Agenda

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1. Basic notions of the text

Language variation <-> speaker variable

sex

age

class

network
1. Basic notions of the text

• Social Class: Large-scale social, political and economic processes

• Social Network: Community and interpersonal level of social organization
1. Basic notions of the text

Macrolevel: Social Class

Microlevel: Network

Linguistic Variation, Linguistic Change
2. Network structures
2.1 Definition and characteristics

- What is a network?
  - Boundless web of ties
  - Anchored to individuals
  - Relates to persons with whom ego directly and regularly interacts
  - Between 30 and 50 individuals
2.1 Definition and characteristics

- Characteristics of personal networks:
  - Structural features: shape and pattern of network, e.g. density
  - Interactional features: content of the ties, e.g. multiplexity, frequency and intensity
2.2 Close-knit communities: Strong ties

- Territorially based

- Close knit:
  - Dense (everyone knows everyone else)
  - Multiplex (individuals know each other in several ways)

-> Strong ties
2.2 Close-knit communities: Strong ties

- **Occurance:**
  - Rural areas

- **Modern cities:**
  - Product of cultural diversity
  - Strong sense of ethnicity and local identity
2.2 Close-knit communities: Strong ties

- Functions:
  - Protect interest of group
  - Maintain and enforce local conventions and norms that are opposed to the mainstream

  -> linguistic norms, e.g., vernaculars, are maintained via strong ties within close-knit communities
2.3 Weak ties

- Casual acquaintances between individuals
- Associated with socially and geographically mobile persons
- Connection between groups

-> Channel for innovations and influence between groups
2.3 Weak ties

Group/Network
Group members, because of their frequent interaction, tend to think alike over time. This reduces the diversity of ideas, and in worst-case scenarios leads to "groupthink".

Weak Ties
Weak ties are relationships between members of different groups. They are utilized infrequently and therefore don’t need a lot of management to stay healthy. They lead to a diversity of ideas, as they tie together disparate modes of thought.

Strong Ties
Strong ties are relationships between people who work, live, or play together. They are utilized frequently and need a lot of management to stay healthy. Over time, people with strong ties tend to think alike, as they share their ideas all the time.

http://bokardo.com/images/weak-ties.gif
3. Strong ties, weak ties and linguistic variation

3.1 Belfast Study (Milroy & Milroy)

- Study of vowel variants in 3 inner city communities and 2 higher status communities in Belfast:
  - Backed /a/ and raised /e/
  - Both variants originate from the Ulster-Scots hinterland, diffuse from east to west of the city
3.1 Belfast Study (Milroy & Milroy)

- Backed /a/: Association with men; working class
- Raised /e/: Association with women; middle class

- Linguistic change: vowel variants have assumed a diametrically opposed social value, although they originate from the same region
3.1 Belfast Study (Milroy & Milroy)

- Addition of network structure as variable:
  - /a/: choice of variant <-> network structure for men: /a/ as network marker
  - /e/: choice of variant <-> network structure for women: /e/ as network marker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change led by</th>
<th>High correlation with network strength</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Males (working-class variant)</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Females (middle-class variant)</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
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3.1 Belfast Study (Milroy & Milroy)

• „It is the group for whom the vowel has less significance as a network marker that seems to be leading the linguistic change.“

• Close-knit network structure: conservative force

• Weak ties: transmitter of innovation

• Social process of linguistic change <-> weakening of network links
3.2 Philadelphia Study (Ash & Myhill)

- Study of “Black English Vernacular” (BEV)

- Four groups of speakers:
  - Core white group
  - Core black group
  - Black group that has contact with whites (WBs)
  - White group that has contact blacks (BWs)
3.2 Philadelphia Study (Ash & Myhill)
3.2 Philadelphia Study (Ash & Myhill)

- WBs using white norms:
  - Capacity of alternation according to occasion of use: in group and out-group functions
  - Explanation of usage: weak ties

  „The degree to which these speakers use the white norms is increased by the range and number of situations in which they have weak-tie contacts outside their core community.“
3.2 Philadelphia Study (Ash & Myhill)

- BWs using black norms:
  - Linguistic accommodation and affirmatory effort
  - Weak ties to both communities
  - Innovators
4. Network and class
4.1 Social class and weak ties

- Speakers with mainly weak ties: middle-class or upper-working

- Middle-class networks:
  - consist of weak ties
  - Larger
  - less kin- and territory-oriented: social and residential mobility

- Lower and upper-class: structurally similar! Dense, small, close-knit and kin-oriented
4.1 Social class and weak ties

- Strong ties:
  - Local cohesion and overall fragmentation within society

- Weak ties:
  - Crucial bridges of information and innovation

> Weak ties connect microlevel of network and macrolevel of social class
4.1 Social class and weak ties

- Which model of social class is appropriate with respect to the importance of weak ties?
4.2 Life-modes

- Thomas Højrup

- Social class = Large-scale and economically process that splits populations into subgroups

- 3 life modes

- Conditions associated with these life modes -> different types of network structure
4.2 Life-modes

- Life-mode 1
  - Self-employed
  - Connection between work and leisure activities: family involved in production
  - Strong solidarity ideology

-> close-knit network structure
4.2 Life-modes

• Life-mode 2

• Ordinary wage earner

• Familiy and leisure separate from work activities

-> close-knit network structure of typical working-class society
4.2 Life-modes

• Life mode 3

• Higher professional or managerial employee
• Monitoring or controlling position
• Competitive attitude to colleagues
• Family in supportive role to career
• Socially and geographically mobile

-> weak ties of professional kind, but also strong ties with potential resources
4.3 The integrated model of network and class

LESLEY MILROY AND JAMES MILROY

Maintance of non-legitimized linguistic code

Mainly strong

Relatively poor wage-earners

Community-based ties

Life-modes

Relatively affluent wage-earners

Mainly weak

Dominance of legitimized linguistic code

Non-community-based strong ties (coalitions, power elites etc.)

Macro level social, political and economic structure
5. Conclusion

- Networks: Consensus; Class: Conflict

- Strong ties: agreement; Weak ties: change and conflict

- Integrated model:
  - Link between network and class: interrelation

- Socioeconomic class (Life modes) → network structures -> changes and variations of linguistic norms