Language Variation on Internet Relay Chat

A social network approach

Paolillo, J.C. (2001)

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Overview

• Introduction/Definition of Terms
  – (Live) Presentation of IRC
  – (Live) Sample Dialogues
  – Social Network Tie Strength
  – Relevant Linguistic Variables

• Procedure/Methodology

• Results
  – Distribution of the linguistic variables
  – Functional interpretation of the linguistic variables

• Summary

• Conclusion
(Live) Presentation of IRC
(Live) Sample Dialogues

6. <Nagin> Dr Pep im not at home
7. <Lamer-X> hi nagin
8. * Sahil waves to Nagin hi
9. <Dr-pepper> where r u ..nagin in dormz?
10. <Nagin> Lamerx Hey whats up?:
11. <Nagin> Sahil :
12. <Lamer-X> nagin: nuttin just feeling old now that i’ve hit 22 today :/- ***
13. <Nagin> Lamer Happy Birthday:) well I know how u feel I felt like that when i turned 21 back in may
14. <Lamer-X> nagin: heh
15. <Nagin> DrPepper kiya dhoond ra ha hai?
   [trans.] what are you looking for?
16. <Dr-pepper> ur phone number . . . nagin
17. <Nagin> Dr Pepper u expect me to give it away just like that?
18. <Dr-pepper> what should i do..to get it..nagin..any testz for thiz ashiq?
Social Network Tie Strength

Strength of a tie (Granovetter, 1973):
Combination of:
• amount of time
• emotional intensity
• intimacy
• reciprocal services

Strength of a tie:
Frequency of interaction
Linguistic Variables

Model of Milroy & Milroy (1992)

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<th>Vernacular Variant</th>
<th>Standard Variant</th>
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<td>'r'</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>shortcut</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>'u'</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>shortcut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>'z'</td>
<td>'s'</td>
<td>modification</td>
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<td>no obscenity</td>
<td>morality</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>codeswitching into Hindi</td>
<td>English</td>
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Motivation

• Social meanings of variant forms
• Identify speakers and addressees
• Clarify relationship between linguistic practices and positions in the channel’s social network
Procedure/Methodology

24h log file of #india

separation of participant turns and actions

identifying the speakers

identifying the addressees

lots of statistical analysis

categorization of the 94 participants into 16 social positions by interactional patterns
Categorization of the participants

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<td>J</td>
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RESULTS
Interaction among the Participants

Hierarchy:

Central Core: K

Outer Core: G, H, J

Periphery I: B, C, E, I, L

Periphery II: A, N, P

Outer Periphery: D, F, M, O
Group Sizes

Hierarchy:

- **Central Core**: K
- **Outer Core**: G, H, J
- **Periphery I**: B, C, E, I, L
- **Periphery II**: A, N, P
- **Outer Periphery**: D, F, M, O
Distribution of Hindi Codeswitching

Hierarchy:
- Central Core
- Outer Core
- Periphery I
- Periphery II
- Outer Periphery

Weight:
- 0.780
- 0.643
- 0.628
- 0.466-0.522
- 0.307
- 0.198
- 0.188
- 0.131
Findings in Hindi Codeswitching

• most strongly used by group G
• avoided by group K
• widespread throughout the network
• no relationship to strong ties
Interpretation of Hindi Codeswitching

• Functions as „attention getter“:
  – Operators disfavor codeswitching
  – Less need in central group K (secure social position)
  – A lot of use in group G (less secure social position)
Distribution of Obscenity
Findings in Obscenity

• Most peripheral groups (D, N, O, P) avoid obscenity
• Central groups (K, H, B) and more peripheral groups (C, E, F, L) favor obscenity to a small extent
• Groups G, J show no clear behavior
Interpretation of Obscenity

• Functions eventually as „Network marker“:
  – Exercise of discursive power
  – Female participants tend to avoid it
  – Operators are partly immune to being kicked

• Distribution must be carefully interpreted in terms of its social and communicative functions
Distribution of 'u'

Hierarchy:
- Central Core
- Outer Core
- Periphery I
- Periphery II
- Outer Periphery

Weight:
- 0.643
- 0.618
- 0.567
- 0.540 (median)
- 0.260
- 0.244
- 0.203
Findings in 'u'

• Groups A, C, P, J, G favor it
• Groups K, H, B avoid it (as in the case of Hindi codeswitching)
• Use of Groups G, J differ sharply with that of K
Interpretation of 'u'

• Usage predominates among the network periphery without being strongly localized in it
• M, O disfavor it
• Usage near the center could be explained by the spread of weak ties
Distribution of 'r'

Hierarchy:
- Central Core
- Outer Core
- Periphery I
- Periphery II
- Outer Periphery

Weight:
- {K} 0.885
- {H} 0.732
- median 0.494
- {M} 0.157
Findings in 'r'

- Greatest probability: N, A, P, J, M (mostly peripheral)
- Greatest avoidance: K, H, B
- Neutral levels: C, D, E, F, I, L, O
- Again: sharp difference between G, J (favor) and K (disfavor)
Interpretation of 'r'

• Associated with the network periphery
• Avoidance by K, H, B (as it is the case with 'u') – again contrary to the prediction!
• Alternative interpretation:
  – „reinterpretation“ of 'r' and 'u' as standard IRC usage
Distribution of 'z'

Hierarchy:
- Central Core
- Outer Core
- Periphery I
- Periphery II
- Outer Periphery

Weight:
- 0.959
- 0.606
- Median 0.326-0.280
- 0.025
- 0.000
Findings in 'z'

- Most common in the outer periphery (as the other orthographic variables)
- Greatest probability: N, G, J, D, M, O
- Extreme avoidance: C, I, F, L
- No correlation with tie strength in any clear way (no network marker)
Interpretation of 'z'

• Possibly associated with hackers or hacker wannabes
• Channel operators disfavor the use (although they often have hacker skills)
• No obvious interactional function
• Very complex nature which is not readily explainable
Summary

• Structured pattern of interaction (though contrary to the prediction):
  – Vernacular variables: obscenity and codeswitching
  – Standard variables: 'r' and 'u'
  – No clear correlation: 'z'

• Findings require reconsideration of the classification of the linguistic variables as vernacular
Conclusion

• Relationship between tie strength and linguistic variation

• Online communication provides a convenient way for social network analysis

• Online social networking services (like *facebook*) enable sociolinguistic analysis in an unprecedented fashion
Sources

• Paper:
  Paolillo, J.C. (2001), *Language Variation on Internet Relay Chat: A social network approach*

• mIRC Client:
  www.mirc.com/get.html

• Logos (all from 27.May 2013):
  – http://www.mircalem.net/mirc-profesyonel.htm
  – http://dudenonline.info/protagonist
  – http://www.live-every-moment.de/2013/02/projekt-alltagshelden-recyclen.html
  – http://www.schulbilder.org/malvorlage-abfall-i11431.html
  – http://icons.iconarchive.com/icons/large-icons/large-icons/large-weather/512/tornado-icon.png
  – http://www.mirc.com/