

# SociolinguistEssex XI - 2006

## Abstracts

Joanna Ryfa



### Chavs and Grungers: The Creation of Distinct Youth Speech Styles in Colchester

It is now widely known in sociolinguistic literature that in justifying variation one should reach beyond the well established demographic categories, such as social class, sex, ethnicity and age. In their pioneering works, Labov (1972), Cheshire (1982) and Eckert (2000) point to the need of observing social practises of informants in order to interpret their linguistic behaviour. The research explores the relationship between speaking habits of teenage boys and their affiliation with two distinct groups, which despite being normally defined as broader social categories in England, in Colchester, where the research takes place, constitute two Communities of Practice, with differing styles of living, activities and ambitions. Apart from stylising themselves by means of different clothing, jewellery, types of music they listen to, different, consciously used, body language, and occupying different places in the town, Chavs and Grungers in Colchester seem to be creating their own distinct speech styles. The research investigates the phonetic realisations of four vocalic variables, the vowels of FLEECE, FACE, PRICE and MOUTH, and seven consonantal variables, voiceless and non-initial voiced TH, intervocalic word-internal and intervocalic word-final T, final NG in the '-ing' ending, initial H, and syllabic, coda and clustered L. The data have been extracted from approximately 3 hours of impressionistically analysed spontaneous speech selected from over 10 hours of speech material recorded in the period between November 2004 and July 2005 and illustrate the speech of eight speakers, four Chavs and four Grungers. Apart from the linguistic analysis, ethnographic observation of both Grungers and Chavs took place in the period mentioned above. The results seem to strongly suggest that speech styles employed by the two communities of Practice differ both qualitatively and quantitatively with respect to all four vowels and the consonant H, but only quantitatively with respect to the remaining four consonants. Moreover, while the phonetic evidence suggests that Grungers speak a supraregional koine referred to by some linguistics and non-linguists as 'Estuary English', Chavs seem to be speaking a variety constituting a blend of local forms and features stereotypically associated with Cockney speakers. However, the findings are not surprising when socioeconomic conditions of the informants are taken into consideration. References Cheshire, Jenny. 1982. Linguistic variation and social function. In: Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski (eds). 1997; 185-198. Eckert, Penelope. 2000. Linguistic Variation as Social Practice. The Linguistic Construction Identity in Belten High. In: Language in society (27). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. Labov, William. 1972. Language in the Inner City. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

## Sue Fox



### A New Sociolinguistic Variable? An Investigation of Allomorphic Variation in the English Article System Among East London Adolescents

If the IPA symbols used in the abstract do not display on your screen, please click [here](#) to read the abstract - In most English grammar and English usage textbooks (e.g. Greenbaum, 1995; Swan, 1995) it is claimed that the pronunciation of both the definite and indefinite articles depends on whether the following segment is vocalic or consonantal.

Compare:

1) the car                    \D<< kA:\  
the ambulance        \Di: ðmjUl<<ns\

2) a sister  
   an aunty

These pre-vocalic allomorphs thus prevent hiatus between the two vowel sounds. However, it is not clear to what extent speakers in informal speech adhere to these 'rules' and evidence suggests that there are regional, ethnic, gender and age differences between dialects with respect to the use of this allomorphy. Although variation is very briefly mentioned in several dialect grammar texts (Shorrocks, 1999; Ojanen, 1982; Wagner, 2004), it has never been systematically analysed within the variationist paradigm. In this paper I analyse allomorphy in a large dataset of informal conversation among adolescents in East London, an urban multicultural area. The results indicate not only robust patterns of variation conditioned by social factors but also suggest that the hiatus between the two vowels is being resolved through the use of a glottal stop rather than the allomorphic pronunciations of \i:n\ or \Di:\.

## References

- Greenbaum, S. (1996) *Oxford English Grammar*, OUP, Oxford
- Ojanen, A. (1982) *A syntax of the Cambridgeshire dialect* Unpublished Licentiate dissertation, University of Helsinki.
- Shorrocks, G. (1999) *A grammar of the dialect of the Bolton area: Part 11 morphology and Syntax* Peter Lang, Frankfurt
- Swan, M. (1985) *Practical English Usage*, OUP, Oxford
- Wagner, S. (2004) 'English dialects in the southwest: Morphology and syntax' in Kortmann, B et al (Eds) *A Handbook of Varieties of English: Morphology and Syntax*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin p.154-174

## Claire Jones



### “I wouldn’t try to trick you...”: The use of ‘trick’ questions by police, in the UK, when interviewing suspects to make them appear self-contradictory

The main purpose of a police interview should be to gather information surrounding the alleged crime (Gudjonsson 1993). However, when it comes to interviewing suspects, all too often, police perceive the main goal of the interview to be the elicitation of a confession (Baldwin 1993). There is a wealth of research from a cross-section of disciplines such as forensic linguistics, psychology and sociology which supports such a claim.

The desire to secure a confession can be observed in the linguistic strategies used by interviewing officers such as, the form but more importantly the function of questions used; suggestions that if they confess “now rather than later” it will look better in court; the rejection of suspects’ responses which do not point to their own guilt and the use of ‘trick’ questions (Auburn et al 1995; Gibbons 1996).

This paper considers the use of ‘trick’ questions in a police setting and examines the factors which constitute a ‘trick’ question. Data taken from eighteen suspect interviews shows that the police do sometimes use trick questions and that they are designed to make the suspects’ narrative appear contradictory and untrustworthy. It also supports the assumption that the police still view confessions as the primary goal when interviewing.

## References

Auburn, T., Drake, S. & Williy, C. (1995) ‘You punched him, didn’t you?’: versions of violence in accusatory interviews *Discourse and Society*, 6(3) pp. 354-386

Baldwin, J. (1993) ‘Police interview techniques; establishing truth of proof’, *British Journal of Criminology* 33 3 325-352

Gibbons, J. (1996) ‘Distortions of the police interview process revealed by video-tape’ *Journal of Forensic Linguistics* 3(2), pp. 289-298

Gudjonsson, G. H. (1993) *The Psychology of Interrogations, Confessions and Testimony (reprinted version)* Chichester: John Wiley and Sons

## Eleftherios Kailoglou



### Style over Age? A Community of Practice Approach in Understanding Linguistic Differences between Two Groups in Athens

Traditional methods of sociolinguistic research present the fixed social categories of age, social class, ethnicity and gender as the main factors that influence someone's linguistic performance. The Community of Practice (CofP) model, introduced to sociolinguistic research by P. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), shifts the focus of sociolinguistic analysis from dialects to styles and, thus, from speaker categories to the construction of personae (Eckert 2000).

During my ongoing research in Athens, I compare two different groups of young people belonging to different subcultures, one mainstream and one non-mainstream. The main difference between the language used by the two groups consists mainly of the different degree they use a "bricolage" technique, as described by Hebdige (1979) and Eckert (2005), to construct their group identity and to signal their distinctiveness.

In this paper, I will focus on the comparison in the female speech expressed in both groups in order to show that, after all, it's not age that plays the major role in the production of salient linguistic features, but rather style. The girls from the mainstream group are 10 years younger than the ones from the non-mainstream. Despite the fact that one would expect the younger girls (in their early 20s) to use more divergent types, it is actually the older girls (in their early 30s) who use more salient figures, according to the stylistic norms of the group. Using the CofP model, I will discuss the way linguistic and social meanings are co-constructed in both cases and how this process explains the data.

## References

Eckert, Penelope and Sally McConnell-Ginet. 1992. Think Practically and Look Locally: Language and Gender as Community-Based Practice. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 21, 461-90.

Eckert, Penelope. 2000. *Linguistic variation as social practice*. Oxford: Blackwell

Eckert, Penelope. 2005. Variation, convention, and social meaning. Plenary talk. *Linguistic Society of America*. San Francisco.

Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Methuen 1979

Aziza Alessa

## Najdi Speakers in Hijaz: The Loss of Affrication

This paper is based on empirical research in the Hijazi city of Jeddah . The research aims to investigate the linguistic outcome of the contact between two major Arabic dialects: Najdi, a Bedouin dialect and Hijazi, a sedentary dialect. The linguistic situation under study is particularly interesting for two reasons. Firstly, although the immigration of Najdies to Hijazi cities such as Jeddah started more than sixty years ago, contact with Hijazi locals is mostly limited to formal encounters in the workplace, the market and schools. Secondly, Najdi and Hijazi dialects are distinct varieties of Arabic. Whereas Najdi Arabic (NA) is an Arabian dialect of Bedouin origin, the urban Hijazi dialect (HA) is the final product of a multitude of ethnicities that mixed with the indigenous Arabian locals in the melting pot of Hijaz.

In spite of the social conservatism of the Najdi community in Jeddah, the data show that the Najdi dialect has undergone various degrees of levelling and change. The changes correlate with the degree of social contact, and age. The more frequent and intense the level of contact, the more Hijazi features are detected in the speech of Najdi speakers. As the socialization patterns of Najdi inhabitants of Jeddah are changing and the rules of social restrictions are increasingly relaxed, these linguistic changes are found to be accelerating in the speech of younger informants.

Out of the 11 linguistic variables investigated in my study, in this paper I will discuss the affrication in Najdi Arabic as it is manifested in three linguistic variables: (g), stem (k) and the second person feminine suffix (-k).

Fadi Helani



### The Management of Topic Transition and Shift in Mundane Arabic Conversation

This study examines topic transition in mundane Arabic conversation, with particular focus on how invocation to Allah (i.e. God), assessments and topic-transition ancillary tokens are recognizable as topic closing techniques in conversation. The corpus of data in this paper will display instances in which participants orient to topic closings by proffering new topics to their talk. Topic shift is thus the achievement of all the parties to

the talk.

The topic-transition tools examined in this paper are resources for disjunctive topic shifts - this is unlike the stepwise transition of talk over different topics that speakers manage to issue throughout their conversation.

## Bukpa A. Bagamba



### Ecology and Socio-cultural Homeostasis as Determinant of Language Shift: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo

In his recent publications Nettle (1999) claimed to have discovered some intriguing relationship between the number of languages and the rainfall in West-Africa. In this regard, Nettle argued that communities living in low ecological risk territories can afford to speak languages that no other communities understand, whereas high ecological risk territories favour development of languages of wider communication, thus opening possibilities of language shift. In this regard, Nettle argued that the real difference between Papua New Guinea and West Africa regarding the number of languages is the amount of climatic variations that have to be faced.

Based on my study of language behaviour among the Hema of the DRC, I will demonstrate that the need for cooperation between people groups, which in turn may compel a community to change its traditional language behaviour is not solely determined by the need of a community to secure its food supply, but also, and most importantly, by the interplay between the cultural ecosystem of the community and the conditions of local ecology.

Lynn Landweer

## A Melanesian Perspective on Mechanisms of Language Maintenance and Shift: Case Studies from Papua New Guinea

The impact of classical classroom education on small languages is a topic of interest among those concerned with language endangerment.[1] Typically, education mediated by a dominant language sounds a death knell for the languages of minority speech communities. However, in the case of two small ethnic communities in Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea: the Gabobora (population 892) and Doga (population 257), this does not appear to be the case.

This paper focuses specifically on the language profiles of three generations of English educated individuals. Given the data provided, there is reasonable doubt that English mediated instruction on its own is a major contributor to the demise of languages within the Papua New Guinean. Instead it is suggested that English education in addition to other social and cultural mechanisms contribute to the differential status of languages on the endangerment continuum.

[1] Cf. Crystal (2000:136); Dalby (2002: 87-89, 110, 160-165); Dorian (1989:9); Mithun (1998:182); Romaine (1992b:20); and Schooling (1990:70).



## Dave Sayers



### Beyond the Speech Community - quotative 'be like' and the 'linguistic virtual collective'

In this paper, the concept of the speech community is evaluated in light of the diffusion of quotative be like in present day English, e.g. 'I was like, no way!'. This feature, presumed to be of Californian origin (Macaulay, 2001:3), has spread rapidly across the English speaking world, finding its way into British and Canadian English (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004; Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999), and Glaswegian English (Macaulay, 2001), among others. This has happened - especially in the British case - with relatively little actual interaction with Americans, but a disproportionately high level of media input from film, television, music and so on.

The problem for sociolinguistics is that in each case - despite a possible media influence - quotative be like is following what seem to be perfectly normal routes of diffusion across the speech community - through successive age and gender groups. In this sense it looks like a normal linguistic innovation; it just happens to be springing up in different places. This tends to overshadow the possible rôle of the media.

The question remains, however, of where exactly quotative be like came from in the first place; and this question is addressed with only speculation or presumption in Tagliamonte & D'Arcy (2004), Tagliamonte & Hudson (1999), and Macaulay (2001). By concentrating on interpersonal interaction, these analyses have no place for the media. Even so, Macaulay (2001:17-8) is drawn to speculate about its effect, especially in terms of American film.

I will argue that the media can still play a rôle, but a very different one to normal interpersonal interaction, and that this deserves a reappraisal of the concept of the speech community. The media, I will argue, occupies a space between otherwise fairly discrete speech communities, allowing the transmission of linguistic innovations between them. Those innovations can then diffuse across the speech community as per normal. This supra-speech-community language grouping, linked together predominantly by the media, I will call the 'linguistic imagined community'.

## References

Macaulay, R. (2001). 'You're Like 'Why Not?' - the Quotative Expressions of Glasgow Adolescents'. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5(1): 3-21.

Tagliamonte, S. and A. D'Arcy (2004). 'He's like, she's like: The quotative system in Canadian youth'. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 8/4:493-514.

Tagliamonte, S. and R. Hudson (1999). 'Be Like Et Al. Beyond America: The Quotative System in British and Canadian Youth'. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 3(2): 147-172.