

# SociolinguistEssex VI - 2001

## Abstracts

### Cherie Woolmer

#### Investigating the notion of the "collaborative floor" in all-female speech

The notion of the "collaborative floor" in women's speech was presented by Edelsky (in Coates, 1996). This theory views women's use of language as a co-operative process. The language features investigated in this small-scale investigation were motivated by Lakoff's (1975) analysis of "typically female features".

I concentrated on the following features: structure of topic; hedges and minimal responses; the telling of a story; joint constructions; and the role of laughter. This paper analyses a 90-minute sample of speech taken from a group of five female participants. The speakers were recorded during a meal, in which I was an active participant throughout. The women differ from one another in age, profession...and class. They also differ greatly in their social networks. Their friendships have been formed through their joint volunteering for a local Rape Crisis help-line.

The findings show that the two commonalities of gender and the solidarity gained from the help-line work appears to be very influential within the group. I conclude that these two commonalities are essential to the co-operative, sharing and supportive work that seems to go on in the language features used.

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  - 3) Eckert, P. & McConnell-Ginet, S. 1992a. *Communities of Practice: Where Language, Gender, and Power all live*. In Coates, J. 1998 *Language and Gender: A reader*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd
  - 4) Lakoff, 1975. References taken from course notes provided by Dr Al-Wer, 2000
  - 5) Yule, G. 1996. *Pragmatics*. OUP
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## Chryso Hadjidemetriou



### Self-initiated self-repairs and syntax-for-interaction: Evidence from Greek conversation

The paper aims at analysing self-initiated self-repairs in Greek conversation, in order to understand how syntax operates in conversation.

Repairs are characterised as instances in conversation where some kind of problem is encountered, like incorrect word selection, slips of the tongue, mis-hearings or misunderstandings. The speakers in order to correct the problematic sources in an utterance need to backtrack. The term 'repair' is preferred to 'correction' in order to stress the point that not all repairs are recyclings or corrections of problematic sources; in fact, there are repairs which are not actually repairing something that was produced wrongly.

The paper looks at how Greek speakers initiate repairs concerning instances of trouble source or otherwise. In particular, I'm interested in how much of the problematic utterance or the phrase is being recycled. If a word is to be repaired, I'm interested in seeing whether the whole NP is recycled in order for the noun to be repaired. So far, I have examples which exhibit full recycling of the phrase that is being repaired. I'm expecting to find such a pattern in my data, that is, when a speaker backtracks and recycles a part of the original utterance, this part is a phrase boundary. This is how repairs in English are organised according to syntactic constituents. It has been argued that the organisation of repairs in different languages is arranged according to the syntactic organisation of the language in question. I would like to see whether repairs in Greek are organised in the same way as repairs in English, even though, I believe that Greek repairs might be more flexible than English in following the syntactic structure of the language.

The data used for this paper comes from recorded conversations among friends. The transcribed data I have so far comes from three different recorded conversations, though more recordings will be used for the purposes of this paper.

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## Yun-Hsuan Kuo



### The development of Mandarin in Taiwan - Language contact or dialect contact?

Weinreich, U. (1953) proposed possible mechanisms of linguistic change when two languages are in contact. Trudgill, P. (1986) attempted to 'predict exactly what would occur when one dialect, with a given set of linguistic and demographic characteristics, comes into contact in a particular way with another dialect with different characteristics'. The former concentrates on language contact situations, whereas the latter focuses on dialect contact situations. The present research serves as a study of contact situations (both that of language & dialect) currently present in Taiwan. In particular, it focuses on the development of the transplanted Peking Mandarin via language planning in education and via language and dialect mixture situation. A predictable result of such mixture, following Trudgill, P. (1986), would lead to a new dialect formation, a new form of Mandarin (thereafter, 'Taiwan Mandarin'), different from Peking Mandarin. The present paper attempts to test this prediction, at the same time trying to clarify whether or not Taiwan Mandarin is a product of dialect mixture only or that of language mixture or both.

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## Michelle Kingston

### 'Still speaking the two spokes, bor?' Rural dialect attrition in the East Anglian County of Suffolk

Nowadays it seems that nobody speaks the way they used to anymore. There are countless examples of traditional British English dialects, both urban and rural, which are dying out, and people are more than ready to apportion blame for this. The research in hand examined motivations for and consequences of dialect attrition, considering especially the role of dialect contact in this process. More specifically, it sought to explore claims that the traditional rural dialect spoken in the East Anglian county of Suffolk was being eroded, and further to suggest possible reasons for this.

The Suffolk dialect was chosen as the subject of this research for several key reasons. although previous research (e.g. Ellis, 1889; Kökeritz, 1932; The SED, 1962) has considered aspects of the Suffolk dialect (such as phonology and syntax) this variety has not been analysed from a variationist or dialect contact perspective. Such an analysis would be valuable since Trudgill's work on the Norfolk dialect spoken in Norwich showed that in the last three decades East Anglian varieties have been changing, moving away from traditional structures and usages in favour of something else (Trudgill, 1974; 1983; 1986). His research suggested that the direction of change was towards features and forms characteristic of London English, and was due to increased contact between native London and native Norwich speakers. If features of London English have diffused to the most northern East Anglian county (note also that such diffusion is widely accepted to have occurred in the southern-most county, Essex) it seems reasonable to expect that such innovations might have reached Suffolk. This expectation is further rationalised by the fact that Kökeritz (1932:xviii-xiv) commented on the presence of cockney features in the (then) modern Suffolk dialect, and also by personal observation from a lifetime in the community studied.

Analysis of three variables (one of which is still in progress) confirms that though young speakers are no longer speaking in the same way as preceding generations dialect features are still discernable. There is also evidence to suggest that the new variety is not London English per se, but possibly a koine. These findings lead to the conclusion that though the Suffolk dialect is being eroded, a total shift is not likely in the immediate future.

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## Michelle Kingston, Dave Britain, Sue Fox & Sue Baker

### Rules are made to be broken: Some evidence for a Southern Subject Rule

Research on verbal -s in varieties of English across the world has long considered Murray's (1873) assertion of a Northern Subject Rule (NSR) governing -s marking on verbs (e.g. present tense marking; past tense of BE) to be an important linguistic constraint. The NSR consists of two parts: the NP/PRO constraint (concerned with subject type) and the Adjacency constraint (dealing with proximity of verb to subject). Stated simply, the NSR argues that verbs which have an NP subject are more likely to receive the suffix -s than are those with PRO subjects, whilst verbs which are not adjacent to their subjects will favour the suffix -s whilst those which are adjacent are less likely to. According to the NSR a non-adjacent verb with an NP subject is most likely to have the suffix -s regardless of concord agreement, whilst a verb which is adjacent to a PRO subject in the linear structure is least likely to receive such marking.

We present today, however, evidence which suggests that, in a number of dialects across the Southeast of England, not only is the NSR not operative but is in fact reversed with regard to marking and subject type. We have called this reversed constraint the Southern subject Rule (SSR), though as yet its geographical and social scope is unclear:

1. East Anglian varieties traditionally do not mark for person or number on present tense verbs: (e.g. John paint whenever he can; the nurse work hard). this zero-marking pattern, however, is being eroded, and 3rd person -s marking is creeping its way into these dialects. Research on the Suffolk dialect of the village of Glemsford (see Kingston 2000; forthcoming a & b) found that, in the present tense, -s marking on the verb was strongly favoured when a PRO subject was used whereas it was strongly disfavoured when the subject was an NP, reversing the expectations of the NSR.
2. Evidence suggests that East Anglian varieties may once have had were as a past tense of BE (he were; the cats were; he weren't; the cats weren't), regardless of person, number or polarity. change has been underway for well over a century, however, and a new system has been introduced in which was is used in clauses of positive polarity (he was; the cats was) and weren't in negative clauses (he weren't; the cats weren't). Evidence for the reversal of the NSR can be found in the use of past BE in three East Anglian dialects:
  - a) The Fens of West Norfolk, North Cambridgeshire and South Lincolnshire (Britain 2002): In this apparent time study we find: an eradication of NSR in 3rd person singular positive contexts (he/the boy was V he/the boy were); a reversal of NSR in 3rd person plural positive contexts (they/the nurses was V they/the nurses were); and, in the north-west, a shift from NSR to SSR in both singular and plural 3rd person negatives (he/the boy wasn't V he/ the boy weren't and they/the nurses wasn't V they/ the nurses weren't).
  - b) Basildon New Town: In this small scale study, the vernacular speech of 19 adolescents was analysed for variation in past BE. The results indicate that the NP/Pro constraint of the NSR does not apply in this location. In third person plural positive contexts, PRO subjects (they) are more likely to receive s-marking than NP subjects (the boys), further evidence of SSR.

c) Brentwood-Essex: - Here (Baker forthcoming), a group of active members of the Guide Association from Brentwood are analysed for variation in past BE. The data were collected during a number of different Guiding events and preliminary analysis also shows a reversal of NSR in 3rd person plural positive contexts (as in the Fens).

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## Sue Baker



### Quantitative analysis and Qualitative analysis: Can and should the twain ever meet?

Sociolinguistics is traditionally a field that has generally been divided between quantitative methodology and qualitative analysis. These two methodologies are normally regarded as being distinct and the consensus of opinion seems to be that researchers should work within one or other of the two camps, i.e. variation/dialectology or conversation analysis/discourse analysis.

My current study, which is work in progress, examines the speech of a single speaker in a variety of different settings and from this data I will attempt to explain patterns of individual linguistic variation using quantitative methodology. Once this initial analysis is completed I will then use qualitative methodology (and current CA theory) to identify certain patterns of interaction such as a) preferred/dispreferred responses, b) interaction following a change of state token and c) asymmetrical turns. These particular sections of data will then be analysed to ascertain whether patterns of phonological variation can be discerned in these particular speech acts.

Thus, this research will draw on both the methodology and theory of both quantitative and qualitative analysis showing that they can be used in conjunction with one another and are not mutually exclusive to their traditionally respective fields.

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## Jonathan Furaha Chai

### 'The Diviner has eaten...': Reflections from ethnographic field experiences among the Giriama of Kenya

This paper emanates from the data collection challenges I had to contend with in the just concluded fieldwork I undertook among the Giriama of Kenya.

In sharing my field experiences with others who may be preparing to go out for field work, I hope this paper will help them to put into sharper focus some of the basic assumptions that underlie ethnographic field work.

By way of introduction this paper outlines, in general the area of study, the objectives and justification of the study then zeros in on the methodology where the tools of data collection will be evaluated. More specifically, issues related to the ethnographic method of data collection arising from the fact that in observing people in situ (Jackson 1987: 7) the method entails more than merely knowing what to observe and how to record, analyse and present findings about a people.

The main thrust of the paper is a discussion of the ethnographic method of data collection focusing on the respondents, who they were and why they agreed to participate. The researcher as 'positioned subject' (Patrick 1999) how entry was gained and the specific roles that were filled in the course of the data collection exercise, the type of data envisaged and the moral and ethical considerations that cropped up during the process. In so doing, specific issues like gate keeping, informed consent will be discussed with examples from the field like why and when a diviner is not supposed to eat.

As Georges & Jones (1980) state ethnography with its numerous demands on the respondents create dilemmas, produces confrontations, demands clarification and compromises and evokes reflections and introspection that one can neither fully anticipate nor prepare for in advance. These reflections then, are the ones I set out to share in this paper.

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## Andromahi Koufogiorgou.

### Vlach Aromanian in Metsovo, Greece

This paper is based on my recent empirical research in the Greek village of Metsovo, whose population are originally speakers of Vlach-Aromanian, a Romance language of the Balkans. The main aim of the study is to provide a sociolinguistic investigation of Vlach-Aromanian as a case of language shift. Vlach is losing speakers. The younger generations speak it less frequently and less proficiently. It seems highly probable that it is heading towards total shift. But, my contribution is not so much to prove that Vlach is being shifted, rather to investigate the process and the reasons that lead to its loss.

The data were collected through sociolinguistic interviews (in the region of 8 hours of tape material), and questionnaires which were completed by 100 Vlach speakers. The data will be subjected to quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The paper will mainly provide a (fascinating) coverage of the sociolinguistic background of the community, and initial analyses of the major sociolinguistic dynamics, which affect the language.

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**Bashar Bouz Al-Jidy**

**The dilemma of identifying origins in borrowings in the case of language death research**

Some light will be shed on the problem of identifying the origins of lexical borrowings in general and in the case of language death studies in particular. A researcher might be faced with the problem when two languages in question are related or from the same family.