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Language and Place

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Language and Place

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Barbara Johnstone
Department of English
Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3890 USA
bj4@andrew.cmu.edu
+1. 412.268.6447

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1. Introduction

Sociolinguists have always been concerned with place. Be it nation, region, county, city, neighborhood, or block, place has long been adduced as a key correlate of linguistic variation, and geography has often entered into explanations of variation. Since in the 19th century, dialectologists have been cataloguing and mapping how language varies from place to place. Starting in the 1960s, sociolinguists turned their focus to "social facts" such as class, gender, and race as influences on talk, but they often continued to delimit their research sites as cities, neighborhoods, counties and, in the U.S., states. Place has also played a role in accounts of variation in more metaphorical and more abstract ways: people's "locations" in social networks affect the likelihood of their being linguistic leaders or followers; changes move from centers to peripheries, or sometimes from peripheries to centers, be these physical or social. Studies of the spread of language change have sometimes used models of diffusion from geography.

More recently, place has again become central in sociolinguistics. Some sociolinguists are exploring how physical environments affect patterns of variation and change by shaping speakers' social environments. Others are exploring the linguistic expression and construction of "place identity." Others describe "linguistic landscapes" and "linguistic soundscapes," exploring how patterns of signage and other visual and aural evidence of language shape attitudes towards speakers and varieties. Another strand of inquiry has to do with how places can be socially constructed through language or talk about language and how varieties of talk get mapped onto physical and political places through talk about talk.

This chapter summarizes all these developments and points to key sources about each. I begin, in section 2, with a sketch of the emergence of dialectology in the 19th century in the context of the politics of the European nation-state. In section 3 I summarize the 20th century dialect atlas projects, conducted in the context of a renewed interest in region across the disciplines. Section 4 traces ideas about place in quantitative, social-scientific approaches to variation and change. Finally, I outline several newer ways of thinking about language and place that have emerged in the context of widespread interest in how the social word is collectively shaped in discourse and in how individuals experience language and linguistic variation.

In choosing to organize the chapter chronologically, I mean to highlight the ways in which dialectologists' and sociolinguists' approaches to place have been shaped by the intellectual and political environments of the times when these approaches emerged.

Thus each section begins with a short overview of era's dominant paradigm in the discipline of geography. While sociolinguists have not always made explicit use of ideas from geography, the two fields of study have ridden the same political and intellectual currents over the past two centuries. I do not mean to suggest that subsequent approaches have displaced earlier ones or that this chronology necessarily represents progress. Current thought is suited to current times and what the times make visible. This is as true now as it was when dialect geography began in the late 19th century.

2. Place and Nation: 19th-Century Dialect Geography

Histories of geography in the Euro-American tradition trace its origins to the Early Modern period in European history (Heffernan, 2003). Europeans' discovery of new economic resources in Africa, Asia, and the Americas called for specialists in cartography and in methods of navigation. By the 19th century, when dialectology came into its own, geography was no longer as much in service to navigation as to nation-building and colonization. The Enlightenment empiricists' drive to describe and the Romantics' valorization of the "primitive" and "natural" fueled the interest of wealthy amateurs and academics alike, and journeys of exploration were often funded by new national geographic societies such as the Société de Géographie de Paris, the Royal Geographic Society, and the U.S. National Geographic Society.

As one of the "pillars" of nationalism, language was a key element of the political philosophy that justified the modern nation state (Gal & Irvine, 1995). The idea that a

nation was bound together by a shared language, in the face of evidence in every European nation of mutually incomprehensible varieties and languages, shaped 19th-century philologists' search for earlier, perhaps purer forms of language and dialectologists' search for the isolated, old-fashioned varieties that were thought to be throwbacks to the more authentic language of the "folk." Late 19th-century advances in theory and method in historical linguistics (including Grimm's law and the comparative method) also provided impetus to dialect geographers to develop systematic techniques for exploring variation from place to place.

Between 1876 and 1887, German linguist Georg Wenker collected data about regional variation by means of surveys he mailed to schoolteachers all over the country. A huge amount of data resulted from this. Like subsequent dialect geographers, Wenker had trouble making his findings available except in small pieces. He ultimately published his data as a set of maps called a *Sprachatlas* or linguistic atlas. Subsequent studies of regional variation employed trained fieldworkers to conduct interviews rather than sending out surveys. However, the technique of publishing the data as a set of maps was carried forward to other 19th-century dialect geography projects in France, Italy, and Switzerland.

In this and much subsequent work in dialect geography, place is at least implicitly thought of in objective, often physical terms. Mapping dialect words connects them with a representation (in the form of a map) of the physical world. This suggests that physical facts about where speakers are located or where they are from play a dominant role in the

processes dialectologists and other linguists are interested in. For example, the "communicative isolation" that can lead to language change was conceptualized, in early regional dialectology, primarily in physical-geographic terms. People separated by a river or a mountain range were thought to be less likely to be able to interact than people who with easy access to one another. When there were such barriers to communication, "natural" processes of change would lead the separated varieties to diverge

Mapping also links linguistic forms, to varying degrees, with the political world represented by boundaries among states, counties, and nations. All dialect atlas maps include political boundaries of one kind or another, be they national boundaries or smaller-scale political divisions, and most include some place-names or names of rivers and other features. In 19th-century accounts, dialect mapping was analogous to the mapping of political units in more specific ways, too. By identifying isoglosses and bundles of isoglosses, dialectologists attempted to determine boundaries between dialect areas analogous to the boundaries between counties or countries, as if dialect boundaries were established by treaty or conquest the way political boundaries are. The practice of boundary-drawing encouraged the idea that dialects are neatly distinct from one another. This idea still underlies a widespread folk understanding of linguistic variation according to which dialects have clear boundaries. The actual messiness of border areas is relatively difficult to account for in such a model and may be difficult even to see.

3. Celebrating Regions: The US Dialect Atlas Surveys and DARE

World War I unsettled many people's faith in the nation-state. Despite the "equality," "liberty," and "brotherhood" that the new European nation-states were thought to embody, and despite the economic progress promised by the Industrial Revolution, historical loyalties and technology came together to make the "Great War" the most brutal and deadly in history. Modernists such as poet William Butler Yeats articulated the widespread feeling that "things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" ("The Second Coming"), and the focus in many disciplines turned from the nation toward the more local. Geographers' interest centered increasingly on the study of regions. This research combined human and physical geography in the study of how human activity was shaped or determined by the local environment. Regions were thought to be "separate areas with distinct landscapes (both natural and human) that distinguished them from their neighbors" (Johnston, 2003, p. 53), and geographical research was largely descriptive. In this idealized view,

> [t]he individual is born into the region and remains with it, physically and mentally, since there is little in-or out-migration by isolated persons and families … . An intimate symbiotic relationship between man and land develops over many centuries, one that creates indigenous modes of thought and action, a distinctive visible landscape, and a form of human ecology specific to the locality. (Zelinsky, 1973, p. 110)

Geographers' focus on regions and regional exceptionalism mirrors dialectologists' work of the period in the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada projects. (See

chapter 13, “Language and Region.”) Geographers’ idealization was the sort of region around which isoglosses could be drawn and which could be identified with a single, labeled dialect such as “North Midland” or “Coastal Southern.” It was the sort of region in which the ideal informant would be the most traditional and the least mobile, since this would be the person most likely to embody “indigenous modes of thought and action.” Linguistic atlas fieldworkers tried to find people who had been born in the area they were studying and had lived there almost uninterruptedly. Because the U.S. atlas projects were modeled on the European dialectologists’ attempt to collect folk speech, the preference was for the oldest rural settlements, though cities were also included. Informants were classified into three groups by their level of education, how much they read, and how much contact they had with people from elsewhere. (These groups usually also corresponded with age groups, as the oldest informants would be the least "cultured" and have the least education.)

Like the European dialect atlas projects, the North American projects both drew on and perpetuated a number of ideas about place and its relationship to language. As pointed out above, mapping in general and isoglosses in particular suggest that dialects areas are analogous to political divisions, particularly if the maps do not represent the topographical features (rivers, mountains, and such) that may actually have more to do with regional linguistic variation. They also encourage people to think that dialect areas have unambiguous, sharp boundaries, and that each region has a named regional dialect. This idea continues to affect how laypeople (and sometimes linguists as well) imagine the relationship between language forms and places. While laypeople’s discourse about

language often links "non-standard" forms to sloppiness or a lack of education, variant forms that are not nonstandard often get linked to the place where they were heard or the place where the speaker grew up. Popular talk about talk thus often links variant forms that are widespread in the U.S. to very specific localities, as when, for example, the widespread Midland *needs* + past participle construction is claimed as "a Pittsburgh thing" (Johnstone, 2005).[1] The maps in the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (Cassidy, 1985; Cassidy, 1991; Cassidy, 1996; Hall, 2003), a similar project but limited to vocabulary, divide the US into states. This suggests that these political boundaries have a great deal more to do with lexical variation than they do, an idea that is reflected (and perpetuated) in the many internet spaces where people discuss how Californians talk or what words and phrases you have to know or use in order to count as an authentic New Jerseyite.

The choice of non-mobile, often rural informants also helps perpetuate the idea of the traditional region in which people live in a "symbiotic relationship" with the physical environment and the idea that the most authentic dialect speakers are people who use or remember the oldest words or variants. Furthermore, the fact that so many of the dialect atlas informants were rural meant that linguistic variation in cities was more difficult to see than variation in the country. The rural slant of the projects also means that it is often difficult to use them to trace the history of urban forms. For example, the *Dialect Atlas of the Middle and North Atlantic States* (McDavid & et al., 1980) provides no evidence from before 1900 of the Pittsburgh area's characteristic monophthongal /aw/, but since the dialect atlas informants from the Pittsburgh area were almost all rural, it is impossible

to tell whether nobody used the form or whether only city dwellers did (Johnstone, Bhasin & Wittkofski, 2002).

Because of the expense of the research, and because social and geographical mobility has made it increasingly difficult to identify regional speech forms, the Linguistic Atlas of the U.S. and Canada has never been completed. But the maps, worksheets, recordings, and databases that resulted from the completed surveys are still in use, now assembled by William Kretzschmar, archived at the University of Georgia, and available online (http://us.english.uga.edu). Computer technology has made new kinds of mapping possible, and new questions are being asked about the atlas materials.

4. Place as a Social Fact in the Study of Innovation Diffusion

After World War II, physical and human geography became increasingly divorced, as human geography adopted the goals and methods of the newly prestigious social sciences. Geographers developed abstract models of spatial patterns and flows of goods and people, positing, for example, that people invariably try to minimize the distance they have to travel (Rogers, 1983). Statistical and mathematical procedures were favored for arriving at generalizations about the effects of essential characteristics of human behavior, such as the supposedly universal drive towards social equilibrium and homogeneity (later challenged by Marxist theory). This era also marks the development of Lavobian quantitative sociolinguistics, distinguished from traditional dialectology by its scientific character and motivated by the search for the underlying "order" in

heterogeneity and for universal facts about language change. Modeling their work on Labov's, many sociolinguists turned their attention away from regional dialectology, focusing instead on cities and on how demographic facts such as socio-economic class, sex, age, and race were related to patterns of variation and change.

In attempts to model and quantify the spread of linguistic forms and practices, however, quantitative sociolinguists have drawn on models of spatial flow and diffusion from quantitative human geography. The most influential model from the point of view of sociolinguistics has been that of Torsten Hägerstrand (1967[1953]). Hägerstrand's "location theory" is concerned with the simulation and modeling of processes of change across space. The theory has been tested on various patterns of change, including the spread of disease. In Hägerstrand's view, "innovation spreads in a community through a network of face-to-face interpersonal communication such that the likelihood of adoption at a given site is higher when it is close to a site of previous adoption" (Yapa, 1996, p. 238). The assumption underlying this model is that interaction becomes less frequent as a function of distance. Diffusion can also be blocked by such things as economic and class differences or geographical factors that make face-to-face communication less likely. There are also amplifiers of diffusion, such as tightly knit social networks or population density. In general, according to Rogers (1983), the factors that influence diffusion across space include the phenomenon itself (for a phonological change, this might include whether it is a merger or a split), communicative networks, distance, time, and social structure. One effect of the need for face-to-face interaction is that innovations can either move from cities to suburbs to rural areas in a wave-like pattern, or bypass the

rural areas near cities, “cascading” as if through gravitational pull to further-away urban centers where city dwellers are more likely to have contacts. Both are types of “hierarchical” diffusion, models of the spread of change that begins in “central places.”

Hägerstrand’s the diffusion of change was first adopted in sociolinguistics by Trudgill (1974). (See Chambers and Trudgill (1998, p. ch. 11) for an overview of this work.) Trudgill modelled the diffusion of change from London to East Anglia in the U.K. using Hägerstrand’s gravity model, which posits that change will move from larger urban areas to smaller ones, and only then to rural areas. This is because city-dwellers are more likely to interact with people from other cities than with people from the hinterlands. Callary (1975) used the gravity model in a study of the spread of an urban speech form from Chicago to other areas in Illinois, U.S.A. Frazer (1983)and Bailey et al (1993). have used elements of location theory to account for “contra-hierarchical” patterns of change. Such patterns can be seen when change diffuses from rural to urban areas, often in connection with the reassertion of traditional identity in the face of in-migration from elsewhere. Horvath & Horvath (2001), also drawing on location theory, note the difference between “space effects” (such as distance) and “place effects” (the roles of particular urban areas) in the spread of /l/ vocalization in Australia and New Zealand. In a study of the spread of changes across political borders (from the U.S. to Canada), Boberg (2000) discovered that a national border could block or slow the spread of innovative forms, because it is a barrier to face-to-face interaction.

In the work of Trudgill, Boberg, and others, place, defined in terms of its physical or political boundaries, serves as an independent variable: the location of a subset of the research population is hypothesized to predict how far advanced that group will be in a particular change in progress. Many other sociolinguists also think of place in physical or political terms as a "social fact" about speakers. When place is not one of the independent variables in the study, it often serves as a way to organize the target population as the study is designed. Variationists interested in sampling across a range of social classes or racial groups may, for example, choose people in several different neighborhoods, using neighborhood as a rough gauge of class or race. A phonological atlas of U.S. English (Labov, Ash & Boberg, 2005) sampled from a set of "metropolitan statistical areas" defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Like their age or sex, people's place is thought to be an objective fact about them: someone is from Newcastle or New York if he or she was born there or if he or she resides there (depending on the sampling technique). The sense in which one's place of birth or residence can be meaningful in different ways to different people -- the ways in which it might matter whether one was a "real" Geordie, or a "native" New Yorker as opposed to a newcomer – often do not come into the picture.

5. Place as Discourse, Place as Experience: Newer Paradigms

The 1960s and 1970s saw increasing mistrust of social-scientific method in geography and the social theory underlying it. For one thing, geographers skeptical of the static, consensual quality of social-scientific models began to explore Marxist and neo-Marxist social theory, with its focus on struggle and change and on the competing pulls of social

structure and human agency. Humanistic geographers explored the phenomenology of place, describing human interactions with the environment from the humans' perspective. Feminist geographers broadened the discussion of competing social forces beyond the political and economic, calling attention to the multiple ways in which individuals can be socially positioned at different times and in different situations. Human geography is now increasingly allied with cultural studies and the humanities, exploring such issues as the politics of the representation of place, human-designed landscapes and other ways in which space is regimented, and how ideas about the meanings of place circulate in discourse. Sociolinguists have taken similar directions, examining how physical spaces shape social spaces, and vice versa; how place and "place identity" are created and reflected in discourse; and how people's phenomenal experience of place may shape their linguistic behavior and ideology, sometimes in shared and sometimes in idiosyncratic ways.

5.1 Physical Environments and Social Environments

One influential line of work in sociolinguistics has ideas about physical space a step further, exploring how speakers' physical environment can shape patterns of change by shaping how people interact. Beginning in the 1980s, Lesley Milroy and James Milroy (1985; 1987); brought social network theory (borrowed from sociology) to bear on sociolinguistic issues. They explored how the multiplexity and density of speakers' social relations (that is, how many people they interacted with and in how many different ways) could account for the degree to which local linguistic forms were maintained. People with relatively many contacts with neighbors (such that the people they lived near

were also the people they worked, played, and worshipped with) and relatively few contacts with outsiders would be more likely to keep using the local forms their neighbors used, because they would be less likely to be exposed to innovative forms and more likely to be exposed repeatedly to local ones, in settings where sounding like an outsider would be disfavored. This helps explain how socio-economic class affects language change: at least in the settings that have been the focus of study, working-class people are more likely to participate in the dense, multiplex social networks that inhibit change and enforce conformity with local norms. It also points to how class-linked differences in physical environment can shape patterns of variation and change. In Belfast, the working-class people Lesley Milroy studied lived in neighborhoods of densely packed row houses within walking distance of their workplaces. Sectarian violence between Catholics and Protestants meant that some neighborhoods were isolated by fences and sandbags, or by unmarked but clearly understood political boundaries. These facts about the built physical environment are conducive to the formation of tightly-knit social networks.

David Britain (1991; 2002, pp. 612-613) shows how physical geography, cultural landscape, and social location can come together to encourage linguistic differentiation. In the English Fens, there is a bundle of isoglosses that separate the area around Wisbech and the area around King's Lynn. The two towns are physically remote, and, in part due to the marshy physical terrain, the area between them is sparsely populated. Bus routes connect towns to the west of the dialect boundary with Wisbech and towns to the east with King's Lynn. Thus the built environment, reflecting human interaction with the

physical world, also serves to separate the areas. Further, people think of the two areas as different. Residents of one area hold negative stereotypes of residents of the other, and the two areas are often rivals. Partly as a result of these patterns and partly shaping them, people's everyday activities -- shopping, and visiting, for example -- are oriented to one or the other of the two towns.

5.2 Place, Discourse, and Variation

Another strand of work on language and place focuses on the ways in which physical *space* become relevant and meaningful as human *places*. Taken together, this research explores the dialectical relationship between physical space and meaningful place: spaces become human places partly through talk, and the meanings of places shape how people talk. "Discourse" in this sense refers to talk, writing, and other practices involving language, as well as to the ideology that is produced and reinforced through talk. In other words, it is through ways of talking that arise from and evoke particular linked sets of ideas that people come to share or attempt to impose ideas about what places mean and how to behave in them.

Some of this work explores how "place identity" is both reflected and claimed in the phonological details of talk. Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003, p. 24) define place identity as social identity "articulated in terms of place or a specific site." Eckert (1996; 2000; 2004) showed how teens in Detroit can adopt a social persona that links them to the city rather than the school. This identity is linked with a style of talking and other modes

of behaving that orient to the the local environment rather than the institution represented by the school. Thus the "burnouts" in the high school Eckert studied participate in activities that include both cruising the streets of Detroit and speaking with an accent associated with urbanness, raising (ae) to [e] and shifting (e) towards [ʌ] and (ʌ) towards [ɔ]. In a similar study, Rose (ref) showed that the replacement of [ð] and [θ] with the corresponding stop consonants is part of a style in the Midwestern US that is associated with rural life. A somewhat different approach is represented in Hazen (2000), who used "local identity" and "expanded identity" as variables in a quantitative study of Warren County, North Carolina. Hazen found that speakers who "do not identify with cultural characteristics outside the county" (p. 127) are likely to use local nonstandard variants more and to shift styles less than do expanded-identity speakers.

Other research has suggested that speakers confronted with social and economic change may use features associated with a traditional place identity as a way to resist change or reformulate its meaning. They explore how dialect levelling can appear to be counteracted by the reassertion of older speech variants, at least in relatively performed speech (Schilling-Estes, 2002), and how forms once associated with migrants' place of origin can be repurposed as markers of their new locality (Dyer, 2002). Coupland (2001), Johnstone (1999) and others have explored how place-identity can be evoked through the use of regional dialect features in more self-conscious, strategic ways. Complicating these issues, Johnstone and Kiesling (forthcoming) compare the results of a perception task exploring whether Pittsburghers hear monophthongal /aw/ (a feature that occurs almost exclusively in the Pittsburgh area) as local-sounding with analyses of the

same speakers' usage of monophthongal /aw/ in interview speech. Their results show that Pittsburghers to whom monophthongal /aw/ sounds local are unlikely to have this feature in their own speech. This calls into question the assumption that speech features that can be heard in a particular place are necessarily meaningful indexes of the place and points to the need to attend even more carefully than we have to the details of how social meanings get attached to linguistic forms.

Discourse analysts have explored how storytelling and other genres of discourse can evoke and shape the meanings of places and ways of speaking, encouraging people to experience them the same way and learn the same lessons from them. Johnstone (1990) used a corpus of personal-experience stories by people from a Midwestern US city, together with newspaper reports about a disastrous flood there, to show how storytelling can create as well as reflect a sense of place-based community. Both the themes and the style of Fort Wayers' stories serve to reproduce and reinforce local norms for behavior and display appropriate local knowledge, and newspaper accounts of the flood shift from factual reports in which individuals figure as characters to highly dramatized, mythlike discourse in which the city is represented as the protagonist in a battle against the now-personlike flood. Modan (2007) analyzed talk among neighbors and at meetings and written documents such as a grant proposal to explore the "senses of place" of residents of a multi-ethnic neighborhood in Washington, D.C. In this gentrifying neighborhood, conflicting ideas about proper behavior in various places (making music on the street, for example) feed into covertly political debates about who really belongs there, the older, poorer, immigrant population or the newer, wealthier whites. For Modan, "turf wars" are

struggles over the right to define the meanings of places. In a study based on interviews with visitors to the Peak Park in England, McCabe and Stokoe (2004) found that visitors' stories served to distinguish between "good" places (isolated, distant, empty) and "bad" ones (crowded, full of temporary urban tourists). They point out that "[s]tories of place therefore become stories of morality" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 218).

On a more microanalytical level, Myers (2006) explores how participants in focus groups answer the question "Where are you from?" Myers finds that people often revise their answers in response to questions or comments from fellow participants; "formulating place" (Schegloff, 1972)is thus seen to be an interactive, rhetorical task, a process that is not well represented by the way place is treated in most social-science research. Paglai (2003) shows how Tuscans use a speech genre they call "contrasto" – a kind of dialogue duel in song and poetry – to link people with places. As places are named, evoked in metaphors, and hinted at, places and place identities are constructed, revised, linked, and displayed. Paglai's work calls attention to the way place identity can be publicly performed.

As Modan's study makes clear, economic change and social processes associated with it make the meanings of place debatable. Gentrification, migration, colonization, urban redevelopment and the like complicate the meaning of questions like "Where are you?" or "Where are you from?" Anna De Fina (2003) explores one effect of economic globalization in her research on undocumented immigrants in the U.S. Models of narrative like that of Labov (1972) are based on the assumption that people are typically

able to "orient" their listeners to place and movement through it. But undocumented immigrants' stories of "crossing borders" are often characterized by *dis*orientation, as the narrators characterize themselves as being out of place and time, out of control.

Returning to the topic of linguistic variation and change, recent work on the "enregistration" of dialects (Agha, 2003) explores how sets of linguistic forms that are hearable or visible in an area can coalesce, in people's minds, into "dialects," and how dialects get linked with cities and regions In Pittsburgh, PA, economic decline starting in the 1960s and reaching its nadir in the 1980s caused people to become aware that they spoke with an accent. Pittsburghers travelling elsewhere for leisure or, increasingly, for permanent work encountered people who told them they sounded different and used different words. At the same time, demographic change caused people to look for new symbols of Pittsburgh place identity. Many members of the generation of working-class Pittsburghers coming of age in the 1980s were the grandchildren of immigrant steelworkers. No longer speaking the homeland language or identifying with the homeland religion, they began to develop class and regional consciousness – and the features of local speech which they could hear were available as a way of indexing these new identities. Johnstone and her colleagues have explored how the links between local speech and local identity have been forged through discursive practices like newspaper feature-writing (Johnstone et al., 2002), the telling of travel stories (Johnstone, 2005), and nostalgic online chat (Johnstone & Baumgardt, 2004), and what is happening as a new generation of Pittsburghers, who no longer speak with strong local accents, begin to

perform and refer to a subset of local speech features to evoke a new post-industrial urban identity (Johnstone, Andrus & Danielson, 2006).

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Beal (1999) explores the history of the social evaluation of features of Northumbrian or "Geordie" speech. The distinctive pronunciation of /r/ called the "burr" has been remarked on for centuries, associated by Shakespeare with the Northumbrian Hotspur and thus with royalty and the "antiquity" of Northumbrians' blood. Despite this positive evaluation, this feature has disappeared in urban Newcastle speech; Beal suggests that this is because it was associated with the area rather than with the city. Also the subject of longtime stereotyping is the unshifted Middle English /u:/ in the class of words that includes *town*, *brown*, and *out*. Unlike the burr, this feature is negatively evaluated, but it is linked with local urban identity. In part because of its negative associations, the feature is on the whole becoming less common as people in Newcastle adopt a more regional, less local way of speaking. But Beal shows that the feature has been "lexicalized" – confined, that is, to words like *toon* in *The Toon* (Newcastle United Football Club) and *broon*, in "Newcastle Brown Ale." Here, then, is one way in which metadiscourse about dialect can affect language change; unlike many other negatively stereotyped features, ones linked with place identity can be preserved, if only in a small set of words.

Also interrogating how the people we study themselves imagine dialects and places, Wolfram (2004), for example, discusses what characterizes"remnant dialects" and "isolated speech communities." He suggests that "isolation" is not simply a result of

topography; rather "locally constructed identity plays an important role in the development and maintenance of peripheral dialects." Some aspects of dialect distinctiveness may in face become more rather than less marked when "isolated" people encounter outsiders, because they may feel the need to differentiate themselves linguistically.

5.3 Experiencing Variation: Linguistic Landscapes and Soundscapes

In a book called *The Betweenness of Place*, geographer N. J. Entrikin (1991)explores how places, in modern life, are always both physical and experiential. In other words, people's experience of place is shaped not both by physical characteristics of the environment and by the ways in which individuals experience the environment. For example, two people living in a town surrounded by mountains may share a physical environment. But depending on the circulating discourses to which they are exposed as well as other, even more particular aspects of their life histories, they may experience the mountains in different ways. One of these people might have grown up hearing the town characterized as remote and provincial, being told how important it would be to see the wider, more interesting world, experiencing the mountains as places for enforced Girl Scout hikes and icy winter roads that made travel treacherous. She might experience the mountains as a cage or a trap. She might notice how dark they look in winter. After trips to more open country, she might notice that, at home, you could never see the horizon. To the other person, growing up in a family that had lived in the valley for generations, never planning to leave, experiencing the mountains as a source of deer and turkey and

hunting as an essential rite of maleness, the mountains might seem comforting. He might remember not their darkness on winter drives, but their dramatic fall colors during autumn hunts.

Geography in this "humanistic" tradition focuses on "the perspective of experience" (Tuan, 1977)in the study of space and place. Geographers like Entrikin, Tuan, and Buttimer (1993) explore how people experience places, both as immediate everyday experiences (smells, sights, sounds, tastes and textures) and in more abstract ways shaped by the shared discourses about their meanings that are reproduced in things like atlases, geography textbooks, and histories. As Robert Mugerauer points out, dialect can be one facet of this experience, for some people (Mugerauer, 1985). And, just as with mountains, different people in the same physical environment experience linguistic variation in ways that are constrained both by what is locally visible and hearable and by more particular aspects of individual experience.

Several strands of sociolinguistic research also draw on the sense that people's experiences of place make a difference. One of these is research on "linguistic landscapes." Much of this research is based on a 1997 study by social psychologists Landry and Bourhis entitled "Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study" (Landry & Bourhis, 1977). Landry and Bourhis define linguistic landscape (LL) as "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings" (p. 25). Interest in the LL emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in the field of language

planning, where practitioners began to recognize the importance of making the boundaries of linguistic territories visible by regulating the languages used on public signs and in place names. Landry and Bourhis conducted a factor-analysis study of tests and questionnaires administered in several bilingual areas. The analysis supported their hypothesis that "the more the in-group language is used on government and private signs, the more individuals will perceive the in-group to have high E[thnolinguistic] V[itality]" (Landry & Bourhis, 1977, p. 35).

In his introduction to a collection of papers about linguistic landscapes in Israel, Thailand, Japan, Friesland in the Netherlands, and the Basque Country in Spain, Durk Gorter (2006) points out that growing interest in this area results partly from the availability of inexpensive digital cameras that allow researchers to collect data at minimal cost and archive and sort them easily on computers. Taking Landry and Bourhis' finding that linguistic landscapes make a difference as a starting point, the papers in this volume expand on it. Ben-Rafael et al (2006) suggest that linguistic landscapes can be seen in terms of the "symbolic construction of the public space," where rational considerations affecting what languages are used must be balanced with self-presentational factors and considerations of power (see also Backhaus's (2006) chapter on multilingual signs in Japan). Huebner (2006) studies private-sector signs as well as government-sponsored ones in a variety of Bankok neighborhoods, exploring the effects of English even in Thai-language signs (which sometimes use the Roman alphabet, for example). Cenoz and Gorter (2006) compare the prepresentation of minority languages on signs in two places with different official policies with regard to these languages.

Broader approaches to the experience of language in the landscape are represented in the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and Scollon and Scollon (2003). Both come the issue not through an interest in language policy and planning but through an interest in semiosis (meaning-making) more generally, and both are concerned with mulitmodality – how discourse in other modes interacts with discourse in language. Kress's larger context is that of "social semiotics;" he is interested in such things as the relative placement of images in a picture or the relationship of pictures to text, and his approach to explaining their effects draws on systemic-functional linguistic theory and sociological theories about how power is claimed and maintained in discourse. Scollon and Scollon call their framework "geosemiotics," or "the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world" (2). In other words, they are interested in how the particular geographical site of a message or an interaction and the particular time at which it happens affect its meaning.

Experiences of language and place also occur in the mediated environment of television. Jaworski, Thurlow, Lawson, and Ylanne-McEwen (2003), for example, examined the uses of languages other than English on British TV shows about travel. In general, they found, English was represented as a global language. Although reporters sometimes began conversations with foreign locals in the local langage, they soon switched to English. Foreign languages were represented were "reduced to the status of a handful of fixed phrases found in guide-book glossaries and exoticized linguascapes" (p. 5). Findings such as these have clear implications for language planning and policy,

since representations of the utility of languages affect people's willingness to learn and use them. They also show, once again, that the relationship between language and place is complex and multifaceted. Linguistic difference, the topic of sociolinguistics, is not just a result of physical distance or topography, as we once imagined. Rather, language is linked with place, or not, though ideas about what language, languages, varieties, and places mean, and these ideas are produced and circulated in talk and taken up in individuals' experience of the linguistic landscapes they encounter.

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