Lesley Milroy & Sue Margrain

Vernacular Language Loyalty and Social Network

(1980)
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I. Introduction

Labov: „[T]he linguistic behavior of individuals cannot be understood without knowledge of the communities that they belong to“ (qtd in Wardhaugh 3)

Le Page: „[T]he individual creates his system of verbal behaviour so as to resemble those common to the group or groups with which he wishes from time to time to be indentified“ (qtd in Milroy and Margrain)
I. Introduction

Sociolinguistics

- the investigation of the relationships between language and society with the goal of obtaining a better understanding of the structure of language and of how languages function in communication
- the study of language use within or among groups of speakers

Vernacular

- The language a person grows up with and uses in everyday life in ordinary, commonplace, social interactions
I. Introduction

Social Network:

- A social network is a set that shows the relationships among people
- Social networks constantly change
- People belong to more than only one network varying in strength
I. Introduction

Open vs. Closed Networks

- **Open**: weak network ties, few close-knit relationships --> standard speakers are said to belong to open networks

- **Closed**: strong network ties, people interact with each other on various levels and occasions --> dialects are more likely to exist within closed networks
I. Introduction

Social Network:

- **Density**: if people you know and interact with also do the same with each other
- **Multiplexity**: if the people within your network are tied together in more than one way
- Usually occur in combination
- Function as norm-enforcement mechanism: the more dense and multiplex a network is, the stronger is impact on linguistic behavior
I. Introduction

How Language and Network relate to each other:

A language and the society that it is spoken in influence each other, therefore the set-up of an individual's network structure influences his or her linguistic behavior.
II. The Study

Lesley Milroy and Sue Margrain

“Vernacular Language Loyalty and Social Network”

II. The Study

Thesis

Loyalty to vernacular norms correlates with level of integration into the localized network
II. The Study

Linguistic behavior of:

- A total of 46 subjects
- Working-class **Belfast speakers**
- Three comparable working-class communities:
  - Protestant East Belfast area: **Ballymacarett**
  - Protestant West Belfast area: the **Hammer**
  - Catholic West Belfast area: the **Clonard**
II. The Study

Belfast English:

• A dialect derived from English in Ulster, Western Scotland, and Northern England
• Contains certain traits only articulated in Ireland's capital
• Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unGtpBP83as
II. The Study

Belfast English:

**Ulster Anglo-Irish (Ulster English) features**

1) palatalisation of /k, g/ before /a/, [kjæt] for cat
2) dentalisation of /t, d/ before /r/, [bɛɾ] for better
3) lowering and unrounding of /ɒ/, [ɒt] for pot
4) ME /ɛ:/ realised as a mid-vowel, [bɛt] for beat /ɔ/ for /ɒ/ in but, luck, etc.
5) lowering of /ɛ/ to /æ/, set [sæt]
6) the use of /au/ before /l/ in monosyllables, [aul] for old, also a feature of Lowland Scots.

**Ulster Scots features**

1) raising of /æ/ to /e/ before velars, [bɛk, bɛg] for back, bag
2) raising of /æ/ to /e/ after /k/ and (residually) /ɡ/ [kɛp, kɛs] for cap, castle
3) short realisations of high vowels, [bit, but] for beet, boot
4) lowering and possible centralisation of /l/, /bɛt, sɛns/ or
5) /bʌt, sʌns/ for bit, sense
II. The Study

**Network Strength Scale (NSS):**

- Means developed to combine and express density and multiplexity of network for local structure
- Six-point scale with a score ranging from 0 to 5
- Measured by means of 5 indicators assigning one point each for a condition met:

  1. Membership of a high density, territorially based cluster → D
  2. Substantial ties of kinship → M
  3. Working at the same place as at least two others from the same area → M
  4. Sharing the same workplace with at least two others of the same sex from the same area → M
  5. Voluntary association with work mates in leisure hours → M
II. The Study

**Linguistic Variables (LV):**

- the linguistic scores are obtained from the occurrences of the variables (a), (ai), (I), (th), (ʌ1), (ʌ2), (ε1), and (ε2)

- Index scores for (a), (ai), (I); percentages for the other variables
II. The Study

Linguistic Variables (LV):

1. (a): index score measure (5 point) on degree of retraction and backing in items such as hat, man, grass

2. (ai): index score measure (3 point) on degree of fronting and raising of the first part of diphthong in items such as pipe, line, life

3. (I): index score measure (3 point) on degree of lowering and centralization in items such as hit, kill, tin

4. (th): deletion of intervocalic in e.g. mother, brother

5. (ʌ1): lip-rounded variant in e.g. hut, mud

6. (ʌ2): occurrence of variant, no predictable distribution; occurs in would, pull, took

7. (ɛ1): low vowel in monosyllables closed by a voiceless stop/obstruent preceded by a liquid/nasal; e.g. bet, peck, rent

8. (ɛ2): same low vowel in di- and polysyllables
II. The Study

Linguistic Variables (LV)

- Sampled for each speaker in
  - Interview Style (direct questioning)
  - Spontaneous Style (talking to acquaintances)
- Variables were extracted from recordings
- No natural speech situation
  - Influenced result?
II. The Study

Methods

- **Correlation**: relationship of NSS and LV score
  - Rank ordering (Spearman Rank Order Correlation): comparing the ranks of both scores
  - Calculating a value to show how closely ranks for each factor match
    - Statistic $r$
    - Significance of correlation
II. The Study

Methods

- **Analysis of Variance**: testing for variation among groups and its interaction, connection of values (if significant)
  - Division into high and low NSS scores
    - Showing difference of variable scores in relation to high or low NSS score
  - Division into subgroups
    - Interaction among extra-linguistic variables
- **Variance test**: (F) ratio statistic giving degree of interaction
II. The Study

Results

it was hard to obtain significant results due to a small total of subjects

• Results for variables were looked at separately:
  • (a), (th), (ʌ2), (ɛ1), and (ɛ2): showed significant relationship
  • (ʌ1), (ai), (ɪ): no overall significant relationship
II. The Study

Results:
relationship of NSS and LV score overall:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>0.539</td>
<td>3.692</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(th)</td>
<td>0.485</td>
<td>3.591</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n¹)</td>
<td>0.337</td>
<td>2.142</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e¹)</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>1.709</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e²)</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N refers to the number of subjects tested for a given variable.
II. The Study

Results

for (a), (th), (ʌ2), (ɛ1), and (ɛ2):

\textit{correlation}:

- a real and reliable relationship between a speaker's language and the social network structure

→ Generally: as NSS scores increase, so do LV scores

- Those who use LV closest to vernacular norms show an interaction with network
II. The Study

Results

*analysis of variance*:

- In subgroups (divided according to sex, age, area) more results for the NSS/LV relationship were found:
  - Both sexes use LVs in the same way as network markers
  - (a) showed strongest interaction between network & area
  - Age-network interaction: older group showed stronger community loyalty
II. The Study

Results

for (ʌ1), (ai), (I):

• Relationship for limited subgroups only:
  • (ai) significant marker in B
  • (I) is a socially important variable in H

• Shows variation among speech communities:
  • Communities use different variables as network markers
  • Within a network variation among extra-linguistic variables
III. Conclusion

• Proof that localized networks are characterized by a specific linguistic behavior
  ➔ Variables serve as network markers

• Within a single speech community (Belfast English) exist smaller communities that show even stronger community loyalty
  ➔ Different variables are associated with different social groups
  ➔ Though: dynamic process: constant change of markers and norms

→ Maintenance of sociolinguistic norms: rural, working-class network structure
III. Conclusion

- Clear relationship between language and degree of integration in network
  - The more integrated a person, the stronger the use of vernacular norms
- Change in network structure is responsible for linguistic change
- Possible to create a means of measuring integration into community
  - Reliable indicators for network strength
IV. Prospect

• Further studies needed:
  • Small total of subjects
  • No direct comparison with other single speech communities

• Personal opinion: neglect of some aspects interesting aspects
  • To little comparison of the three communities
  • No examination of what they have in common: other extra-linguistic sociologically interesting variables
    → Geographical closeness and religious orientation
IV. Prospect

• Study is old (from 1980)
  • Today different social structure and different techniques

• What could study look like today?
V. Sources


- [http://www.uni-due.de/IERC/belfast.htm](http://www.uni-due.de/IERC/belfast.htm)

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unGtpBP83as](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unGtpBP83as)
Thank you for your attention!