

Abstract: Presentation #3) Speech perception, the social psychology of language, sociolinguistics, and folk linguistics

How do forms of language regard emerge in task-oriented, discursal, and observational studies focused on language?

Variationist sociolinguistics, many of whom took the subjective correlate mandate of Weinreich et al. (1968) seriously, were quick to adopt the experimental procedures developed by social psychologists of language but extended them in more sophisticated models as in the numerous methods discussed in the first two presentations. This presentation explores the more qualitative, anthropological, discursal, sociolinguistic, and folk linguistic sides of approaches to language regard.

I want to examine the tools and value of folk linguistic tasks (e.g., map-drawing, voice identification and imitation), the content of folk linguistic interviews, the means of determining the enregisterment of varieties, and the correlation of these findings with the outcomes of data gathering in the experimental fields already discussed.

First, why would the conscious, overt, asserted meanings from interviews as well as media and other public resources not be a guidepost to the ideological backdrops of language regard in speech communities? This is a basic assumption of ethnographic and folk linguistic approaches to discursal and public event language use and deserves continuing attention.

Second, and more methodologically important to these presentations, why would social psychologists and others who worry about the authenticity of interview and other directly elicited data ignore the fact that a great deal of what happens in language use is presupposed and implicit? When a respondent from the US South is asked to outline where they believe US dialects are and writes in the area they identify as "North" the words "Scratch and claw," they project Southern perceptions of northern speech and the personae and associated behaviors that rest behind them. More subtly, semantic and pragmatic tools allow us to investigate talk about language that is perhaps as implicit as that which can be elicited by clever experimental devices. When a US Linguistic Atlas fieldworker wrote in his notes many years ago that his respondent was a "Quick, bright, but poor, hard-working woman," a semantic implicature makes it clear that the reader should understand the mismatch between being "quick" and "bright" and "poor" and "hard-working." Consider this from a recent Facebook meme: "When you can't think of a word, say 'I forgot the English word for it.' That way people will think you're bilingual instead of an idiot." It is not asserted that bilinguals are intelligent nor that people who forget words are stupid, but those links must be recognizable in the popular mind, or they could not be implied.

This presentation summarizes various ways that asserted and unasserted social meanings may be retrieved from folk linguistic interviews, enregisterment data, and a variety of folk linguistic tasks and made a part of the search for the elusive but essential "subjective correlates."

Reference

Weinreich, U., Labov, W., & Herzog, W. 1968. Empirical foundations for a theory of language change. In Lehmann, W. P. & Malkiel, Y. (eds), *Directions for historical linguistics: A symposium*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 95-188.