Introduction

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1   The place of style in the study of variation

Style is a pivotal construct in the study of sociolinguistic variation. Stylistic variability in speech affords us the possibility of observing linguistic change in progress (Labov 1966). Moreover, since all individuals and social groups have stylistic repertoires, the styles in which they are recorded must be taken into account when comparing them (Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994:265). Finally, style is the locus of the individual's internalization of broader social distributions of variation (Eckert 2000).

In spite of the centrality of style, the concerted attention that has been paid to the relation of variation to social categorizations and configurations has not been equaled by any continuous focus on style. In other words, we have focused on the relation between variation and the speaker's place in the world, at the expense of the speaker's strategies with respect to this place. But as social theories of variation develop greater depth, they require a more sophisticated, integrative treatment of style that places variation within the wider range of linguistic practices with which speakers make social meaning. For this reason, the editors of this volume organized a two-day workshop on style at Stanford University in February 1996, funded by the National Science Foundation (no. SBR-9511724). Bringing together scholars who have worked on style in language from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, the workshop had the goal of stimulating discussions that would set new directions for future work on style in variation. This volume is a product of that workshop.

2   The history of the study of style in variation

The study of sociolinguistic variation is commonly characterized (Bell 1984:145, Finegan and Biber 1994:316) as involving three principal components: *linguistic* or internal constraints, *social* or inter-speaker constraints, and *stylistic* or intra-speaker constraints.

The study of *linguistic* constraints is the area in which the concerns of

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variationists articulate the most clearly with linguistic research in other areas, adding use data to intuited or experimental data, and bringing quantitative insights to an otherwise exclusively qualitative enterprise. The examination of linguistic constraints, both qualitative and quantitative, has been an active component of variationist work from the 1960s to the present. The quantitative study of large corpora of variable speech data has yielded detailed insights into several aspects of language, including constraints on variable speech output, sound change and syntactic change, the mechanisms of vowel shifts, and structural relations among regional dialects.

The study of *social* variation has also been continuous and productive over this period. The past thirty-five years have seen a flourishing of empirical studies of variation: studies not only in urban settings, but also in suburban and rural settings, in a range of societies outside the USA, and drawing on both survey and ethnographic methods. In these studies researchers have refined their understanding of the relation between variation and social parameters, including class, gender, ethnicity, social networks, identity, local categories, and ideology.

The study of *stylistic* variation, however, has been more uneven. The traditional delimitation of style in the variationist paradigm has been any intra-speaker variation that is not directly attributable to performance factors (in the strict sense) or to factors within the linguistic system. We will begin with this definition, partially to show that the next phase of stylistic studies will have to focus on the highly permeable boundaries among linguistic, social, and stylistic constraints.

William Labov's (1966) New York City study, which launched the current quantitative study of variation, gave central theoretical and methodological importance to style. This study established that stylistic variation constitutes a crucial nexus between the individual and the community – between the linguistic, the cognitive, and the social. Labov demonstrated that the use of sociolinguistic variables is socioeconomically stratified, and that each speaker's stylistic range covers a continuous subset of use within the socioeconomic matrix. Placing global prestige at the upper end of the socioeconomic hierarchy and global stigma at the lower, Labov characterized each speaker's stylistic continuum in relation to these two poles. He viewed the "prestigious" end of the speaker's range as the result of more formal, careful, speech, and the "stigmatized" end as the result of more casual, unmonitored speech. The speaker's stylistic activity, therefore, was directly connected to the speaker's place in, and strategies with respect to, the socioeconomic hierarchy.

While the notion of prestige plays an important role in Labov's work on style (e.g. 1972), it is attention paid to speech that he puts at the center of the theory, presumably because attention is the cognitive mechanism that

links social to linguistic factors. Fundamental to his work, then, is the notion of the speaker's vernacular – that speech that is most natural, that is prior to an overlay of correction, and that emerges when the speaker is not monitoring their speech. And it is in the vernacular that Labov expects to find the most natural speech and the best evidence of the processes of change. With this theorizing of style came a focus on field methods, making the manipulation of informants' style central to the process of data extraction. Labov designed the sociolinguistic interview to elicit as wide a range of a speaker's style as possible, from the most careful to the most casual speech. Fundamental to the interview is what Labov called the "observer's paradox" (Labov 1975) – that the vernacular the linguist wishes to observe is unlikely to be produced in the relatively formal context in which speakers interact with interviewers who are strangers. Labov sought to elicit a broader range of interviewees' styles primarily by manipulating the topic, on the assumption that some topics will focus interviewees on their speech while others will focus them away from it. While topic is the parameter that Labov most consciously controls in the interview, the need for such a strategy, the observer's paradox, stems from the fact that audience is a fundamental influence in stylistic production. Labov showed some early recognition of this (1966:101–4) insofar as he defined speech to family members and friends rather than the interviewer as potential casual speech contexts within the interview.

Stylistic variation emerged from the New York City study as among the most important constructs in the field. Yet despite its importance, style became less of a focus of empirical research from the 1970s onward, at least in the influential American quantitative tradition. This was partly because people questioned Labov's focus on attention paid to speech (Milroy 1987:172–83), partly because of the operational difficulty of separating casual speech from careful speech via interview contexts and channel cues (Wolfram 1969:58–9), and partly because researchers became absorbed in the study of the linguistic and social constraints on variation. (See Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994:238–9 for further discussion.)

Social psychological work in accommodation theory (Giles and Powesland 1975, Giles 1984, Giles, Coupland, and Coupland 1991) ran parallel for some time to efforts in variation, showing among other things the important influence on language style of the speaker's orientation and attitude to addressees. Some early variation studies explicitly explored the effect on variation of the addressee (Van den Broeck 1977, Baugh 1979, Hindle 1979, Rickford 1979, Coupland 1980) and of audience more generally (Bell 1977). Bell (1984) followed up these early studies with focused research that put audience at the center of stylistic production. Specifically, he argued that stylistic variation can be explained as a response to the

present audience: primarily the actual addressee, but also third persons (i.e. auditors and overhearers). He argued that the apparent influence of topic shift is actually due to the association of topics with audience types. Recognizing that not all stylistic shifts are obvious responses to present participants, he posited the effect of "referees" – absent reference groups – whose presence in the mind of the speaker could influence variability. This paper not only introduced a coherent view of style-shifting, it also integrated a wide range of previously disparate sociolinguistic findings, and posited a number of novel theoretical generalizations and testable predictions about the relation between social and stylistic variation.

In their (1994) paper on the relation between register and social dialect variation (first circulated in draft in 1990) Finegan and Biber credited Bell with explaining the parallel relation between stylistic and social variation, but not the internal systematicity of each category (why consonant cluster simplification *de*creases as formality *in*creases, for instance). Their own explanation for this systematicity was a functional one, which argued (p. 339) that "Social dialect variation . . . depends upon register variation, and register variation is largely shaped by communicative constraints inherent in particular situations." Where Bell focused on audience, Finegan and Biber focused on the broader *situation*, and sought to establish a link from the variables themselves to the situations in which they are used and finally to the socioeconomic hierarchy. They began with the argument that socially stratified variables tend to involve some kind of reduction or simplification, and that complexity of linguistic form correlates with socioeconomic status. They argue that more complex linguistic forms are called for in more "literate" situations, as a function both of the tasks being undertaken in these situations and of a relative lack of shared context. They then attribute the social stratification of language use to the stratification of access to these situation types.

With Coupland (1980), we come full circle, with a focus on the speakers themselves. Introducing an emphasis on the "identity dimensions" of style, Coupland treats stylistic variation as a dynamic presentation of the self. For this reason, rather than focusing on the cumulative use of variables by speakers or groups of speakers, he focuses on the strategic use of variables in discourse. This emphasis also led him to approach the selection of variables differently. Because of the structural focus in the field of variation, variables have been customarily selected not so much on the basis of their apparent social significance as on the basis of their interest to the study of linguistic structure and change. Coupland's focus on the speaker's identity led him to take seriously the participants' perceptions of style, and to argue that the tendency to focus on individual variables abstracts away from what speakers themselves perceive as style.

This emphasis on style as a set of co-occurring variables that are associated with the speaker's own persona was a major departure from the studies of style that preceded, and is becoming increasingly important in the study of variation. Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994:263–5) and Rickford and Rickford (2000:128) have raised the issue of performativity in style, suggesting that variability can play a role in the performance of the speaker's own social affiliations and identity. The California Style Collective (1993) and Eckert (2000) have explored the role of variation in the active construction of personal and group styles, viewing individual variables as resources that can be put to work in constructing new personae.

Some of these explorations are part of a movement in the field of variation away from the purely structural models of society that formed the original basis of variation theory, into a view of variation as social practice. An emerging focus on agency is bringing researchers to examine variation as part of a process of construction of identities and social meaning (California Style Collective 1993, Bucholtz 1996, Eckert 2000), and to view variation in terms of relations of linguistic production (Bourdieu 1982) rather than simply in terms of appropriateness to "social address" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992).

These explorations remain in the early stages, and are bringing variation studies into synch with work in anthropology. Roughly the same decades that have seen the development of modern variation theory have also seen the development of the anthropological study of communicative competence and the ethnography of speaking (e.g. Hymes 1964, 1972, Bauman and Sherzer 1974, Heath 1983, Briggs 1988). Researchers working on these topics, focusing on verbal performance, have developed perspectives on linguistic practice that are quite crucial and complementary to the explorations of style that have been developing in the field of variation. While in earlier years there was considerable interaction between people studying variation and people studying the ethnography of speaking, as variation emerged as a field in itself, this interaction dwindled. As a result, there has been little integration between the study of variation and the study of verbal genres as pursued in folklore and the ethnography of speaking.

The models of style discussed above that have arisen in the study of variation are not contradictory or mutually exclusive. One might think that, for example, Labov's view of style as a function of attention paid to speech is irreconcilable with the view of the use of variables in terms of "identity performances." A resolution between the views, however, may well lie in an examination of differences among variables, and also of the interaction among variants of a single variable, and of the situated use of variation.

As this volume will show, the very definition of style must expand. While the division into internal, social, and stylistic constraints has been heuristically important, as work progresses in the field, the areas of overlap are becoming increasingly interesting. It will become apparent in this volume that the division between social and stylistic constraints is a fine and highly permeable one indeed. Specifically, earlier models have viewed social categories and identities as given, and stylistic variation as the speaker's way of navigating with respect to the social. As we move toward viewing social life as a continual process of constructing these very categories and identities, style becomes in addition a resource for the process of construction. The view of variation is expanding, therefore, from marking categories to constituting a more fluid landscape of meaning; from a view of language as reflecting the social to a view of language as also creating the social.

We begin this volume with papers by the anthropologists Judith Irvine and Richard Bauman, with the purpose of setting a broader context for the study of stylistic variation. The variation papers follow, in roughly the chronological order of the development of the frameworks that they represent. The featured papers are followed by commentaries by people who have been engaged in related stylistic work.

3   Anthropological approaches to style

Judith Irvine's cross-cultural, ethnographic work on formality (1979) and status and style (1985) has directly addressed issues relevant to variationists, although the variationist literature has rarely taken it into consideration. Her chapter in this volume, "Style as distinctiveness: the culture and ideology of linguistic differentiation" (chapter 1), continues to bring the anthropological perspective to the study of variation. She begins by reminding us that style in language, as in other areas of everyday life, is essentially about *distinctiveness* within a system of possibilities, and that we need to explore the contrasts and boundaries among alternatives to appreciate their full significance.

Irvine's conception of style as a "social semiosis of distinctiveness" crucially involves attention to the language ideologies of native speakers and the principles of differentiation which "link language differences with social meanings." In particular, she identifies three semiotic processes – *iconization*, *recursivity*, and *erasure* – which have emerged from her joint work with Susan Gal (e.g. Gal and Irvine 1997), and she goes on to define and exemplify them with analyses of stylistic variation in a rural Wolof community in Senegal and a Hungarian/German speaking community in Southern Hungary. Although she is careful to emphasize that "language ideologies are to be investigated independently of the distribution of

observable sociolinguistic facts, not as a substitute for them," it is clear that understanding them allows us to appreciate the workings of style in ways that might otherwise escape us.

Finally, Irvine's paper includes a useful discussion of the distinctions between *register*, *dialect,* and *style*. She suggests that although register (variety defined according to use) might in theory imply differentiation within a set more readily than dialect, the distinction is not as useful in practice, since speakers are often aware of a range of user-differentiated varieties, and dialects and registers are closely connected. (Indeed, aware-ness of social distinctions is a fundamental part of Bell's 1984 model of how styles come to be differentiated and deployed according to audience.) For Irvine, style is essentially a superordinate category which emphasizes processes of linguistic (as well as non-linguistic) distinction in general, while register is restricted more to relatively stable, often named, varieties like "sports announcer talk" within the larger category.

Susan Ervin-Tripp, well known in the study of style for her (1972) exten-sion of the linguistic notions of "alternation" and "co-occurrence" to include different "ways of speaking," provides a commentary on Irvine's paper which extends its framework to include monolingual as well as multi-lingual situations (chapter 2). She suggests that Irvine's appeal to language ideologies is relevant to the acquisition of more than one language variety as well as its display in switching between codes or styles. She likens style-shifting within a single language using dialect features to code-switching between different languages insofar as both can be affected by changes in addressee and speech conditions, and both can be used to effect rhetorical shifts, to get attention, persuade, elaborate, personalize, mark identity, and perform a variety of other functions. One difference is that dialectal style-shifts are potentially accessible to a larger audience, since intelligibility is not usually an issue. Another is that co-occurrence restrictions are laxer, although speakers are very sensitive to shifts in the probabilities or frequen-cies of occurrence of specific features.

Most of Ervin-Tripp's paper is taken up with a detailed analysis of rhe-torical shifting in recordings of two Black political leaders: Stokely Carmichael and Dick Gregory. The analysis of Carmichael is briefer, focus-ing on the use of one prosodic, one vowel height/length, and one lexical feature to rouse the audience at a Black Power rally in Oakland. The analy-sis of Gregory's speech is longer and more detailed, revealing the come-dian/writer/politician's strategic use of phonological and morphosyntactic features of AAVE (African-American Vernacular English) and Standard English to incite, parody, amuse, and/or provoke serious political reflection. Her larger point is that Gregory's deft code-shifting exploits socially estab-lished ideologies about the relationship between speech styles and different

social groups: Whites versus Blacks, old versus young, rioters versus sophisticated consumers and protesters, American colonists versus the British, and so on. The recurrent iconization of which Irvine speaks is not simple, but complex, revealed in the successive realigning of potential contrasts in Gregory's unfolding talk.

Richard Bauman's chapter (3) brings new insights from his work on genre and poetics (Bauman 1977, Briggs and Bauman 1992) to the understanding of how variation takes on social meaning. The papers that follow Bauman's in this volume focus on style as a function of situation, of speaker, of hearer, of text type – but always one at a time. As Bauman presents his analysis of market calls in San Miguel de Allende, he foregrounds the inseparability of speech styles, texts, situational contexts, and social categories.

Bauman's analysis of market sales genres focuses on "calls" and "spiels," genres that one could say have become thoroughly reified in the community. These have clear formal properties, and are used for the hawking of everyday items. Within the landscape of calls, Bauman argues, there is emerging a new genre called the "pitch," which builds on and elaborates properties of the simpler genre to produce a more elaborate genre appropriate to the hawking of luxury items. In other words, the currently existing genres present a discursive landscape within which new genres can develop and take on meaning.

Variationists have looked to discourse as a way to contextualize variation. An obvious relation between work on genre and work on variation lies in the potential for genre to define the situations within which variables are deployed, to circumscribe style and to establish stylistic equivalence. Labov's paper in this volume seeks to establish some kind of situational/interactional equivalence within which the differential use of variants can be said to reflect speaker differences. Genre, thus, is viewed as isolable and stable. Bauman's paper, however, focuses on genre as emerging, varying, and changing in practice. Rather than viewing genre as imposing constraint, he presents genre as the result of strategy, a reification to which community members can orient themselves in making meaning. Some genres are more reified than others, and the degree and nature of this reification leaves room for speaker and audience both to use convention and to change it. Bauman's paper thus embodies a shift of perspective from schema for the categorization of text to framework for the production and interpretation of text. He defines genre in terms of its affordances for change in discursive practice.

Most importantly for the variationist, this discursive practice is not abstracted from the day-to-day use of variation, but is a key element in the construction of social meaning in variation. Bauman points out that these texts are tied to a recurrent context, the market, to a category or categories of speakers, the hawkers. The subgenres, furthermore, are associated with

different classes of wares, weaving ever more subtle social meaning into the styles. Bauman argues that as children grow up, hearing these calls must be an integral part of their sociolinguistic development. These calls fore-ground linguistic form, providing a stage for the performance of unusual linguistic variants, which is in turn enhanced by the poetic structuring of the calls – the lexical repetition and the phonological parallelism.

Ronald Macaulay's commentary on Bauman's chapter points out early on a theme that emerges in several of the papers in this volume, and that is at the heart of the problem of style (chapter 4). That is, while studies of variation focus on those variables that are relatively easy to define, measure and quantify, these variables exist in a much broader stylistic landscape that so far has not been subject to compatible treatment. Macaulay observes that the wider field of variables that characterize registers and genres may well be more interesting than classic sociolinguistic variables ". . . if we can find a way to deal with them." For this reason, much of Macaulay's com-mentary focuses on problems with the operationalization of the notion of genre, and particularly on problems of identifying genres and assigning lin-guistic features to them.

Observing that the market genres in Bauman's analysis form a contin-uum from categories that are clearly shared by analysts and speakers alike (calls) to those that may at this point only be an analyst's category (sales-talks), he raises the issue of whether the speakers of San Miguel de Allende actually share Bauman's view of the discursive landscape, and how far the analyst can go in breaking genres down into subgenres, or grouping them into macro-genres. He goes on to point out similar problems elsewhere, most notably in the case of narrative, which is a fundamental genre for the analysis of variation yet quite variably defined across the literature.

4   Attention paid to speech

The first four sections of **William Labov's** chapter (5) emphasize the impor-tance of stylistic variation to the understanding of language change, opposing the study of style-shifting in naturalistic contexts to its study within the sociolinguistic interview, and defending the value of the latter. Labov argues that both audience design and audio-monitoring (attention paid to speech) are factors in style-shifting, and recaps key findings in the study of style over the past two decades. For him, the central problem in stylistic analysis is separating casual and careful speech within the sponta-neous sections of the sociolinguistic interview, and the mechanism that he and his students have found most useful for doing so is the "decision tree" and its eight contextual branches: Response, Narrative, Language, Group, Soapbox, Kids, Tangents, and Residual.

All of this is important groundwork by the sociolinguist most respon-
sible for the attention paid to speech model. But it is with the fifth section
that we really get down to new developments. Here Labov draws on a large
data pool (184 speakers from the Language Variation and Change corpus
at the University of Pennsylvania) to examine the nature of style-shifting in
three stable sociolinguistic variables: (ING), (DH), and (NEG). The main
point of this section is that although the various subgroups of the speech
community (social classes, age-groups, and genders) are differentiated by
their absolute uses of the variable, they are NOT differentiated by their rel-
ative use in casual and careful contexts. As Labov has noted earlier, shared
patterns of style-shifting are one of the defining characteristics of member-
ship in a speech community.

In the sixth and seventh sections, Labov explores the issue of whether the
decision tree might be refined by eliminating individual subcategories
which are less objectively identifiable and/or which contribute less to the
differentiation of careful and casual styles. His overall conclusion is that the
eight subcategories all contribute to the differentiation of styles and there is
no motivation for discarding any of them, even when differentiation by
social class and gender is considered.

While Labov skilfully deploys quantitative methodology to refine our
understanding of the role of the various subcategories of the decision tree,
his research raises a number of questions for future research. For instance,
the style-shifting effects of the different variables Labov considered (DH,
ING, NEG) were not uniform, and were we to consider others, the range of
variation would undoubtedly increase. Bearing in mind that speech is an
amalgam of variables, how do their differential effects contribute to the
overall "styles" that speakers create and audiences interpret? Another ques-
tion is whether style-shifting for variables undergoing change is different
than it is for stable sociolinguistic variables. From other findings (for
instance, the cross-over pattern for (r) in New York City, and the fact that
the Philadelphia variables in change showed little style-shifting), this
appears to be the case. But this makes the study of style-shifting through
variables undergoing change even more compelling, especially given the
centrality of style to the study of language change.

In his commentary on Labov's chapter, **John Baugh** emphasizes the
development of Labov's approaches to the study of style between the
1960s and the present, isolating four areas in which improvement has
already occurred or still seems necessary (chapter 6). The first is the use of
reading passages and word lists, a central strategy for eliciting more careful
styles in the framework of Labov's early New York City study. As Baugh
points out, this strategy is inappropriate with illiterate subjects, a group
which can include children and many adults in metropolitan societies, and