going out and having fun, whereas the term for a female (spinster) has associations attached to it of an older woman who failed to marry and lives alone, perhaps with her cats.

Sometimes we describe women and men by referring to animals or food. Consider these examples:

*bitch; old biddy; cow; chick; bird; wolf; stud*

*sugar; honey; tart; crumpet; six pack; beefcake*

Apart from the fact that there seem to be more terms to describe women, and far fewer that are only for men, those that do describe women are quite insulting, and there is frequently a sexual meaning associated with them. Hines (1999, p.150) charts how *tart* first meant small pie or pastry and then its meaning extended to express affection. Next it was used to talk about a sexually desirable woman and now the term can be used to refer to a prostitute. Considering language in this way enables us to see the *asymmetry* or unequal power relations expressed in the way that we use it.
Activity
Here are some more sets of words. Are they symmetrical (equal) terms or is there some asymmetry attached to them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Term</th>
<th>Female Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ram/ewe</td>
<td>stallion/mare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>king/queen</td>
<td>courtier/courtesan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master/mistress</td>
<td>sir/madam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>priest/priestess</td>
<td>god/madam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man/woman</td>
<td>bachelor/spinster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boy/girl</td>
<td>lord/lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>governor/governess</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are some terms which we can describe as symmetrical or equal when referring to males and females. Take for example: ram/ewe; stallion/mare; man/woman; boy/girl. There is one term for each gender and they mean the same, the only difference being gender. What about the others? The terms do not match. The female term is not of a similar status to that of male term and there is often a sexual connotation attached. There seems to be a pattern of what is referred to as semantic derogation (see Schulz, 1990). This is the process by which words acquire certain connotations and start to mean something different from previously. We could say that some terms referring to women have undergone pejoration (they have undergone devaluation over time). Note that the word wizard has actually undergone semantic amelioration, the opposite process, where a male-referring term develops more positive connotations (see Romaine, 2000, p.112). You might also like to argue that the terms boy/girl are not in fact equal, because the term girl can be used almost as an abuse term (for example ‘Don’t be such a girl!’).

Activity
Here is a riddle. Can you solve it? Who is the surgeon?

A father and his son were seriously injured in a car accident. On the way to hospital in the ambulance the father died. The boy was taken to the emergency operating room and the surgeon was called. On seeing the boy, however, the surgeon said, I can't operate on this boy. He's my son (Freeborn et al., 1993, p.251).

Did you assume the surgeon was male? When we are not given the sex of a person, only their occupation, it is common to assume that they are the sex that is usually associated with that particular occupation. When the person is of the sex not usually associated with a particular occupation we often mark it in some way. Thus, we can refer to two categories:

**Unmarked:** this is the norm, that which goes unnoticed.

**Marked:** this is the noticeable version, it is unusual and deviates from the norm.

Activity
Which sex is more usually linked to each of these occupations? Or, in other words, is it the female form of the term that is marked linguistically or the male form?

waiter; steward; actor; manager; doctor; soldier; fire fighter; nurse; secretary; model
Activity

Now consider what kind of linguistic marking is used. For example, does the marked form carry a suffix such as ‘ette’ or ‘ess’, or is the noun preceded by an adjective such as ‘male’ or ‘female’?

Activity

What does the term ‘ladette’ refer to and how has it been constructed? How does it compare to the American term ‘tomboy’?

For a further discussion of marked and unmarked terms and to answer some of the above questions refer to Pichler and Preece (2011).

Generic terms

The use of generic terms concerns the way in which references such as man and he are used when what is being talked or written about includes both women and men.

Activity

Read the following and comment on it:

Mountainland ecosystems are fragile, and particularly vulnerable to the influence of man and his introduced animals...Life in the mountains is harsh. Storms are common, and temperatures are low...Into this scene comes man, with his great boots, ready to love the mountains to death. Man loves to hunt. He sees it as a tradition and a right. He believes that deer herds should be managed so he and his son after him, can hunt them. He cannot understand his brother’s claim, that deer diminish the range of plants. After all his brother couldn’t name a single plant that deer had made extinct.

(From ‘Mountain Management’, quoted in Holmes, 2008, p.319)

Activity

Do you agree with the view that using ‘generic’ terms (such as ‘man’ and ‘he’) marginalise women or do you think it is simply a necessary strategy for referring to humans, both male and female?

There are different strategies used by writers who feel it is inappropriate to use ‘generic he’. Sometimes he and she are used alternately or perhaps she is used in an effort to redress the balance because he has been used so much in the past. Other strategies used in writing involve pluralising subject nouns, using the innovative s/he, and using singular they (see Holmes, 2008, pp.320–21). This latter strategy is controversial because prescriptivists insist that they is plural, but they is regularly used as a singular pronoun in everyday speech and is also used in writing by eminent writers (for example, Shakespeare!).

Further examples of sexist language use

There are many other examples of sexist language that have been identified by scholars and researchers, for instance the way we personify objects such as cars and boats, referring to them as if they were female. In addition, it is worth thinking about what Mills (2008,
p.124) refers to as ‘indirect sexism’. Mills (2008) argues that there are fewer examples today of overt sexism than there used to be. No doubt increasing legislation outlawing sex discrimination has played its part in reducing this. There is, however, a substantial amount of indirect sexism and this takes several forms which she discusses in Chapter 5 of her book. One is the type of sexism that can often be found in jokes such as those where the humour rests on stereotypical behaviour associated with women, or with men, for example, that women are principally concerned with what they are wearing, shopping or with nagging men, whereas men are preoccupied mainly with thinking about sex.

**Activity**

Do you think there is less overt sexism than used to be the case in the language(s) that you speak? Do you think by suggesting that sexist jokes are problematic and that they reproduce sexist ideologies about women, this is going too far? You may want to compare the situation in (British) English with other languages you are familiar with.

We can also consider sexism in discourse. This is the way in which particular ways of thinking are perpetuated by language use that we encounter in our everyday lives. Examples of sexism in discourse include the way in which women’s clothes and their appearance are described in media reports to a much greater extent than those of men, or the fact that we are frequently told more information about the status (that is, single, married, family) of female business women. Despite the fact that no sexist words are actually used, we can argue that these ways of representing women are still problematic because they form **gendered discourses**; that is, ways of speaking and thinking which reflect and affect ideologies about roles typically associated with each gender.

**Activity**

Read the first part of Chapter 5 of Pichler and Preece (2011, pp.99–101). Select some texts, perhaps from newspapers, magazines, leaflets, brochures, on the television or from the internet. Examine if and how gender stereotypes are being perpetuated in the examples you have chosen. Can you suggest ways in which we could avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes?

**Learning outcomes**

After working through this chapter, and having done a substantial amount of reading on the topic as well as the activities, you should be able to:

- discuss the ways in which language, thought and representation are linked
- explain the work of the main theorists associated with these processes (Saussure and Sapir-Whorf)
- critically discuss and evaluate these theories in relation to the research that has been done involving them
- describe the relationship between sexist attitudes and language use.
Sample examination questions

1. Discuss the relationship between language, thought and reality, drawing on examples and research evidence to support your answer.

2. Is the English language sexist? Draw on research and examples to support your discussion.

3. Critically discuss what has become known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, giving examples to support your argument.

4. To what extent do you think eliminating sexist terminology from a language will alter views and perceptions towards women and men? Draw on examples to support your discussion.

5. Look at some articles about women in a men's magazine and some advertisements of women's beauty or sanitary hygiene products in women's magazines. Then consider if and in what ways any of the language used is sexist and/or draws on gendered discourses.
Chapter 8: Approaches to analysing written texts: focus on politics

Essential reading


Further reading


Other works cited


In this chapter we consider some more ways in which you might approach discourse analysis. Once you have learnt a few basic strategies, the types of texts you can analyse, both written and spoken, are almost limitless, bound only by your enthusiasm and your interests. Many students are interested in print media texts of one kind or another; for example, newspapers, advertisements or magazines. Another possibility could be a literary text or, if you are interested in institutional settings, those texts produced by large organisations or by workplaces. A further idea is political material such as political party manifestos or other publicity related to politics. In short, there are lots of possibilities and we can only consider a small selection in this chapter, focusing mainly on examples from the language of politics. Your task will be to extend your knowledge further by reading more on the concepts and terms introduced, and applying them to as many texts as you are interested in. As is often the case, the more you try out and apply what you have learnt, the better you will become at doing it. In the final section of this chapter, we draw your attention to an approach for textual analysis called Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Many analysts following this approach use the tools we will outline in this chapter in their work. To begin with, however, we will start by considering some rhetorical or persuasive strategies, because these are used in many text types in order to convince audiences of particular points of view.
The art of rhetoric, or persuasive speaking and writing

Politicians use many rhetorical devices, knowingly or unknowingly, when they speak (and in their writing too). Cockcroft and Cockcroft (2005, p.3) refer to rhetoric as the ‘art of persuasive discourse’. The word ‘rhetoric’ comes from Greek. As Beard (2000, pp.35–36) summarises, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC) wrote a great deal about rhetoric, believing it to be a very important skill. The term is often used today in connection with formal public speaking skills. In addition, it is also sometimes the case that the ability to argue, debate or speak persuasively is considered as more important than the actual beliefs a person holds. What we’re going to do is to look at some common persuasive devices and rhetorical strategies and to consider examples of how politicians use them in the language that they choose.

Activity

Here are some examples of rhetoric: advertisements, politicians’ speeches, love letters. Although these texts are quite different, what is their common denominator? What other texts can you think of?

Aristotle classified the way in which people are persuaded into three strategies:

- **Ethos**: Persuading people on the grounds of character or reputation. This is successful according to how credible we believe the speaker or writer to be. Do they deserve our respect and do they know what they are talking or writing about?

- **Pathos**: Persuading people by engaging with their emotions. Advertisements or charity appeals are examples of texts which frequently use this strategy.

- **Logos**: Persuading people using logic and reasoning. Institutional documents or academic works are often structured in this way.

Cockcroft and Cockcroft (2005, p.4) describe these strategies as:

- persuasion through personality and stance
- persuasion through the arousal of emotion
- persuasion through reasoning.

It is worth noting, however, that the strategies are not mutually exclusive: you may find evidence of more than one in any particular text, but it is often the case that one may be predominant. Consider, for example, a type of magazine advertisement which is commonly found in UK women’s magazines today where a celebrity is advertising a beauty product such as some anti-ageing skin cream. The advertisers will be using the celebrity’s reputation and character to advertise the product (ethos). In addition, they might also be appealing to the ideal of feminine beauty as something to aspire to (pathos). The advertisement may also mention scientific sounding terms in an effort to support the claims the advertisers are making for the product (logos).
Activity
Can you think of some other contexts where more than one rhetorical strategy might be used? Try to identify the strategies and give examples of what these could involve.

Rhetoric: some common devices
There are a great number of rhetorical devices which can be used in persuasive texts on either a visual or a verbal level (or both). In this section, we take a look at some of the most common ones, including metaphors, metonyms, three-part lists and contrastive pairs.

Metaphor
Broadly speaking, metaphor is concerned with describing something in a way that invokes a similarity between concepts. For example, if your friend comes back from a holiday and you ask them how it went and they reply ‘It was a nightmare’, you know they are not describing a bad dream they had but they are expressing the fact that they had an awful time on holiday. The qualities of a nightmare become transferred to the description of the holiday. To illustrate this further, we can consider the point that metaphors of war and sport are commonly used in politics as the following example shows:

The gloves came off in the Conservative leadership race yesterday as David Davis launched a thinly veiled attack on the appeal to ‘image politics’ of his chief rival, David Cameron (The Times, 10 October 2005).

Argument is frequently expressed or experienced as war or as a battle:

- He attacked every weak point in my argument.
- I’ve never won an argument with him.
- If you use that strategy he’ll wipe you out.

(Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.4.)

Lakoff and Johnson’s book, Metaphors We Live By (1980) is widely regarded as seminal. We reproduce below an extract from it where they discuss the importance of metaphor. This is followed by some observations by Lakoff about the first Gulf War in 1991:

… metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central defining role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.

(Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.3)
Metaphors can kill. The discourse over whether to go to war in the gulf was a panorama of metaphor. Secretary of State Baker saw Saddam Hussein as ‘sitting on our economic lifeline.’ President Bush portrayed him as having a ‘stranglehold’ on our economy. General Schwarzkopf characterized the occupation of Kuwait as a ‘rape’ that was ongoing. The President said that the US was in the gulf to ‘protect freedom, protect our future, and protect the innocent,’ and that we had to ‘push Saddam Hussein back.’ Saddam Hussein was painted as a Hitler. It is vital, literally vital, to understand just what role metaphorical thought played in bringing us in this war.

(Lakoff, 1991, p.XX)

Activity

Try to sum up the first quotation by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in your own words. What do they mean when they say that ‘our ordinary conceptual system […] is fundamentally metaphorical in nature’ and ‘what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor’? Then try to think of other examples of ‘metaphors [that] can kill.’ You may want to look at a newspaper article or a speech about war.

Another closely related device to metaphor is metonymy. Metonymy, like metaphor, also involves a process of substitution, but instead of substituting one thing for another which is like it in some way, we substitute one thing for another thing that is associated with it in some way. Metonymy works by a process of contiguity (Chandler, 2007, p.129). The classic example, given by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.35), is one in which a waiter says to another waiter: ‘The ham sandwich is waiting for his check’ (‘check’ is the American term for ‘bill’). In this example, it is obvious that ‘ham sandwich’ is being substituted for the customer in the cafe who ordered a ham sandwich to eat. He/she is being referred to by something that is ‘part’ of him/her (as far as the two waiters are concerned anyway!). Here are some further examples of metonymy that are very commonly used:

- The White House: This stands for the US president and their government.
- Buckingham Palace: The building signifies the British monarchy.
- Downing Street: This refers to the British Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Activity

Can you think of another word that stands metonymically for the US Government?

Activity

Read the following extract from a transcript of an interview between Peter Usborne from the British newspaper the Independent and Melissa Block from NPR discussing the likelihood of a war in Iraq in March 2003 which was broadcast to a US audience. Can you pick out some examples of metonymy and metaphor in the extract? Can you think why these devices may have been used? Consider why metaphor and metonymy might be useful devices in times of conflict.
USBORNE: Tony Blair stands shoulder to shoulder with President Bush, has done all the way through, but he has always made it plain to the White House that he needs UN legitimacy for anything that he does, and every single public opinion poll since then has borne that out. And the only way that Tony Blair can sell it to his own audience is if it comes wrapped in the cloak of UN approval. Now it seems that as we go down this last kilometer of the path that that may not happen. 

BLOCK: How do you explain that the position of Prime Minister Tony Blair at home is so much more tenuous, perhaps than that of President Bush here? Opposition in both countries to this war is quite significant.

USBORNE: Yes, but I think it’s much more significant in all of Europe, not just in Britain. The sense over on the other side of the Atlantic is that America is rushing this unnecessarily, that we haven’t had clear evidence of all the things that Saddam Hussein is accused of, and indeed, that the repercussions of an invasion, however quick the war may be, could be very dangerous for the region. And after all, we’re closer to the Middle East than America is. So Tony Blair really faces quite dire political consequences. He is sitting fairly comfortably politically in the sense that there are no elections coming up, but there has been talk of challenges to his leadership of the Labour Party if he finds himself running to war with George Bush. He’s often accused of being George Bush’s poodle in this regard, and especially if things start going wrong for him.

Three-part lists

Atkinson (1984) cited by Beard (2000, p.38) draws attention to the fact that many political speeches involve lists of three. In your Essential reading this is referred to as ‘the rule of three’. But these lists of three are not only used in political speeches. Many people use them when speaking or writing because they sound ‘complete’. If you look back over some of your academic writing to date or make observations about your own or others’ speech in conversations you have, or that you listen to on television, you will see that they are very common. Here are some examples which you can find in Beard (2000):

- *Veni, vidi, vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered) (Julius Caesar).
- Education, education, education (Tony Blair, 1997).
- *Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few* (Winston Churchill, 1940).

It doesn’t have to be the same word that is repeated, as in these examples:

- Friends, comrades and fellow South Africans. I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all (Nelson Mandela, 1990).
- Government of the people, by the people, for the people (Abraham Lincoln, 1863).
**Activity**

Can you think of some more three-part lists? Draw on your knowledge of nursery rhymes, religion, jokes, song titles etc.

As Henriksen (2011, p.51) points out, the three-part list is not the only rhetorical device that relies on some type of repetitions. There are other kinds of parallelism that are frequently used in politics. One of them is the contrastive pair.

**Contrastive pairs (or antithesis)**

This is another very common strategy that politicians make use of. Beard (2000, p.39) shows us that while three part lists ‘go together’ or give a sense of completeness, contrastive pairs put elements in opposition while, at the same time, using repetition to complete the effect. The example he gives is a ‘classic’, making use of the first words uttered by Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, when he stepped out onto the lunar surface in July 1969:

‘One small step for man: one giant leap for mankind’

**Activity**

By dividing the utterance into two, can you make some observations about the repetition and contrast across it? It might help you to break it down in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>one</th>
<th>one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>small</td>
<td>giant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>step</td>
<td>leap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for man</td>
<td>for mankind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It might also help you to think about what Neil Armstrong was actually doing at the time and also the political and social background to the situation. Some of the utterance is literal and some of it describes situations metaphorically. It is also evident that the utterance is very ‘neat’ in its patterning (Beard, 2000, p.40) and it is therefore extremely unlikely to have been spontaneous.

**Other devices which can be identified in textual analysis**

There is a whole range of devices which may be relevant to the text analysis you are undertaking. We concentrate on a small selection, including presuppositions, implicatures, active/passive voice, modality, euphemisms and pronoun use, but you will find others as you read and research this area further. After you have completed your Essential reading, especially Chapter 3 ‘Language and Politics’ in Mooney et al. (2011), you can read a little more in depth by turning to Chapter 3 in Richardson (2007) or the work by Carter et al. (2008).

Most people would agree that people who become career politicians spend much of their time speaking and trying to persuade people that their way of thinking and their world view (their ideology) makes sense and will benefit other people; that is, you. They are therefore usually quite skilled at manipulating audiences and also at side-stepping or avoiding difficult issues. First of all, we are going to outline two tools which are commonly used in both advertising and political
discourse: presupposition and implicature. These two tools are very useful in various ways as we shall see. After that, we will look at some other strategies which are often relevant to an analysis.

Presupposition

Presuppositions are assumptions made by a speaker or writer which are not made explicit. So if a witness is asked in court: ‘Did you keep in touch with the defendant after the incident?’, the presupposition, embedded in the question (but not explicitly stated), is that the witness was in touch with the defendant before the incident. A key feature of presupposition is that the presupposition remains in place even when the utterance is negated. For example: ‘Clinton’s dishonesty was frowned on by the majority of Americans’. Even if you say ‘Clinton’s dishonesty was not frowned on by the majority of Americans’, the utterance presupposes (but doesn’t actually say) that Clinton is dishonest. (This example comes from Goatly, 2000, p.341.)

Presuppositions in interviewer questions can make it very difficult for a politician to answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to a question (see Beard, 2000, Unit 6). By answering ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, the politician may sometimes show him or herself to be agreeing with things they may not want to agree with.

Activity

Read the following extract, where the political news interviewer, Jonathan Dimbleby, was interviewing John Patten, then the Secretary of State for Education, on BBC television in the UK in 1993.

JONATHAN DIMBLEBY: Secretary of State, do you regret the impression that you’ve given of being somewhat arrogant and overbearing in your approach to your task?

JOHN PATTEN: I think one of the most important things in political life, like in private life, is to say those things you believe in. Now I can remember a year ago – when I was a minister of state in the Home Office, saying the sorts of things in the House of Commons that Tony Blair’s been saying recently, about the need to balance responsibilities with rights. I used to be howled down in the House of Commons by Labour then, it’s now become very fashionable, so by the same token I think when you come to a world of education which has been very much inward looking as though an educational establishment which has had a grip on education, it’s very important to bring it out into the open, make it a matter of public debate, and that’s what I’m determined to do, whether it’s over surplus places, truancy or whatever else.

Activity

What would have been the effect if Patten had said either ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to Dimbleby’s question? What does Patten try to do instead?

Implicature

Implicatures work in a similar way to presuppositions because the listener or reader may infer something which has not been said explicitly. The difference is that implicatures are more dependent
on shared knowledge and the context of the situation. Consider the following example:

**INTERVIEWER:** Will you condemn the violence on the picket lines?

**SCARGILL:** I condemn the violence of the police and the National Coal Board.

*(Quoted in Cameron, 2001, p.76)*

**Activity**

What could you infer from Scargill’s response? It may help you to know that this extract was part of an interview which occurred during the 1980s when there was a miners’ strike in the UK which was long and involved quite violent action between the miners and the police. Arthur Scargill was the leader of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Note: You should take note of the correct usage of *imply* and *infer*. They are commonly confused in English.

- **To imply**: this involves hinting, suggesting or conveying something using language. An implicature is made intentionally by a speaker/writer and it may or may not be understood by the hearer or reader.
- **To infer**: this involves deducing something from evidence (which might be linguistic, paralinguistic or non-linguistic). An inference is made by the hearer or reader (see Thomas, 1996, p.58).

**Modality**

Modality indicates a writer or speaker’s attitude or judgment and the degree to which they are committed to whatever is being written or said. Modality in English is often expressed by the use of modal verbs (for example, can, may, might, could, shall, should, will, must) or adverbs (certainly, probably). Consider the following example from the *Daily Mail*, 2005:

> Britain could suffer a Madrid-style terrorist attack in the run up to the Royal Wedding and General Election, the country’s most senior police officer warned yesterday.

*(Richardson, 2007, p.60)*

**Activity**

What is the effect of the modal claim in the extract? There is another verb in the extract which accentuates the sense of threat. Can you identify it?

**Active and passive sentence structures**

There are two voices in English: the active voice and the passive voice. Here is an example which illustrates this:

*The gunman shot the boy.*

This is an active sentence which emphasises the gunman and his actions.

*The boy was shot by the gunman.*

This is a passive sentence: the affected entity (the boy) is now in the subject position.
**Varieties of English**

_The boy was shot._

Using the passive voice allows us to delete the agent entirely.

**Activity**

By studying the example above, can you suggest why using the passive voice might be a useful device in newspaper reporting and politics?

**Activity**

Read the chapter by Tony Trew in Fowler et al. (1979). This gives an analysis of two newspaper reports of the same event and demonstrates how the active and passive voice highlights the attitude of the two newspapers towards the event.

**Euphemism**

When we use euphemistic expressions or words, we use a more pleasant or ‘nicer’ expression for something that is unpleasant or taboo. A good example of this is the way we speak about death in Western cultures. There are many euphemisms or ‘nice’ ways of expressing death.

**Activity**

Make a list of as many euphemistic expressions or ways of talking about death as you can think of. Then reflect on what you think the effects of describing death more ‘positively’ might be.

You might want to refer back to Chapter 7 where Carol Cohn’s article about the nuclear defence intellectuals and their ways of talking about nuclear weapons was discussed. Euphemism has become very common in relation to war and the military. By using terms such as ‘surgical strikes’ or ‘clean bombs’, the positive connotations of, for example, ‘surgical’ and ‘clean’ are emphasised, while what is actually happening (that people’s lives are being devastated, because they are being bombed and killed) is obscured.

**Pronouns**

Beard (2000, p.45) remarks that by choosing their pronouns carefully, politicians can show themselves as authoritative, they can take credit for the things people will like, and share the blame with others when they say things people will not like:

- ‘I’ can signal authority or allow the politician to take credit for the good things.
- ‘We’ can be used to refer to ‘all of us’; that is, the politician and the people he/she is talking or writing to. ‘We’ could also be used to refer to the politician plus his/her colleagues.
- ‘They’ can be used as a contrast with ‘we’ to signal those ‘we’ are not part of, perhaps ‘our’ enemies.
- ‘You’ can make it seem as if the reader or speaker is being personally addressed.

Here are some examples from speeches and manifestos.

- We will govern on behalf of the forgotten majority (Conservative Party Election Manifesto, 2005). (Note also the presupposition here.)
• We only get one life and our paths through it shouldn’t be planned out for us almost before we’ve begun (Green Party manifesto leaflet on education, 2005).

• We know the methods of this regime. They buy time with hollow promises. They move incriminating evidence to stay ahead of inspectors. They concede just enough to escape – to escape punishment, and then violate every pledge when the attention of the world is turned away (George W. Bush, on Saddam Hussein’s regime, 2 October 2002 www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021002-7.html)

• On Tuesday night I gave the order for British forces to take part in military action in Iraq (Tony Blair, Prime Minister’s Address to the Nation, 20 March 2003).

• You voted for change and gave me the chance to serve (Blair, election manifesto, 2005).

The strategies we have included are a small proportion of those you could consider when analysing political material. By doing some further research and reading the books we list in this chapter, you will be able to familiarise yourself and learn about these and others. This will enable you to try and analyse some political speeches or election campaign materials yourself. You will also be able to analyse other texts (perhaps some of the types of texts referred to in the introduction, such as articles in newspapers, advertisements or extracts from books) making use of these and other rhetorical strategies.

**Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Many analysts who engage in the type of analysis we have outlined in this chapter regard themselves as Critical Discourse Analysts or Critical linguists. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) describes an approach to text analysis (whether written or spoken) where analysts are particularly concerned with exposing how language constructs and maintains *power* relationships. Many CDA studies investigate social inequality and the ways it is expressed and how language is used to do this. Typical areas of research that CDA analysts have been concerned with are political discourse, advertising language, newspaper reporting, or medical textbooks. The aim and areas of interest of CDA is captured in the following quote.

> Discourse is a major instrument of power and control and Critical Discourse Analysts […] feel that it is […] part of their professional role to investigate, reveal and clarify how power and discriminatory value are inscribed and mediated through the linguistic system: Critical Discourse Analysis is essentially political in intent with its practitioners acting upon the world in order to transform it and thereby create a world where people are not discriminated against because of sex, colour, creed, age or social class.

*(Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard, 1996, pp. xi–xii: this chapter also provides a good overview of CDA)*

Discourse, according to CDA, is seen as language use that reflects and perpetuates ideologies in ways that are frequently not obvious to the
reader or listener. The range of rhetorical and other linguistic devices that we discussed above demonstrates how language can be used to project specific ideological stances. Frequently as readers we need to have a little experience to detect which of these linguistic tools are used and in what ways they are used, in order to be able to understand the hidden agendas of a text.

Activity

Read section 4.2 of ‘Language and the media’ by Anthea Irwin in Mooney et al. (2011). Irwin focuses especially on news coverage about asylum seekers. Read her chapter and then find other written media texts which capture this ‘threatening’ discourse of asylum which she describes (Irwin, 2011, p.71). When you analyse these newspaper articles think about how linguistic devices are used to convey ideological meanings. You may want to focus your analysis on pronoun use, on actives and passives, on implicatures, presuppositions and modality. You will certainly also discuss the meaning of individual words that have been chosen and the word choice itself. For example, ask yourself why the accommodation asylum seekers stay in is described as a ‘hotel’. Which other words could have been used and why do you think this choice has been made? (See also Chapter 7.)

There are several CDA approaches but Norman Fairclough’s approach is considered by many to be the most prominent. In this subject guide, we have drawn on Richardson’s (2007) work. He puts Fairclough’s model into practice in relation to newspaper language. We have also included Fairclough (2001) in the further reading. In addition, you can read Chapter 9 on CDA in Cameron (2001) or the section in Chapter 14 of Holmes (2008). Although these last two sources primarily focus on spoken discourse, they both provide clear and relevant summaries.

Activity

Read further on CDA in the texts we have mentioned. Compile a list of the linguistic strategies and devices that CDA focuses on. This list will contain several of the features that we have discussed above. Make sure you understand the definitions and applications of these features. Then consider the question whether you think CDA can be a successful tool in exposing the hidden agendas’ or opaque ideological meanings of texts.

In this chapter we have focused largely on written texts from politics and the media. Several of our examples, however, demonstrate that some of the tools we have introduced here can also be applied to the analysis of spoken language. Political speeches are, of course, delivered in speech but they are usually carefully planned in writing. These speeches are not the only example of texts that sit in between the written and the spoken. New media language, such as emails and, even more so, instant messaging, also draw on both written and spoken genres. When you approach the analysis of these texts you may well want to draw on the methodological and analytical tools that we have introduced in our chapters on written as well as on spoken language. For example, it may be interesting to consider turn-taking (Chapter 6) in instant messaging. Political interviews can also be analysed from a turn-taking as well as a Critical Discourse Analytic perspective. That is, frequently it is useful to use an eclectic approach to the analysis of texts which allows you to combine different foci and tools.
Learning outcomes

After working through this chapter, and having done a substantial amount of reading on the topic as well as the activities, you should be able to:

- discuss the importance of rhetorical strategies in persuasive texts, both written and spoken
- identify some of those strategies and apply your knowledge to an analysis of a range of texts
- understand Critical Discourse Analysis and apply it to a range of texts.

Sample examination questions

1. How can Critical Discourse Analysis expose the hidden, ideological meanings of texts? Your answer should introduce a range of linguistic devices and demonstrate how they can be used to analyse (chunks of) texts.

2. How would you approach the analysis of a political speech? In your discussion, demonstrate your understanding of concepts and tools of one or more approaches to discourse analysis.

3. Choose one genre of new media (such as texting or instant messaging) and discuss to what extent its characteristics are different from conventional media and to what extent they are the same.

4. Choose a political speech from the internet. Then analyse the rhetorical strategies which have been used in the speech. In addition to identifying those strategies, consider what effect they have on the text as a whole.
Appendix 1: Sample examination paper

Answer THREE questions (all three questions carry equal marks).
Candidates may NOT reproduce the same material in more than one
answer, in this examination or in any other Advanced Level Course
examination.

1. Discuss some of the historical and social factors that led to the
standardisation of English in the British Isles. What are some of the
positive consequences and some of the negative consequences of
standardising the language?

2. In what ways does social class interact with language? Draw on
evidence and research to support your discussion.

3. Discuss attitudes to standard and non-standard varieties of English
using examples to support your discussion.

4. Until relatively recently, pidgins and creoles were not thought of
as worthy of study. Examine why this might have been the case,
drawing on evidence and research to support your discussion.

5. Illustrate some of the features of both African American Vernacular
English and London Jamaican, and examine why these two
language varieties are considered to be so contentious.

6. Discuss some of the ways in which language is used by a person/
group to express their ethnic identity. Provide examples and refer
to research in this area.

7. Does language determine the way we think? You should draw on
theories and research, and illustrate your answer with examples.

8. Discuss the ways in which strategies such as euphemism are used
to describe distressing or controversial events and the effect this
may have on people's perception of those events. Your answer
should be informed by research in this area, but you should also
provide examples of your own to support your discussion.

9. Is the English language sexist? Illustrate your answer with
examples and, with reference to specific literature and scholarly
research, suggest some of the ways in which we can avoid
perpetuating stereotypes about men and women.

10. Critically discuss and compare the deficit, the dominance, the
difference and the social constructionist approaches to language
and gender research.

11. Examine some folklinguistic or stereotypical beliefs about the way
men and women speak and discuss to what extent the research
has shown these beliefs to hold true.

12. Compare and contrast the Ethnography of Speaking and
Interactional Sociolinguistics with Conversation Analysis. What
are the benefits and what are the drawbacks of using only one
approach or, alternatively, using more than one in combination in
an analysis of spoken interaction?
13. Identify the rhetorical strategies used in the speech in Appendix 2 by Kennedy. Analyse the way in which these strategies make the speech persuasive.

14. Analyse the attached transcript ‘It was a laugh man’ (Appendix 3). Use any method or approach that seems reasonable to you. You may use more than one approach, as long as it is made clear within your analysis that you are doing so and that you are able to apply theories to the data systematically.
Advice to candidates on how Examiners calculate marks

It is important that candidates recognise that in all papers, three questions should be answered in order to get the best possible mark (ensuring that the rubric for the paper has been followed accordingly).

Examiners follow a simple mathematical formula when awarding a final overall mark: they give each answer a mark out of 100 (up to three answers only, as required by the exam paper); they then total all available marks; and finally they divide the total by three, thus giving an average overall mark.

So, if your first answer is given 57%, your second answer is given 56%, and your third answer 50%, then the calculation will look like this:

\[ 57 + 56 + 50 = 163 \]
\[ 163 \div 3 = 54.3 \]

Overall mark: 54%

Two good essays and no third essay will always bring the mark down. So, if in the example above a third answer was not given, the calculation would look like this:

\[ 57 + 56 = 113 \]
\[ 113 \div 3 = 37.6 \]

Overall mark: 38%

In this case, even if the candidate had written a ‘poor’ third answer getting a mark of 40% their overall mark would be higher than not attempting an answer at all:

\[ 57 + 56 + 40 = 153 \]
\[ 153 \div 3 = 51 \]

Overall mark: 51%

Note in the example above how the 40% mark, while low, still enables the candidate to achieve an overall mark in the Lower Second category, which is in keeping with their first two marks of 57% and 56%. Not answering a third question would see the candidate lose considerable marks and drop two whole classes. It could also mean the difference between a pass and a fail.

Candidates are thus strongly advised to give equal attention across the paper, plan their time accordingly, and attempt to provide three answers of roughly the same length and as full as possible. Candidates are also reminded that it is totally unnecessary to copy out the question again into the answer book; a question number in the margin is sufficient enough, and this will also save valuable minutes.
Appendix 2


I am proud to come to this city as the guest of your distinguished Mayor, who has symbolized throughout the world the fighting spirit of West Berlin. And I am proud to visit the Federal Republic with your distinguished Chancellor who for so many years has committed Germany to democracy and freedom and progress, and to come here in the company of my fellow American, General Clay, who has been in this city during its great moments of crisis and will come again if ever needed.

Two thousand years ago the proudest boast was ‘civis Romanus sum.’ Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is ‘Ich bin ein Berliner.’

I appreciate my interpreter translating my German!

There are many people in the world who really don’t understand, or say they don’t, what is the great issue between the free world and the Communist world. Let them come to Berlin. There are some who say that communism is the wave of the future. Let them come to Berlin. And there are some who say in Europe and elsewhere we can work with the Communists. Let them come to Berlin. And there are even a few who say that it is true that communism is an evil system, but it permits us to make economic progress. Lass‘ sic nach Berlin kommen. Let them come to Berlin.

Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect, but we have never had to put a wall up to keep our people in, to prevent them from leaving us. I want to say, on behalf of my countrymen, who live many miles away on the other side of the Atlantic, who are far distant from you, that they take the greatest pride that they have been able to share with you, even from a distance, the story of the last 18 years. I know of no town, no city, that has been besieged for 18 years that still lives with the vitality and the force, and the hope and the determination of the city of West Berlin. While the wall is the most obvious and vivid demonstration of the failures of the Communist system, for all the world to see, we take no satisfaction in it, for it is, as your Mayor has said, an offense not only against history but an offense against humanity, separating families, dividing husbands and wives and brothers and sisters, and dividing a people who wish to be joined together.

What is true of this city is true of Germany—real, lasting peace in Europe can never be assured as long as one German out of four is denied the elementary right of free men, and that is to make a free choice. In 18 years of peace and good faith, this generation of Germans has earned the right to be free, including the right to unite their families and their nation in lasting peace, with good will to all people. You live in a defended island of freedom, but your life is part of the
main. So let me ask you, as I close, to lift your eyes beyond the dangers of today, to the hopes of tomorrow, beyond the freedom merely of this city of Berlin, or your country of Germany, to the advance of freedom everywhere, beyond the wall to the day of peace with justice, beyond yourselves and ourselves to all mankind.

Freedom is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free. When all are free, then we can look forward to that day when this city will be joined as one and this country and this great Continent of Europe in a peaceful and hopeful globe. When that day finally comes, as it will, the people of West Berlin can take sober satisfaction in the fact that they were in the front lines for almost two decades.

All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and, therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words ‘Ich bin ein Berliner!’
Appendix 3

From: 'It was a laugh man' (in Pichler, 2009, pp.111–12).

(1) Hennah can you remember all- (-) (but) she remembers it .hh

(2) Hennah (innit) all the time we (1) %bunked% {laughs}
Varda yeah I

(3) Hennah (remember xxxxxxx) Stratford we went Forest Gate
Varda (know xxxxxxxxxxx)

(4) Hennah yeah loads of places (man) .hh

[...]

(5) Ardiana we never got caught me I used to bunk off every time every

(6) Ardiana lesson Bengali::: [(Rahima and me)]
Rahima [yeah we used to hid] in (the) toilet

(7) Ardiana yeah we used to hid in the toilet=[do you know where
Rahima innit =[(we used to hide

(8) Ardiana where (our old)] do you know where Miller School Miller
Rahima in rooms]

(9) Ardiana Girl was) you know where the cafeteria is=
Rahima yeah =yeah we know=

(10) Ardiana we used to climb the tree and get over the walls but
(11) Ardiana [= since] since we got caught yeah (.) cause one of the Hennah [=oh my] God

(12) Ardiana caretakers saw us and we done a runner[laughing] (.) and Hennah *ya
*Bengali: “oh no”

(13) Ardiana (any)thing) yeah (.) that’s because (we’re so) after that ? (/hm)]

(14) Ardiana yeah they took the tree off cause no one could go away

(15) Ardiana then [and then we] were on report for two Hennah oh::: {laughs} [no wonder]

(16) Ardiana weeks (-) but still it was a laugh man Hennah (.) oh my God

Transcription key:

? identity of speaker not clear
[aughter] non verbal information
xxxxxxx[laughing] paralinguistic information qualifying underlined utterance
[.....] beginning/end of simultaneous speech
(xxxxxxxx) inaudible material
(……..) doubt about accuracy of transcription
’…….’ speaker quotes/uses words of others
CAPITALS increased volume
%......% decreased volume
bold print speaker emphasis
>...< faster speed of utterance deliver
/ rising intonation
yeah:::: lengthened sound
- incomplete word or utterance
~ speaker intentionally leaves utterance incomplete
= latching on (no gap between speakers’ utterances)
( ) micropause
( - pause shorter than one second
(1); (2) timed pauses (longer than one second)
.hhh; hhh in-breath; out-breath
*Bengali translation of Bengali or Sylheti *utterance* into English
Notes