1 Language Regard: What, Why, How, Whither?

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1.1 What Is Language Regard?

Language regard is a term I first used in Preston (2010) to cover the object of several approaches that highlight nonlinguist perceptions of language. I was not satisfied with the scope of the term *language attitudes* due to its apparent limitation to evaluation, and, perhaps more importantly, its already complex characterization in social psychology as being composed of "affect, belief, and (overt) behaviors" (e.g., Albarracín et al. 2005). Nonlinguists' beliefs about language are not necessarily evaluative, and behaviors related to language regard are by no means always overt, as the recent rise of studies of implicit responses shows, but even adding nonevaluative belief and implicit responses will not cover all the territory I would like to include under the heading *language regard*.

At a most basic level, *language regard* refers to both the individual beliefs about and affective responses to language details at any level and from any source. It also refers to the *organized* structure of such beliefs and responses from cognitive, sociolinguistic, and anthropological points of view. The notions of an *attitudinal cognitorium* from social psychology (Bassili & Brown 2005), an *indexical field* from sociolinguistics (Eckert 2008), and *language ideology* from the anthropological linguistic point of view (e.g., Woolard 1998) all try to capture the complex and interrelated networks of beliefs that lie behind all instances of regard. For example, if one looks inside the network of associations that are triggered in most US respondents by an instance of "Southern speech," one will find person (and therefore related speech) caricatures ranging from such negative notions as "uneducated," "impoverished," "slow," and "inbred" to positive ones such as "down-to-earth," "hospitable," "honest," and "authentic." The scientific determination and representation of such cognitively based language regard networks is a difficult job, one based on language variation data, experimental detail, metalinguistic commentary, and deep cultural knowledge. In this volume, for example, Cramer considers the network-versus-details dichotomy in terms of emic–etic relationships, and Purschke (2015 and

this volume) pursues a philosophical and cognitive approach to a theoretical basis for the study of regard for linguistic detail in the development of new, overarching systems of regard.

The resulting networks revealed in such research also show that regard responses are variable, just as the details of linguistic production are in any speech community. The foundational questions in the study of regard from any point of view, not just a cognitive one, are the following: What are the elements of such networks? Which are strongest? How are they connected? How are they triggered and how do they surface (or fail to surface) in response behavior? What situational facts will trigger one element (or one group of elements) rather than another? The chapters in this book take up this challenge from several points of view.

1.2 Why Study Language Regard?

Occasionally studies of language regard do not fare well in the court of professional opinion. "Who cares what people think and feel? We're (socio)linguists and want to know what they do." This book adds to the growing body of research that shows that "thinking" and "feeling" are not only modes of "doing" but are also inextricably entwined with the better-recognized "doings" of language production and perception.

The contributions to this volume reveal that our current thinking about language regard is not limited to metalinguistic comment or to evaluation and identification of tasks that make use of the conscious or working memory capacities of respondents. The various chapters in this volume are concerned with folk linguistics (including perceptual dialectology), language attitudes, and language ideologies and appeal to both the procedural aspects and the covert, underlying constructs of language regard. Regard studies avoid the conscious–nonconsciousness split between folk linguistics and the more experimentally oriented social psychology of language. They try to do away with any implication that both styles of research do not seek the same culturally structured organization of belief and attitude more often associated with anthropological investigations of language ideology. The contributions in this volume do not disregard the facts that some research has shown interesting mismatches between more and less conscious responses to linguistic stimuli (e.g., Kristiansen 2009 and this volume) and that the organizing principles of ideological studies have helped in our interpretive work. This common ground is perhaps best expressed by Hymes (1972:39): "It should be possible to cut across this distinction between conscious and unconscious attitudes, and simply take the whole attestation of behavior with regard to language use as the subject matter for our type of description."

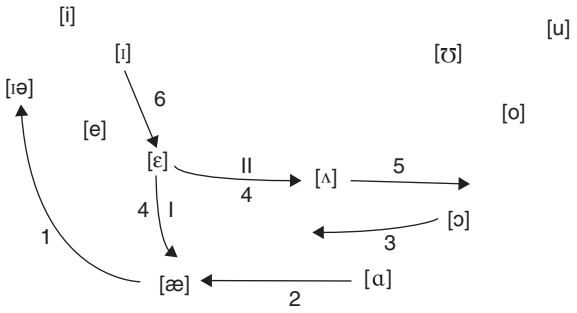

Figure 1.1 The Northern Cities Shift: Step 1, [ae] raises and fronts; step 2, [ɑ] fronts; step 3, [ɔ] lowers and fronts; step 4, [ɛ] either lowers and backs (path I) or backs (path II); step 5, [ʌ] backs, and step 6, [ɪ] lowers and backs

It is perhaps most important to sociolinguists that there is very good precedent for thinking that the study of regard is essential to language variation and change. Although Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968:186) refer to social factors in all the problems of the field (constraints, transition, embedding, evaluation, and actuation), they are most sanguine when it comes to evaluation: "The theory of language change must establish empirically the subjective correlates of the several layers and variables in a heterogeneous structure. Such subjective correlates … cannot be deduced from the place of the variables within linguistic structure." In other words, the demographic or any other correlates of the production data, no matter how sophisticatedly tuned by social networks, communities of practice, and other suggestions over the years, will not reveal the "subjective correlates," which must be "establish[ed] empirically." Many of the chapters of this volume not only establish just such correlates but also show their necessary character in interpreting the structured heterogeneity that is the major focus of the study of language variation and change.

In fact, language regard may offer clues that go beyond variationist interests and touch on matters of general linguistic description (although many variationists would claim that a general linguistic description that did not take variation into account would be at best incomplete). Plichta (2004) took a clue for an investigation of nasality in the Inland North of the United States from the frequent observation by people from outside the region that speakers there were "nasal." He then determined the nasalance (i.e., the proportion of nasal air flow) of vowels outside nasal environments for speakers from southeastern Michigan and showed conclusively that the more advanced a speaker was in the well-studied Northern Cities Shift vocalic reorganization (shown in Figure 1.1, e.g., Labov et al. 2006:187–205), i.e., the more they exhibited the

local vernacular, the more nasalized their vowels were. Such discoveries suggest the importance of regard to a wide range of language production studies, whether focused on variation and change or not.

On the other hand, Peter Trudgill's chapter in this volume suggests that regard features may be unnecessary in some cases of the formation of colonial varieties, but even there they may be unnecessary only under certain restricted conditions. I personally welcome Trudgill's chapter as a cautionary tale; it reminds sociolinguists that language forces alone may be the deciding factor in some cases of change and/or retention. Even within the envelope of variation, for example, linguistic variables most often have a stronger influence on variable selection than either status or style (Preston 1991), and in emerging grammars the internal appeal to such universal characteristics as symmetry or simplicity are ones that sociolinguists might pay more attention to in their search for the underlying causes of variability and change (e.g., Preston et al. 2009; Trudgill 2011). In spite of this overarching importance of language structure, I will nevertheless, with Weinreich et al. (1968), hold on to the notion that many facts of language variation and change cannot be fully addressed without reference to language regard of one sort or another. Without the understanding that (at whatever level of consciousness) men held the local vernacular of Norwich in more esteem (or more appropriate to their own performances) than did women, we could hardly explain the sex-based patterns of variation so elegantly mapped out in Trudgill's own early work there (e.g., Trudgill 1972) nor could we understand his own reluctance to adopt American English [ae] in such words as *dance* and *last* without his explanation that it was for him "too" stereotypically American (Trudgill 1986:18).

The goals of understanding variation and change and even basic descriptive facts about varieties are not, however, the only desiderata that lurk behind the study of language regard. There is clearly an ethnographic one: "[I]f the community's own theory of linguistic repertoire and speech is considered (as it must be in any serious ethnographic account), matters become all the more complex and interesting" (Hymes 1972:39). A complete ethnographic account of a variety surely includes thoughts and beliefs about language and variety (Hymes's theory of linguistic repertoire and speech) and has already been characterized by the mention of "language ideology" above.

Language regard research also provides fodder for opposition to linguistic prejudice of any sort (and ways to counteract it), and this is an important sociolinguistic tradition. "Most sociolinguists are do-gooders. Although a strong sense of social commitment is not a sociopolitical requisite for examining language in its social context, it certainly seems to characterize the lives of many sociolinguistic researchers" (Wolfram 2000:19). Wolfram is himself a leader in such efforts through the North Carolina Language and

Life Project, which has had very good influence on public education there and has stemmed from careful research on language varieties in the state. In fact, to counteract "linguicism" it seems obvious that a thorough knowledge of regard for prejudiced against varieties is as much a prerequisite for effective action as is knowledge of the structure of such varieties. In this volume, both bottom-up and top-down approaches to a healthier respect for language variety are proposed. Benson and Risdal offer a chapter that seeks to understand in greater detail the regard in which varieties of English are held, with an eye toward determining the degree to which individual appreciation of diversity correlates with acceptability of nonstandard linguistic features. Kontra, on the other hand, noting that nearly one-third of native speakers of Hungarian do not use certain standard language features, wonders if usage mavens and other self-appointed prescriptivists might not be reined in by some sort of recognition of variation and change by such prestigious bodies as the Hungarian Academy. He also asks linguists and teacher educators to offer more scientifically based and realistic assessments of changing features in the language in both general publications and in educational training situations.

Additionally, John Baugh has also contributed to our understanding of not only the fact that a person's speech may be denigrated and used against them for such things as apartment-seeking or loan procurement but also the details of speech that trigger ethnic identification and the resulting prejudicial behavior (e.g., Purnell et al. 1999; Baugh, Chapter 10, this volume).

In short, there is much to be gained by the study of regard, and the chapters in this book take various approaches to it by focusing on its results for a better understanding of variability and change, for a more complete picture of a speech community or community of practice, and for the creation of a linguistically healthier society. They also touch on various ways to elicit and interpret language regard data, the topic of the next section.

1.3 How Can Language Regard Be Studied?

I cannot provide here a survey of all the professional techniques that have been used to explore questions of language regard. From the attitude point of view and beyond, Garrett (2010) is an excellent survey; its coverage ranges from the earliest matched-guise studies to the more recent extraction of social meanings from conversational settings. I would be remiss, however, not to touch on a selection of some findings, both to illustrate different approaches to the study of regard and to give concrete examples to support the claims that language regard study is not only internally or ethnographically worthwhile but also a necessary part of what are often considered the central areas of sociolinguistic study. Of course, some of the other chapters in this volume will

help fill in that need, illustrating the use of questionnaires, rating (Likert-type) scales, forced-choice and comprehension tests (often "misdirected" by priming of various sorts), mental maps (perceptual dialectology), and language choice and apparent time studies linked to the regard status of the varieties involved.

Let me begin this section anecdotally, for it has been the case that even emerging methodologies in this area have sometimes been met with suspicion. One of my former students presented some of her early findings at a conference some years ago. The study involved the ratings of areal varieties based on the stimulus of the area names only, a technique pioneered by Inoue (1977/78, 1978/79), but one audience member found the idea of asking people to rate regions by name (rather than responding to a speech sample) so ridiculous that he gave an on-the-spot lecture about how to carry out a traditional matched-guise experiment, a technique well known to the presenter.

I tell this story not to degrade matched-guise experiments but to highlight the fact that different approaches to language regard will reveal the variation in regard potential that surely exists. Asking different questions, presenting different sorts of stimuli, asking people to carry out different tasks, and even offering different conversational opportunities will help us not only establish the complex and underlying networks of regard systems that any member of any speech community will have but also begin to understand the contextual facts that trigger one sort of regard response or another. Soukup (2015) offers a detailed survey of "mixed-methods" approaches to language regard data.

In other words, I think it is fruitless to search for the one superior technique that will reveal the respondent's "true" regard for language. Employing different techniques will expose the variable regard systems that lie beneath the surface in the respondent's "attitudinal cognitorium" (Bassili & Brown 2005:552). A study of southeastern Michigan respondents showed that Southern US English was downgraded for both "correctness" and "pleasantness" on a rating scale (Preston 1996:312, 316), although "correctness" took a much harder hit. I wondered if those two categories might be too broad to capture certain more precise characterizations, so I asked another group of southeastern Michigan respondents to name as many characteristics of US regional speech as they could think of, and I determined the following list from the most frequently named items, a technique often used in traditional matched-guise studies. The ones in the left-hand column are associated with the status or competence traits as they have been determined in such studies in general (and roughly correspond to the notion of "correctness"); those on the right are traditionally associated with solidarity (and roughly corresponded here to the notion of "pleasantness"). "Nasal," "drawl," and "twang" cannot be classified along these two dimensions.

Status	Solidarity
slow – fast	polite – rude
educated – uneducated	snobbish – down-to-earth
normal – abnormal	formal – casual
smart – dumb	friendly – unfriendly
nasal – not nasal	
speaks with – without a drawl	
speaks with – without a twang	

Table 1.1 *Michigan ratings of the North and the South for twelve attributes (scale = 1 to 6) (Preston 1999a: 366)*

South			North		
Rank	Attribute	Mean	Rank	Attribute	Mean
1	Casual	4.66	1	No drawl	5.11
2	Friendly	4.58	2	No twang	5.07
3	Down-to-earth	4.54	3	Normal	4.94
4	Polite	4.20	4	Smart	4.53
5	Not nasal	4.09	5	Good English	4.41
		*	6	Down-to-earth	4.19
6	Normal [Abnormal]	3.22‡	7	Fast	4.12
7	Smart [Dumb]	3.04‡	8	Educated	4.09
8	No twang [Twang]	2.96‡	9	Friendly	4.00
9	Good English [Bad Eng.]	2.86‡	10	Polite	4.00
10	Educated [Uneducated]	2.72‡	11	Not nasal	3.94
11	Fast [Slow]	2.42‡	12	Casual	3.53
12	No drawl [Drawl]	2.22‡			

Note: * marks the only significant ($p < 0.05$) break between two adjacent scores (determined by an analysis of variance with a Tukey comparison of means); ‡ marks values below 3.5 (which indicate the opposite polarity, shown in brackets here).

Another group of southeastern Michigan respondents were shown a simplified version of a previously acquired generalization of Michigan mental maps of US speech areas (Preston 1996: 305) and were asked to rate those areas on the above paired opposites along a six-point Likert scale. The results for the North (the local area) and the South are shown in Table 1.1.

The North is clearly the winner, particularly for "no drawl," "no twang," "normal," "smart," and "good English," mostly status attributes, but for the

solidarity scores, the ones more like "pleasantness," the South has an obvious edge, certainly for "casual," "friendly," "down-to-earth," and "polite," all positive evaluations that would seem to attest to the "Southern hospitality" caricature. Why didn't this fact emerge in the correct and pleasant ratings by Michigan respondents? In both those tasks Michigan was best rated (uniquely highest for correctness in fact) and Alabama, a core Southern state, worst; the only clue lay in the fact that a narrower range of judgments was observed in the pleasantness task, but that hint did not reveal the substantial difference shown in Table 1.1 for North vs. South ratings of factors that are surely pleasant, e.g., friendliness, politeness, down-to-earthness, etc. Perhaps not surprisingly, different tasks seem to elicit different responses, one no "truer" than the other.

The high regard ratings for Michigan English correctness by locals has had other repercussions, and Nancy Niedzielski led us into uncharted waters when she linked regard to perceptual acuity (1997). In her seminal work on what one might call "priming misdirection," Niedzielski asked southeastern Michigan respondents to first listen to a local speaker's pronunciation of the word *last*. She then had them listen to three other versions of the same word; one had a lower and backer version (hypercorrect) of /æ/, not common in American English and associated by many US speakers with British English (or a posher variety); another contained what she called a canonical low-front American English /æ/; the third was the fronted and raised /æ/ of the Northern Cities Shift (see Figure 1.1) and the same one used by the sample local speaker to which the other three tokens were to be matched, as well as the variant used by the local respondents themselves (the actual vowel). The answer sheet primed the respondents by indicating that the sample word they heard first was spoken by a Michigander; it then instructed them to simply match the speaker's pronunciation of that word with one of the other three samples provided. The stimuli were resynthesized to avoid any interference of voice quality; only the vowel harmonics were distinctive. Here are the F1 and F2 formant frequencies and matching results:

Table 1.2 *Formants of tokens of* last *Played for respondents (*N*=42) and Responses (Derived from Niedzielski 1999: 72)*

Token #	F1	F2	Label of Token	# and % of Respondents Who Chose Each Token
1	900	1530	Hyperstandard	4 (10%)
2	775	1700	Canonical /æ/	38 (90%)
3	700	1900	Actual vowel produced	0

Amazingly, not one respondent correctly matched the equivalent pronunciations although the vowel quality differences among the three were quite distinct. Why can't Michigan speakers carry out this simple task? Here is her explanation:

> Several previous studies have shown that Michigan speakers display a high degree of linguistic security (cf. Preston 1989). To date, however, no other study sought to determine whether Detroiters [i.e., southeastern Michiganders] felt that the Northern Cities Chain Shifted Vowels were "correct" and standard or whether they simply did not hear the shift in their own speech.
>
> The present study provides strong evidence for the latter. Even when faced with acoustic data that suggest otherwise, Detroit respondents select standard vowels as those that match the vowels in the speech of fellow Detroiters. It is not the case, then, that Detroiters assign standard labels to raised peripheral and lowered lax ones, that is, NCCS vowels. Rather, Detroiters simply do not perceive NCCS vowels at this level of consciousness. (Niedzielski 1999:80–81)

My favorite phrase to describe this phenomenon is, "Your brain gets in the way of your ear." That is, a language regard feature ("We're standard speakers around here") interferes with linguistic evidence (a vowel that the hearers do not associate with their imagined standard speech is ignored and recast as one that matches their perception). Such interferences may stem from other factors; Miami Cubans, for example, "hear" the Spanish of the homeland in the post-Castro regime as one of the least correct varieties of the language worldwide; pre-Castro Spanish was ranked highest (Alfaraz 2002, this volume). This evidence from perceptual acuity and regard can be taken even further.

Figure 1.2 shows a case in which the low front vowel F1–F2 territory (/æ/, the vowel of such words in US English as *bat* and *rag*, shown in shaded circles) contains a single case of a speaker's intended /ɑ/ vowel (the US vowel of such words as *hot* and *sock*, shown in white squares). The "standard" territory for /ɑ/ is farther back in the vowel space than this one example, and the F2 mean is shown in the center of that territory (the black square, at 1550 Hz).

If hearers do not hear the outlier as an /ɑ/, then the speaker's intended *sock* is misunderstood as *sack*, and the system is not influenced. There is evidence that more misunderstanding like this goes on than was earlier thought. For example, in Peterson and Barney (1952), only /ɛ/ (*head*) at 88% and /ɑ/ (*hod*) at 87% did not reach the 90% level of correct comprehension. In Hillenbrand et al. (1995), only /ɔ/ (*hawed*) at 82% failed to exhibit 90% or better comprehension for single-word stimuli; these are very good scores for a single-word comprehension test. In a more recent study, Labov (2005) played the word *socks* for speakers of different ages and from different areas, including native speakers from the same area as the sample (Chicago, Illinois). In the first presentation, the word was given in isolation; in the second, a slightly longer phrase (*had to wear socks*), and in the final, the entire sentence (*You had to wear socks, no*

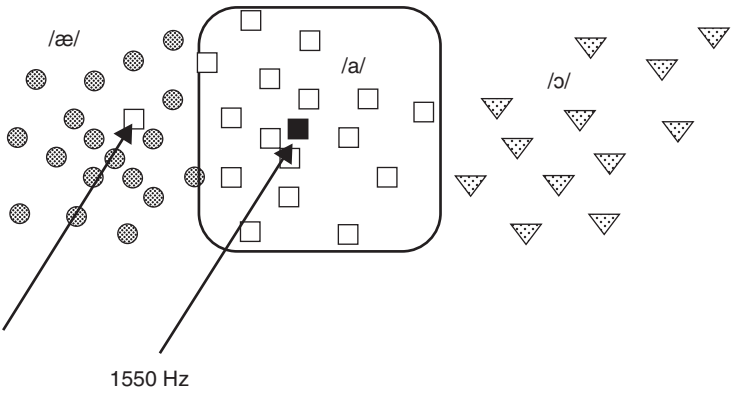

Figure 1.2 Distribution of tokens of the English low vowels (Preston 2011:18, adapted from Labov 2002)

sandals). Although the Chicago high-school-aged respondents, who were closest in their own speech to the norms of the sample, were best in comprehending the word and phrase presentations, even they understood *socks* to be *sacks* at a rate of only about 60% until they heard the entire sentence.

In another study from the same Northern Cities Shift area (Detroit, Michigan, and suburbs), in which only young, local respondents participated and only single-word tokens were presented, similar findings emerged, as shown in Figure 1.3 (Preston 2005). Vowels shifted earliest in this rotation (/æ/ and /ɑ/) show the best overall comprehension, but those shifted later (/ɪ/, /ɔ/, and /ɛ/) are much worse (the first two well under 50%), although /ʌ/, a late shifter, is somewhat out of order.

Why are these scores and the ones reported in Labov (2005) so poor? Figure 1.4 shows how the /æ/ tokens have been fronted in the Northern Cities Shift (see Figure 1.1), leaving the one fronted /ɑ/ token behind. Now removed from the new, shifted /æ/ territory, that token is much more likely to be correctly understood as /ɑ/, as the respondents in Figure 1.3 have done more than 80% of the time; it is also now a contributor to a new F2 mean value of 1571, a value for /ɑ/ more in line with the Northern Cities Shift.

How could such sweeping changes in the vowel system of linguistically secure speakers from southeastern Michigan go unnoticed? It might appear only speculative to suggest that the linguistically secure are easily influenced since they cannot conceive that their own performance (or that of others like them) would stray from a standard (i.e., their norms), but Niedzielski's (1999) work solidly anchors that attitudinal speculation: Michiganders are so linguistically secure that they seem to recalibrate the vowels of those around them and avoid notice of change.