High dialect contact, the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation, and the role of a standard variety: the case of a Japanese New Town

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In Japan, since 1950s, urbanization and industrialization increased a degree of the demographic mobility. In fact, we witnessed a rapid grow of the population especially in large cities. So as to solve the population problem, new towns were designed and established primarily in their suburbs. New town, therefore, have received a number of immigrants with various dialectal backgrounds. Sociolinguistically speaking, a high dialect contact situation emerged for several decades.

This paper reports findings from my sociolinguistic surveys conducted between 1999 and 2003 at a Japanese New Town in Kobe, called, ‘Seishin New Town.’ The survey aimed two generations: (1) immigrant generation, who migrated into this new town since 1980s and whose age ranges from 30s to 50s, and (2) new town generation, who are the first native teenagers. As a baseline data, another sociolinguistic survey was conducted at one of the neighbor, rural, and agriculture-based communities, called ‘Hazetani-cho.’ Their spontaneous speech of 12 New Town residents and 9 Hazetani-cho residents were collected. 13-hour recordings were used as a data. Two variables (verb negation, and complementizer) were analyzed.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the degree of (1) how immigrant generation create their sociolinguistic variation through their interactions with their neighbors, friends, and colleagues at their workplace, if any, and (2) how new town generation acquire the sociolinguistic variation, and utilize it in their interaction with their peer group. As mentioned earlier, a baseline data from Hazetani-cho will be analyzed to measure the differences from Seishin new town residents.

The result shows that immigrant generation has a frequent use of non-dialectal form both for verb negation and complementizer, which clearly differs from Hazetani-cho residents whilst new town generation has a frequent use of the dialectal form (especially in verb negation) instead of the non-dialectal form. The frequent use of this form can be found in Hazetani-cho residents.

Based on the analysis, this paper will consider how standardization of Japanese language impact upon the use of the two variables both in immigrant and new town generations. Generally speaking, a standard variety in Japanese has been heavily influential. This paper will state that standardization did observed generally in Hazetani-cho, whereas a different kind of standardization process was observed in Seishin new town residents.
Regional Accent Perception in Children: The Acoustic and the Meta-Linguistic

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Part of sociolinguistic competence is recognizing social categories indexed in speech. Studies show that the more exposure a person has to different regional accents in childhood, the better they are as adults in discriminating and identifying them (Clopper and Pisoni, 2004). However, the few studies that exist on young children’s ability to discriminate regional accents have shown them to be poor at the task. The problem has been attributed to still-developing phoneme categories, and the relative difficulty of perceiving vowels categorically (Girard, Floccia et al. 2008; Floccia, Butler et al. 2009). I contend that the difficulty doesn’t lie in poor perceptual ability, but the still-developing meta-linguistic knowledge about regional variation and as well as abstract geographical-spatial concepts needed to make sense of geographically-based variation. My experimental work with children addresses what role meta-linguistic awareness and prior exposure to regional variation plays in developing the ability to perceive regional accents. First, I simplified previous accent discrimination tasks to increase the likelihood that 5-year-olds are successful in them. Second, I look at whether meta-linguistic awareness and prior exposure to different regional accents correlate with accuracy in discriminating regional accents. Finally, I ask how aware children are about their own accent and speech variety, to see if they make accurate comparisons between their own speech and that of others, or if they have inaccurate mental representations.

This study is currently being conducted near Philadelphia, PA, USA, with about 200 5-year-olds enrolled in a public school. This study should demonstrate that non-linguistic factors play at least as much a role in the development of accent perception as do the cognitive-linguistic ones, and that children do not have accurate representations of their native variety at the age of 5.

This study will further our understanding of what children know about their native language, how their awareness of accent develops and how accurate their representations of their own speech are in the early school years. In turn, this can inform our understanding about how children begin to form stereotypes and generalizations about speakers of other languages, which can affect their interactions with speakers of other dialects later in life (Purnell, Idsardi et al. 1999), and what role overt knowledge about social groups and categories plays in perception and learning of the native language.

References


The effects of social diversity on the acquisition of stylistic variation

Laurence Buson

The notions of interaction density and social network density/multiplexity have long been invoked to explain language use convergence phenomena and the reinforcement of local norms within certain communities (Milroy, 1980; Labov, 2001). Nevertheless, the comparative effects of homogenous and heterogeneous socialization contexts on the development of communication skills in children are still poorly understood. To help remedy this situation, we decided to explore the influence of the composition of the social networks of eight 10-year-old girls from working-class families, socialized in either homogeneous (working-class) or heterogeneous (socially mixed) social environments. We first examined the girls’ repertoires by analyzing two variables: the discursive markers _hein_ and _oh_, which are more frequently used in informal situations. We then used qualitative analyses of stylistic variation in ordinary interactions and utterances, in order to provide more information about certain global results and thereby examine processes that are difficult to measure using quantitative approaches (e.g., stylisation, see Snell, 2010). We obtained four main results:

1) All the girls in our sample use stylistic variation;

2) Although ways of addressing peers were globally equivalent between the two socialization environments, the girls socialized in a socially heterogeneous environment used fewer informal discursive markers when addressing adults in their entourage (mostly teachers addressed while we were collecting data) than the girls socialized in a socially homogeneous environment;

3) The stylistic variation characteristics of the children’s spontaneous and elicited speech also differed according to their socialization environment. These differences included perceptions of the _we-code_ and the _they-code_ (to draw a parallel with the language-contact situations described by Gumperz, 1982);

4) The register and style of the language adopted by the girls’ teachers, who are the traditional sources of standard language forms, differed according to the socialization environment. In the socially homogenous school with students from working-class backgrounds, the absence of adult models who strongly incarnate standard practices may partly explain the children’s more homogenous use of style. In fact, the stabilization of adult speech and the parody of stereotypical social roles are reinforced by children’s games, and these games play a major role in the acquisition of variation (Maybin, 2006).

References
Early Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Variation: Bringing Together Social and Cognitive Issues

Jean-Pierre Chevrot (Université de Grenoble)

Variationist sociolinguistics and cognitive psycholinguistics have rarely been associated together. Two cultural models in place in the western world – the rationalist model that sees language as a tool and the romantic model that considers it as an identity marker (Polzenhagen & Dirven, 2008) – seem to have been opposed within the field of language sciences. But new elements within the general scientific field have encouraged the convergence of social and cognitive sciences: the development of the connectionist paradigm opening towards non determinist aspects of cognition, the recent directions taken by ethology and neuroscience for exploring the cognitive and cerebral basis of links between communication and social life, the current place, in science in general, of the intrinsic relationships between variation and stability.

Our approach to acquisition of sociolinguistic variables takes place in this general context, which gave rise to the emerging fields of Cognitive Sociolinguistics (Kristiansen & Dirven, 2008) and Sociolinguistic Cognition (Campbell-Kibler, 2010 http://sociolinguisticcognition.blogspot.com/).

We aim to show that taking into account cognitive issues such as the way of learning variation (indexical values and variable linguistic units and constructions) or the online processes involved in the production/perception of the variants (Ghimenton & Chevrot, submitted; Chevrot, 1994) would be to the advantage of sociolinguistics. Conversely, for the sake of descriptive adequacy, acknowledging that the child learns to speak in a highly variable linguistic environment, structured by social factors would benefit psycholinguistics greatly.

We will defend the idea that the cognitive mechanisms underpinning the acquisition of sociolinguistic variables must be taken into account in order to explore certain questions the answers to which remain unsatisfactory in the context of a strictly linguistic approach. One of the most persistent questions in the field of sociolinguistics is that of the social determinism of usage, connected to a wider examination of the rationality of social actors: To what extent does the speaker choose his usage according to pragmatic issues and to what extent is this usage determined by his social origin and the communicative context?

By taking into account the course of acquisition and by exploring the cognitive mechanisms underpinning its dynamics, we are able to tackle these issues from a new point of view. More precisely, we will review the available data concerning the acquisition of the stylistic ability and the appearance of gender- and SES-related differences (Chevrot, Nardy & Barbu, 2011, Nardy, Chevrot & Barbu, submitted) in order to answer two questions: (1) Are these patterns of variation firmly established in the first stages of acquisition, which would mean that they are automatically inherited from the early interactions in the child environment? (2) Alternatively, are these patterns acquired or modified later in the course of development, indicating more complex influences including the formation of identity and the construction of social roles?

An affirmative answer to the first question would be more compatible with the view that the acquisition of variation is based on the implicit learning of regularities (statistical learning) whereas an affirmative answer to the second one would suggest that the acquisition is guided by cultural learning (norms, identity strategies). A close examination of these options should however take into account the fact that social life is guided by non-conscious automatic processes...
(Bargh & Williams, 2006) whereas sociolinguistic cognition, as other parts of cognition, becomes more flexible and accessible to consciousness in the course of acquisition, due to metalinguistic development (Buson & Billiez, submitted).

References

The acquisition of variable word order in two-verb clusters in regional Dutch

Leonie Cornips (Meertens Instituut/KNAW & Maastricht University)

Standard Dutch and its regional varieties displays variable word orders in the verb clusters, although the order of the verbs is never random, and some orders are never found (Zwart 2001, Barbiers 2005). In Dutch a distinction must be made between participial and infinitival constructions. With respect to two-verb clusters, standard Dutch allows 1-2 and 2-1 order in the participle construction but only 1-2 order in the infinitival construction. The hierarchically highest verb has index 1, the second highest verb has index 2.

The empirical study discussed consists of a sociolinguistic study of a regional Dutch variety in which 67 adult speakers were recorded resulting in 33,5 recorded hours of spontaneous speech. This corpus yields a bewildering variety of word orders at the level of the group (‘community’ grammar) of speakers and the individual (grammar). The 67 speakers produce 558 tokens of a verbal cluster containing a perfective or passive auxiliary combined with a past participle and 554 tokens of a two verb-cluster involving a modal combined with an infinitive, presented below:
participle two-verb cluster  | infinitival two-verb cluster  
---|---
*order* | tokens | % | tokens
2-1 | 376 | 67.4 | 14 | .03
1-2 | 182 | 32.6 | 540 | 99.97
*total* | 558

Crucially, it is not the case that the variable word order in the participle construction is due two homogeneous subgroups of speakers exclusively using order 2-1 or 1-2. Instead, 50 out of 67 speakers use both orders reveal optionality, thus the variation is present at the level of the individual speaker as well. Remarkably, the two word orders do not show social stratification according to age, level of education and language background of the speakers.

The general question now arising is how do children in the same community deal with the word order variability in the participle construction in the input? to be more specific, (i) is the variable order in the participle construction acquired from the beginning? (ii) are the linguistic conditionings (morphology of the deepest embedded verb and type of auxiliary) of the participle and infinitival construction acquired and at what age? (cf. Smith et al 2007)

In order to answer these questions, we conducted a question answering task (elicited production), regarding 30 pictures (taken from Zuckerman (2001)) presented to 20 children growing up in the same village as the adults described above. The children were divided in two age groups (2:8 through 3:10 and (5;0 through 5;11). The developmental stages are:

(i) The children start out with the acquisition of the infinitival construction, followed by the participle one;

(ii) The children start out with the 1-2 order for both types of clusters, followed by the 2-1 order at a later age for the participle construction

(iii) The children first start out with particle inclusion, followed by particle split

It is remarkable that the children start out with (i) categorical orders in the participle construction where there is variability in the adult community and (ii) the order is the least frequent one in the adult ‘community’ grammar i.e. the 1-2 order.

The objectives of this talk are to discuss in detail what kinds of considerations influence the choices of the children, to be more specific, what are the exact linguistic and social conditionings of the participle and infinitival construction and when and how they are acquired.

References
What is the target variety? Acquisition of dialectal variation by adult second language learners

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"If structure is at the heart of language, then variation defines its soul" (Wolfram 2006: 333). Sociolinguistic variation is an integral part of everyday life communication, which means that variation is present in situations that can serve as stimuli for learning in an untutored context. Even though adult learners are able to reproduce variation present in the input (cf. Hudson Kam/Newport 2005, 2009), the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation in a target language and the development of the capacity to alternate between speech styles does not seem to be straightforward (cf. Rehner, Mougeon and Nadasdi 2003; Romaine 2004). In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, learners are constantly confronted with the coexistence of two varieties – local dialect(s) and the standard variety – in everyday spoken and written communication (Berthele 2004; Werlen 1998). The use of the two varieties is highly influenced by interactional and sociolinguistic aspects of the situation of communication and a considerable linguistic and social flexibility is required from second language learners and users.

Second language learners have different attitudes towards dialectal variation and their acquisition process is shaped by different individual and environmental factors (personal and professional network, amount of language instruction etc.). As a consequence, learners differ with respect to the definition of a target variety in the acquisition process. In this paper, I want to focus on the question why and how the learners "choose" to learn either one or the other variety or do not strictly separate in a situation with dialectal variation in the input. The analyses are based on second language learners' free speech from a conversation with a dialect and with a standard-variety speaking person, on prompted linguistic data and on metalinguistic statements. They will provide insights into the question in how far the standard and the dialectal variety and the variation involved in their usage are part of their linguistic competence. How learners incorporate the two varieties in their language capabilities and their interlanguage grammar can improve our understanding of the dynamics of linguistic, cognitive and sociolinguistic factors that might influence the acquisition of variation.
Effects of school demographics on child and adolescent morphosyntactic and phonetic variation: A longitudinal analysis

Charlie Farrington (North Carolina State University), Mary Kohn (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) & Jennifer Renn (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

The social structure provided by schools may play a significant role in shaping the speech varieties of children and adolescents by contributing to processes of leveling (Britain 1997, Trudgill 1998). When dialects undergo leveling, marked features are frequently lost in favor of features that are not overtly indexed with social information. Although typically associated with regional dialect contact, leveling may also affect ethnic variants as children in more integrated schools have been found to use fewer African American Vernacular English (AAVE) forms than those who attend less diverse schools (Craig and Washington 2004, Terry, Conner, Thomas-Tate, and Love 2010). Whether or not leveling processes can explain the effect of school demographics on dialect has yet to be explored. A longitudinal analysis of children who change school environments could clarify whether the correlation between school demographics and dialect use is attributed to the process of leveling, or simply reflects the child’s home language.

This current analysis uses longitudinal data to explore the role of demographic makeup in determining trajectories of dialect development among African American school children in central North Carolina. 67 children participated in a longitudinal study of language and over the course of 18 years. In order to operationalize dialect use over time, a dialect density measure (DDM) consisting of a features per utterance count is used to assess overall morphosyntactic vernacularity for each child at three different time points: at approximately ages 7, 11, and 13. In addition, the full vowel spaces of a subset of ten speakers at ages 9 and 13 are included to compare trajectories of different dialect levels.
Within the region, children matriculate into different intermediate and secondary schools around ages 11 and 14. For some of the participants in our study, this change represents a shift from a school with a predominantly African American population to a school with a significant proportion of European American students as well. For other students, the proportion of African American students in their new schools is similar to that of their old schools. To explore the correlation between vernacularity and school demographics, we conducted linear regressions predicting either vowel height for the front vowels or the DDM measure using the independent variables of age, sex, and percent African Americans in the school. Initial results indicate that while the percentage of African American students in the school is a significant predictor for front tense vowel lowering, in accordance with the Southern Vowel Shift (Labov 1991), the effect is only apparent between speakers. This suggests that while demographics may influence the use of vocalic features, dramatic shifts in demographics do not affect overall vowel quality. The DDM shows within speaker effects for school demographics, indicating that changing school environments influences the use of AAVE morphosyntactic features. School demographics appear to affect acquisition of regional AAVE variants on both the phonetic and morphosyntactic level. However, phonetic variables appear more stable in the face of changing educational environments.

References

Acquisition of variation in multiparty interactions in Veneto (Italy): evidence from the weaker language

Anna Ghimenton (University of Fribourg - Institut de Plurilinguisme)

Family network helps the child scaffold her language construction, transmitting style and variation through language choice and usage, in order to become a competent speaker of her community (Ochs 2002). The linguistic contrast generated by multilingualism may elucidate important aspects of the way in which children acquire variation.

This case study took place in Veneto (Italy), where children grow up in contact with the dialect varieties and Italian, the national and official language. Dialect in Veneto is still very vital and
benefits from a prestigious cultural heritage (Cortelazzo and Paccagnella 1997). Adopting a (psycho)sociolinguistic approach to our corpora, we observed the language production of a young child, Francesco (17-30 months) when participating in multiparty interactions with his nuclear and extended family members.

All utterances were transcribed and coded. Each word was placed in a language category: Italian, dialect and cognates (words which are used in both languages). We compared the proportions of lexical frequencies in utterances addressed directly to Francesco to those addressed to other adults.

We also examined how Francesco interacts in this variable environment, given the presence of Italian and dialect and the increased number of participants.

The general results show that: 1) adults prefer Italian when speaking to Francesco; 2) the child uses mainly Italian; 3) the lexical choices in the multiparty interactions show that the child uses dialect, especially when interacting with speakers who generally produce more dialect.

Through a quantitative and qualitative approach to the data, we discuss the ways in which the acquisition of the minority language – the Veneto dialect – may shed light on the more general processes linked to the acquisition of variation.

References

The Socio-Syntactic Development of Cypriot Greek Clitic Placement

Kleanthes K. Grohmann (University of Cyprus) & Evelina Leivada (Universita Autònoma de Barcelona)

Studying language acquisition in a context that involves the simultaneous use of a non-codified variety (L) that lacks official status and an official language (H) that is closely related to L requires paying close attention to sociolinguistic factors such as the existence of linguistic continua, the manifestations of linguistic insecurity that eventually give rise to enhanced metalinguistic awareness, and the gradient nature of certain (morpho)syntactic phenomena.

The linguistic reality of Cyprus is often described as demonstrating a state of bidialectism (e.g., Yiakoumetti et al., 2005; Tsiplakou et al., 2006; Papapavlou & Kouridou, 2007), where the sociolinguistically L Cypriot Greek (CG) co-exists with the H Standard Modern Greek (SMG), which is also the standardized, official variety spoken in Greece. The two varieties show many differences in all domains of language, even within grammar and morphosyntax, with one of the more studied ones being the different patterns of placement of pronominal object clitics. This paper draws insights from the findings of two recent studies that investigate the acquisition of direct object clitic placement in CG (see Grohmann, 2011; Grohmann et al., in press; Grohmann and Leivada, to appear) in order to discuss:
(i) the existence of metalinguistic awareness, but also concomitantly linguistic insecurity, that derive from the schooling environment, which makes use of a language (SMG) different from the one children are exposed to at home (CG) and discourages the use of the former;

(ii) the dynamics of the interplay between competing motivations (Du Bois, 1985) as well as competing grammars in the sense of Tsiplakou (2007), which frame language acquisition in linguistic environments such as the one observable in Cyprus;

(iii) the phenomenon of gradience in grammar approached through the perspective of syntactic variants existent within and affected by a dialect–standard continuum (for such a discussion of Heerlen and Standard Dutch, for example, see Cornips, 2006).

Recent inquiries into the field of ‘socio-syntactic’ research claim that sociolinguistically determined functions may facilitate the process of choosing between syntactic variants, thus somewhat blurring the traditional distinctions between sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and theoretical syntax (Grondelaers et al., 2009). The necessity to advocate an interdisciplinary approach has recently been formulated by Cornips & Corrigan (2005: 20), who predict “the coming-of-age of ‘Socio-Syntax’ as a discipline in its own right”.

This paper can be seen as a contribution to this new type of interface study, the role and relevance of social and sociolinguistic factors in first language acquisition and development. Findings of a picture-based elicitation task (from COST Action A33; Varlokosta et al., to appear) administered to different populations residing in Cyprus shed light on the different stages of the process of constructing a socio-syntactic repertoire in diglossic environments such as the one discussed here, in a manner that goes beyond assuming mere diglossia or engaging into the issue of bidialectism vs. bilingualism. The cover term chosen here and in related work is “bi-x”, an umbrella for (quasi-)bilingual settings that involve two very closely related varieties. In this context, the cover term “bi-x” is introduced and tied in with the process of constructing a sociosyntactic repertoire. Aiming to bring together the different factors that affect the process of language acquisition in the case of Cyprus, the Socio-Syntax of Development Hypothesis (Grohmann, 2010) is discussed in relation to the acquisition of direct object clitic placement. It specifically relates the grammar of CG with the continuum that informs, but also affects, the process of first language acquisition in a dialectal context.

**Didaktisierung des Klammersverfahrens im L2-Erwerb, dialektale Varianten und Restriktionen der Satzklammer**

*Claudia Grümpel (Universidad de Alicante)*

zwei Signalelemente erklärt: Die Konjunktion bildet den grammatischen Teil und das Finitum die lexikalische Information.

Im Laufe der Progression des L2-Erwerbs werden neue syntaktische Elemente zur Verfestigung des Klammersverfahrens eingeführt. Die erste nachvollziehbare Klammer ist für den L2-Lerner das trennbare Verb (1) oder das kopulative Verb (3). Nach der Lexikalklammer erwirbt der L2-Lerner die Verbalklammer, deren Spannungsbogen einerseits das Modalverb und das Finitum bilden (2a.) und am Ende der Hauptsatzklammer das Perfek (2b.).

(1) Lexikalklammer: Er [VP bringt [NP (seinen Hund)] [V runter, raus, weg oder...] um.

(2) Verbalklammer:
   a. Er möchte nach der Bratwurst mit Senf und dem Bier noch den Lebkuchen essen.
   b. Er hat den Kuchen (in zwei Sekunden ohne zu kauen) verschlungen.

(3) Kopulaklammer: Er ist (seit vielen Jahren) Lehrkraft.

Die relativ frühe Einführung der Nominalklammer als solche kann von den Lernenden erst mit Einführung vorangestellter Attribute nachvollzogen werden (vg. 4-5), ebenso die Negierung einer solcher Klammer.

(4) der (gern gesehene) Gast. - der [AP gern [A gesehene] [N Gast.]]

(5) ein gern gesehener Gast

(6) kein gern gesehener Gast.


(7) Wir haben uns nicht gesehen (*Wir haben uns gesehen nicht)

(8) *Nicht war sie gestern zu Hause (Sie war gestern nicht zu Hause)

Dialekte und regionale Varianten im Deutschen können auch zur Verfestigung der Satzklammer angeführt werden, wie zum Beispiel im Norddeutschen bei Adverbialpronomen (vgl.9-10) oder auch bei Fragenpronomen (vgl. 11-12).

(9) Da weiss ich nichts von! (Da weiss ich nichts davon).

(10) Da kann er doch nichts für! (Da kann er doch nichts dafür)

(11) Wo geht die Reise hin? (Wohin geht die Reise?) –

(12) Wo hast du das Geld her? (Woher hast du das Geld?)
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Examining Children’s Learning of Variation in a Miniature Artificial Language

Carla L. Hudson Kam (University of British Columbia)

Most research in language acquisition is concerned with aspects of language that are consistent, deterministic, and perfectly predictable once the correct generalization or exception to a pattern has been learned (e.g. past tense form in English). However, not all aspects of language can be described in this way; sometimes patterns in the language are variable. Sometimes these variable patterns are stable across generations (or exhibit only minor differences between speakers of different ages), other times variation in language is changed by children as they learn it, e.g., variation present in newly emerging languages. The research reported here is concerned with understanding why children sometimes change variation but sometimes are able to learn it.

To investigate this I exposed 27 child learners aged 5-7 to one of several miniature artificial languages (MAL) containing a probabilistically occurring grammatical morpheme (the article). In one MAL (unconditioned variation) the article occurred randomly in sentences in the children’s input. Overall, it appeared with 60% of the noun tokens. This was consistent across syntactic position (subject, object) and sentence type (transitive, intransitive), so that, e.g., 60% of the
subject nouns occurred with articles, and the same for objects. In the other MAL (conditioned variation) the occurred more often with subject than with object nouns. Importantly, in neither language was the occurrence of the determiner completely predictable in any sentence or with any noun – it was always variable. What differed between the two input languages was the presence of conditioning; in the first language all nouns were equally likely (or unlikely) to take a determiner, in the second, nouns in one syntactic position were more likely to occur with determiners than nouns in another syntactic position.

Exposure took place over 6 sessions, each lasting 15-20 minutes. In each session, the child saw a series of scenes (live act-outs of a meaning), and heard spoken sentences in the artificial language describing each scene. Scenes and sentences were presented one by one, and the children were asked to repeat each sentence as they heard it. In an additional test session children were asked to produce their own, sentences describing novel scenes. Productions were recorded and analysed for article use.

In general, children exposed to the first MAL did not learn the probability associated with the article. Instead, they imposed strict rules on article occurrence. In contrast, although the second MAL seems like it should be harder to learn since there were multiple probabilities associated with the article, many children did learn conditional probabilities of occurrence for the determiners, as evidenced by their production of determiners in novel sentences. Interestingly, however, the data suggests that they might have learned the probabilities associated with sentence types (transitive and intransitive) rather than syntactic position (subject and object).

Results then suggest that children can learn conditioned variation in a MAL, just as in natural language acquisition, when there is conditioning on the variation. Therefore, the regularization found in previous MAL studies is likely not just an artifact of experimental methods. Moreover, it suggests that change will be imposed whenever variation is too general, i.e., when there is no real linguistic conditioning, as is the case in language contact situations.

### Acquisition of regional variation

_Matthias Katerbow (Philipps-Universität Marburg - Forschungszentrum Deutscher Sprachatlas)_

For decades, an understanding of the acquisition of (regional) variation has been keenly sought, first by Schultze 1880 and most recently by Schmidt/Herrgen 2011. Research in the field began in the mid 1990s, with work by Julie Roberts and William Labov, and is still growing rapidly, but there are as yet no detailed studies of the acquisition of regional language variation in German aside from the work of Scholten (1988) and Berthele (2000). The causes for the neglect of the acquisition of variation in German can be traced to a traditional dialectological perspective on variation and equally to a Chomskian perspective on acquisition. On the one hand, canonical acquisition theories were restricted to homogeneity, while on the other, theories of regional variation mostly focused on NORMs rather than children.

The talk’s aim is to contribute empirical data and key theoretical features to address this deficit of research into the acquisition of regional variation in German. The work is based on a phonetic/phonological analysis of the acquisition process of a Moselle-Franconian regional
language. The term *regional language* is defined in the linguistics dynamic approach of Schmidt/Herrgen 2011, which provides the theoretical framework for this paper. A *regional language* is a bundle of local varieties which can be said to compose the vertical spectrum between a local dialect and the standard variety. The data basis is a collection of the spontaneous speech of 23 children in different natural communication contexts, i.e., children interacting with their mother, with a friend and with a stranger (the author). The corpus includes real-time and apparent-time data. The speech data were transcribed phonetically and analysed using different modern variation-linguistic methods. In this talk I will discuss the main findings concerning the factors >age<, >situation< and >individuality<. The influence of these factors will be examined from two perspectives: firstly that of the dynamic of the sounds in the acquisition of regional variation, and secondly, that of the individual acquisition processes and the gaining of shifting or switching competence. Based on the findings, I present some essential characteristics of the process of acquisition of a regional language.

References


Impact of Social Background on the Evaluation of Sociolinguistic Variables in French-speaking Children Aged 4 to 6

Aurélie Nardy (LIDILEM, University of Grenoble, France)

Different studies in adults have shown that speakers of the same speech community share identical evaluations of sociolinguistic variables, whereas use of the latter is socially stratified (Labov, 1966, 1972, 2001; Trudgill, 1974). Although research has been carried out on the evaluation of variants in children, few studies have sought to verify the Principle of Uniform Evaluation (Labov, 2001). The aim of our study is therefore to examine the impact of social background upon the evaluation of different sociolinguistic variants – phonological, morphological and syntactical – in French.

One hundred and fifty children aged between 4 and 6 participated in the study. They were divided into two age groups (4-5 years old and 5-6 years old) and into three social backgrounds (high-SES, middle-SES and low-SES). In order to determine the children’s social background, we ascribed a score to the profession of each of the two parents based on the French National
Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies’ classification of professions and socio-professional categories (Insee & Dares, 2003). Score 1 was given to occupations within the unskilled workers’ category, score 2 to those belonging to the category of intermediate professions and employees, and score 3 to managers and knowledge workers. We then calculated the average score of both mother and father. The children whose parental SES-index was 2.5 or 3 were placed in the category that we entitled high-SES. Those with a parental SES-index of 2 were classified amongst the mid-SES category. And those with a parental SES-index of 1 or 1.5 were placed in the low-SES category.

In order to allow the sociolinguistic variants to be evaluated, we implemented a judgment of acceptability task. In this task, children had to determine which one of the two linguistic forms (standard versus non standard variant) they heard was correct. The two forms were produced by the experimenter, who made two puppets talk, and the children had to indicate which puppet had spoken correctly.

Firstly, we can observe that the percentage of judgments in favour of the standard variants increases significantly between 4-5 and 5-6 years of age. Secondly, we can note the social stratification of children’s judgments: the mid-SES children produce more judgments in favour of the standard variants than the low-SES children, and less than the high-SES children. In statistical terms, however, this difference is a tendency. Analyzing separately the impact of the mother and father’s SES on children’s judgments shows that only the mother’s SES has a statistically significant influence on judgments in favour of the standard variants.

Our results in children run counter to the idea according to which judgments are directed by the uniform standard of the speech community (Labov, 2001). Given that children’s judgments are influenced by the SES of their mother, main source of input for the child, it would seem rather that these judgments are the result of the frequency with which they encounter certain sequences in their environment. Thus, at an early age, greater familiarity with certain sequences would lead the latter to be evaluated more favourably. Then during development, and as the child enters the school system, a marked preference for standard variants would take root in all children, independently of their social background, as shown by Chevrot (1991), Lafontaine (1986) and Martino (1982).

References
The role of salience in Second Dialect Acquisition

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This paper addresses the role of language-internal and language-external factors in the process of second dialect acquisition. We use the notion of second dialect acquisition to indicate the acquisition of a vernacular variety outside the home environment and chronologically later than the acquisition of the standard variety, which is acquired at home. We particularly focus on the role of salience. By salience, we mean “a property of a linguistic item or feature that makes it in some way perceptually and cognitively prominent” (Kerswill and Williams 2002: 81).

In the literature, it has been observed that salient dialect variables are the first to be given up when dialect speakers accommodate to the standard language (Thelander 1982; Hinskens 1986, 1992; Auer et al. 1998; Taeldeman 2006). Further, it has been predicted that salient variables will be acquired first in dialect acquisition processes (Auer 1997; Auer et al. 1998), but almost no empirical evidence is at our disposal. We aim to fill this gap with our study into the acquisition of phonological variables of the Maldegem dialect (East-Flanders, Belgium) by children who were raised in a standard variety by their parents.

We define salience in terms of geographical distribution, lexicalization and phonemicity. We investigate the effects of these factors on the degree to which individual dialect variables are acquired, starting from the hypothesis that salient variables will be acquired better. These effects are estimated in a set of spoken responses to a word list that was administered to 128 children of nine, twelve or fifteen years old, who were living in the Flemish village of Maldegem and who only came into contact with the local dialect outside their home environments.

In this study, the prediction that salient dialect variables are acquired better is not corroborated. There are indications that the factor of lexicalization overrules salience.

References
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“Me encantan los niños…un día les llevé al Parque de Campo Grande y ellos se divirtieron muchísimo…”: The Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Variation by Advanced Second Language Learners of Spanish in a Study Abroad Context

Francisco Salgado-Robles (University of Kentucky)

It is generally believed that study abroad (SA) is the most efficient and successful way to acquire proficiency in a second language (L2). SA is a crucial component of L2 learners’ or nonnative speakers’ (NNSs) process, for it puts them in situations in which they can use the language on a daily basis and interact with native speakers: intercultural communication.

Although previous empirical research on learners in SA programs has shown that immersion in the target culture has a strong positive effect on the development of fluency, morphosyntax, phonology, and cultural competence (e.g. Collentine, 2004; Díaz-Campos, 2004; Freed, 1995; Lafford & Collentine, 2006; Lord, 2010; Segalowitz, Freed, Collentine, Lafford, Lazar, & Díaz-Campos, 2004; inter alia), this research has focused on NNSs’ acquisition of features of the target language, typically measured by categorical, as opposed to variable, standards. Consequently, many questions pertaining to the acquisition of patterns of language variation common to a particular community in a SA context remain unanswered (Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler-Barker, Henriksen, & Killam, 2010; Salgado-Robles, 2010).

This present research explores the extent to which NNSs of Spanish (#20) acquire variable structures of language –specifically, the leísmo phenomenon, i.e., the use of the dative pronoun le(s) instead of the accusative pronouns lo(s) and la(s) as direct objects– while participating in a study abroad immersion program in Valladolid (Spain) –a speech community characterized by the salience of this linguistic variation. In addition, baseline data from native speakers (NSs) (#20) is compared to that of the NNSs. The work is a quantitative and qualitative longitudinal investigation of oral (i.e., sociolinguistic interviews) data which are respectively elicited through sociolinguistic interviews with participants (#40).

The results suggest that SA learners do in fact develop an awareness of non-standard forms of the target language, which are, to a certain degree, incorporated into their sociolinguistic competence. In sum, this project contributes to an extensive body of research on the SLA of object pronouns by adding qualitative and quantitative longitudinal data, and helps to add further knowledge about the development of L2 linguistic competence during a sojourn abroad, and to fill a gap in the new strand of studies on the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation due to L2 learners’ exposure to the target speech community.

References
Developmental stages in the acquisition of variation in English /t/

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This study investigates the patterns of variation in the speech of teenage migrants in London, focusing on intervocalic and word-final (t) with its released and glottaled variants. Data analysis is based on conversations from 21 Polish and 24 locally-born teenagers, which we use as a benchmark for establishing the norms of variation the Polish kids have the most frequent exposure to. Among native Londoners variation is affected by the constraints of preceding and following segment as well as style and lexical frequency in word-final position. In word-medial position, these as well as grammatical category are the significant factor groups constraining glottal replacement of /t/.

This talk pursues two questions. First, are these constraint hierarchies acquired by non-native speakers and if so when? Second, at what point are non-native speakers able to use glottal replacement of /t/, a highly-salient English variant with links to youth language, as a stylistic resource? To answer these questions, the non-native speakers have been subdivided into three groups and their acquisition progress is analysed by length of time spent in London. Results indicate that the Polish teenagers do not replicate native constraints all at once but one by one, adding and replacing constraints as they acquire glottal variation in /t/, guided, to a certain extent, by input frequencies of native speakers. The results of our study raise several questions regarding order of constraint acquisition and the role of frequency. We speculate that some constraints are
more readily acquired than others, and we explain why lexical frequency plays a very important role in the acquisition process.

**Incomplete acquisition of anticausatives in heritage speakers of Spanish-Greek and English-Greek bilingual adults**

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Minority and host languages (HL) are in permanent contact and thus may influence each other by adopting lexical and grammatical forms or structures (Language Interference). Despite this situation, non-target performance in minority languages (ML) has been argued not to be related to transfer from HL. Instead, it has been shown that it is similar to the non-target performance observed in monolingual child acquisition, displaying a simplification of the morpho-syntax of the minority languages, which is “frozen” in the early childhood of the heritage speakers (HS) when HLs become dominant and the input of MLs decreases significantly (Incomplete Acquisition; Montrul and Bowles, 2009; Polinsky, 2011; Silva-Corvalán, 2003; and references therein).

We examined spontaneous speech data (autobiographical interviews, 45-60 min. approx. 4,000 words spoken by each participant) of 10 Spanish-Greek as well as 10 English-Greek adult bilinguals aged 18-60. These revealed that HS of Greek overused the ACT instead of the NACT in forming anticausatives (e.g. *ekopse i grami* ‘the line broke’; 27% and 21% non-target forms respectively, p < 0,001). Similar deviant performance is observed in both L1 children aged 2;0-4;3 (Unsworth et al., 2011; Zombolou et al., 2010) and L1 Turkish-L2 Greek adolescents (12-16) (Ampati et al., 2004; Tsimpli, 2006). Spanish and Turkish Interference would predict different error patterns, since both languages form anticausatives with reflexive morphology, which in Greek is syncretic with the non-active.

We concluded that Greek HS are incomplete acquirers. This is because of the high morphosyntactic complexity of the Greek Voice system, in the sense of Babyonyshev et al. (2001) & Jakubowtiz and Nash (2001). This complexity explains the incomplete acquisition of the HS: anticausatives are not fully acquired at the time of schooling (5-6 years of age), as L1 data show, and because Greek input decreases significantly anticausatives remain incompletely acquired.
References