Ideology and discourse in the enregisterment of regional variation

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1. Introduction

This chapter adopts a social constructivist, discourse analytic approach to the question of how geography and language variation are related. Sociolinguists have typically thought of place in physical terms, as the location of speakers or varieties in space, on the globe or on a map. In order to understand the role of place in the sociolinguistic processes I am interested in, however, we need to conceptualize place not just as a demographic fact about speakers but as an ideological construct, created in human interaction. I am interested how places, and ways of doing things associated with places, emerge in social interactions that are enabled and constrained by particular material, historical, and cultural factors.

In this chapter, I explore the idea of the regional variety. Since the earliest days of dialectology, linguists have always been skeptical about the possibility of actually finding ways of speaking that have clear geographical boundaries. At the same time, however, we are also often drawn to talk as if there were such things as Southern speech or Pittsburghese. In this, we follow the lead of laypeople, who often have no trouble labeling and characterizing speech varieties in such a way as to suggest that they have sharp boundaries. If we simply rule out the lay view as uninteresting and wrong, we risk missing the ways in which laypeople’s ideas about regional variation can be consequential in the study of patterns of linguistic variation and change.

I am grateful to my fellow participants in the workshop on Language and Geographical Space held at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Research (FRIAS) in November, 2009, most particularly to organizers Peter Auer, Martin Hilpert, Anja Stukenbrock, and Benedikt Szencsanyi, for providing the venue and audience for the first draft of this chapter and introducing me to some new ways of conceptualizing dialectology. A generous research fellowship from FRIAS from January to July, 2011, allowed me to deepen my understanding of some of these issues, and comments from Peter Auer helped greatly to sharpen the argument in the chapter. I am also grateful to my fellow workers on the Pittsburgh Speech and Society Project, which was partially funded by U.S. National Science Foundation Award No. BCS-0417684.
If we want to understand why people think that there are clearly bounded regional varieties of language, we need to understand the social and semiotic practices that give rise to this idea. One useful framework for doing this is the idea of "enregisterment" suggested by Asif Agha (2003, 2006). Enregisterment is the process by which linguistic forms become linked to sociolinguistic "registers", or ways of speaking, acting, and being. Using Pittsburghese, the imagined dialect of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area, as my example, I show how the plots of personal-experience narratives about encounters with linguistic difference can enregister linguistic forms with place and place-identity. Theoretically, then, the chapter argues for the usefulness of enregisterment as a way of understanding how language ideology arises and circulates. Methodologically, it argues for the value of discourse analysis in the study of language and space.

2. Regional varieties are not empirical objects

The idea that languages can be divided up into varieties has always had an ambiguous status in linguistics. Dialectologists and sociolinguists have known since the earliest attempts to map variant forms that the world does not present itself to us with neat linguistic boundaries waiting to be discovered. Dialects and dialect boundaries are idealizations. W. N. Francis, a fieldworker on the Survey of English Dialects, points this out on the first page of the introductory chapter of his textbook *Dialectology*.

The truth is that dialect boundaries are usually elusive to the point of non-existence. Very seldom does a traveler cross an imaginary line and suddenly find the people using a new and quite different dialect from that used on the other side of the line (Francis 1983: 2–3).

To support the point, Francis quotes 19th century dialectologists like Gaston Paris and Louis Gauchat. In their textbook, J.K. Chambers and Peter Trudgill similarly point out that "the labels 'dialect' and 'accent' [...] are used by linguists in an essentially ad hoc manner" (Chambers & Trudgill 1998: 5), since what can actually be observed are continua of variation rather than discrete varieties.

Current dialectology suggests that rather than starting with relatively small sets of pre-chosen variable features (different ways of saying the same word, different words for the same thing, different grammatical or discourse patterns for the same purpose) and looking for dialect boundaries by aggregating the dividing lines between variants of them, we need to look at how much larger numbers of variant tokens cluster together, trying to remain ag-
nostalgic about what the clusters represent and to pay attention not just to the centers of clusters but to their peripheries (Goebel 1982; Kretzschmar 1996; Nerbonne, this volume; Szmrecsanyi 2012; Viereck 1985). Once our aim is no longer to find and describe varieties or languages, but rather to find and describe the spatial patterns that emerge in large corpora of speech, we are led to reimagine varieties and languages not as empirical objects but as ideological, concepts that come into being in particular historical and material contexts, via particular sets of discursive practices. To put it another way, the only thing we can actually observe are specific facts about how specific people pronounce specific sounds and which words and structures people adopt in particular situations in which they have multiple options. If we make enough such observations (and computers now allow us to assemble and analyze sets of millions of linguistic data points), we can detect patterns in the spatial distribution of particular forms. In the U.S., for example, we could find more instances of /ay/ pronounced as [ai] (as in mub for my) in the southeastern states than elsewhere. We could find other features as well whose distribution was different in the southeast than elsewhere. But the patterns are never exactly the same from one feature to another, and there are always exceptions to the rule, forms that occur where we do not expect them to. In order to claim that there is a southern "variety" or "dialect" of U.S. English, we must abstract away from the facts we can actually observe, generalize over them, and ignore the exceptions. We may want to do this, for one reason or another, but when we do we are not simply describing something but creating it, for some particular set of reasons. This is what it means to say that language varieties are socially constructed.

Contemporary dialectologists thus stress the political, historically contingent reasons for dialectology's mapping of boundaries (Auer 2005) and the ways in which people's perceptions of regional linguistic boundaries and regionally variable features are ideologically shaped (Niedzielski 1999; Niedzielski & Preston 1999; Preston 1989). What regional dialectologists study are not varieties, but the distribution of regionally variable features, and what they find are not boundaries, but continua; not neat bundles of isoglosses but fuzziness.

Modern variationist sociolinguistics has some of its roots in and still draws on the data of the European and North American dialect atlas projects.

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The term "dialect" is used differently in continental Europe than in the U.S. and the U.K., where "dialect" is often synonymous with "regional variety." In this chapter, I use "dialect" only when the people I am quoting or paraphrasing might use it.
(particularly later ones in which social differentiation was acknowledged and described). For example, in his seminal paper "The social motivation of a sound change", William Labov (1963: notes 11, 12) cites the Linguistic Atlas of New England. Yet sociolinguists' objects of study are, likewise, speech communities or communities of practice, not regions; distributions and correlates of variation, not varieties. In general, the sociolinguistics of the later 20th century moved away from explicit concern with the linguistic effects of space, turning instead to the study of other "sociolinguistic patterns" (Labov 1972a), accounting for patterns of variation with reference to class, gender, and style. Early work in sociolinguistics was precisely about how and why speech patterns varied within areas like Martha's Vineyard or the Lower East Side neighborhood of New York, because spatially defined areas are rarely linguistically homogeneous. Language differences are not automatic reflexes of speakers' physical locations or places of origin, nor do speakers' occupations or places of origin always explain very much of the variation among them (Szmrecsányi 2010).

Social constructivist and phenomenological approaches to place from cultural/critical and humanistic geographers also suggest the need to reexamine how we have been conceptualizing explanatory variables connected with place (Johnstone 2004). Rather than asking about how speech co-variates with physical location, we are beginning to ask how meaningful places are constructed in speech and other forms of interaction, how individuals experience place, and how the use of one set of linguistic variants versus another can result from and contribute to these processes. For example, Carmen Llamas (2007) has shown that people in an English town on the border of two vernacular regions differ in how they pronounce certain words depending on whether they feel that the town belongs in one region or the other. Penelope Eckert (2004) correlates the use of urban-sounding speech variants with how teenagers in Detroit experience the city. Scott Kiesling and the rest of our Pittsburgh research team have started to explore the role of various kinds of local orientation in shaping patterns of use (Kiesling et al. 2005), and Kiesling and I have explored how people's experiences of the city affect how they hear and evaluate local speech forms (Johnstone & Kiesling, 2008).

And yet the term dialect, often used in the English-speaking world as a synonym for variety, is still very much in evidence in sociolinguistics, and it is often used to label place-linked patterns of speech. The term appears in textbooks: Ronald Wardhaugh's An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (2006) and Janet Holmes' Introduction to Sociolinguistics (2008) both have sections or chapters on "regional dialects" as well as "social dialects". And it appears in research ar-
ticles. A search for dialect in the journal Language in Society, founded well after the heyday of the large-scale regional dialectology projects, yields 820 hits, at least 16 of which are articles with dialect in the title. Some of these are very recent. Edinburgh University Press published a series of books about place-defined ways of speaking called “Dialects of English”; the series’ first volume appeared in 2007. The term dialect appears 18 times in the program for the 2009 New Ways of Analyzing Variation conference, the North American gathering of socio-linguists which was founded specifically to move the field beyond the kind of theoretically naïve dialectology that was seen as the old way of analyzing variation. Even though sociolinguists are in theory more interested in patterns of variation and change within communities than in differences between them, and despite our well-founded skepticism about the ontological status of language varieties and dialects (not to mention languages), our results are often used to make claims about areal varieties like the Ocracoke brogue or Southern speech. In doing this, we implicitly adopt a different view of language and of the reasons for variation, a view much more like that of laypeople.

3. Regional varieties are social constructs

Although linguistic variation may be audible to someone listening for it, a variety is not. What linguists and laypeople alike encounter in lived experience are particular speakers, writers, or signers, saying particular things in particular ways. The variation between one speaker and another, or between an individual’s speech in one situation as opposed to another, is often unnoticeable to a particular hearer. In order to become noticeable, a particular variant must be linked with an ideological schema in terms of which it can be evaluated in contrast to another variant. Associations between particular features of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, on one hand, and imagined languages, varieties, and speech communities, on the other, arise in social practices that are enabled and constrained by larger-scale political and economic conditions. As Michael Silverstein (1998: 204) puts it, “users of languages in essence construe culturally particular concepts of denotational normativity that bind subsets of them into ‘language’-bearing groups”.

The links between social groups and languages, although not entirely arbitrary, are unstable, especially when social and geographic mobility create situations in which people come into contact with other ways of speaking. As a result of such contact, argues Silverstein (1998: 415), communities become increasingly aware of the peculiarities of their ways of speaking, and this in turn encourages them to think of themselves as groups. At the same time,
the concept of locality is unsteadied and the link between language and place is problematized. According to Silverstein (1998: 404), global-scale processes such as colonization, de-colonization, global economies in which communication and information are commodified, and diasporic flows of people have created a situation in which locality no longer has an essential link to language. Linguistic locality is produced, as “particular, geopolitically conceptualized, bounded swatches of the earth [are] attached to particular labels for ‘languages’ – and their bearers” (Silverstein 1998: 405).

For many non-linguists, however, regional varieties seem very real. There is evidence of this in how people talk about regional variation. As Chambers and Trudgill put it, “we are used to talking of accents and dialects as if they were well-defined, separate entities: ‘a southern accent’, ‘the Somerset dialect’” (Chambers & Trudgill 1998: 5). There is also evidence from Dennis Preston’s (1989) well-known dialect mapping experiments. Asked to draw dialect boundaries on maps and label the dialects, people have no trouble. They may not agree on where the boundaries are or on the names, but they do not question the possibility of performing the task. In my sociolinguistic interviews in the Pittsburgh area, I asked people to describe “Pittsburghese”. No one challenged the question’s presupposition that there is such an entity, and all were willing to provide examples. The answers paint a picture of a set of speech forms that is far more sharply distinct from neighboring varieties than is actually the case. Typically, Pittsburghese is thought to be a set of words, phrases, or “sayings” that are unique to Pittsburgh, different from what can be heard anywhere else, and incomprehensible to outsiders. One or two people called it an “accent”. Some labeled Pittsburghese as “slang”, “colloquialisms”, or “dialect” (in the sense of a nonstandard variety), but others called it a “language”.

Whether or not it exists from a dialectologist’s point of view, Pittsburghese is central to the way Pittsburghers imagine themselves and their city. As a set of highly standardized representations of pronunciation, words, and phrases that people think are local, Pittsburghese is visible throughout the city as well as in places where ex-Pittsburghers congregate. Pittsburghese can be seen in folk dictionaries and online glossaries, on souvenirs, beer mugs and t-shirts, on graffiti tags and in the names of rock bands, literary magazines, and restaurants. Pittsburghese forms can be used in casual written or spoken interaction to make playful reference to one’s Pittsburgh identity or that of one’s interlocutors. Five of the most commonly used forms, represented here as they usually are in writing but also common in oral performances of Pittsburghese, are listed in Figure 1 together with some characteristic contexts of use.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>form</th>
<th>gloss</th>
<th>examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>y&quot;ing, y&quot;ing</td>
<td>'you', pl.</td>
<td><em>Enemies of Ying</em> is a rock band; a <em>yinger</em> is a person with a strong local identity; <em>Ying%play</em> was the name of a museum exhibit for children; a linguist might say <em>See y&quot;ing tomorrow</em> in a playful email to fellow linguists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dahntahn</td>
<td>'downtown' (with monophthongized /aw/)</td>
<td>In a political cartoon, the destination of a city bus is Dahntahn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stillers, Stillers</td>
<td>the Pittsburgh Steelers (Pittsburgh's American football team, with lax ed /a/ before /r/)</td>
<td>Decorative license plates and bumper stickers for cars say Stillers in the team's colors; on a t-shirt, the term is defined as four time Super Bowl champs with unfinished business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jaggoff</td>
<td>an irritating or stupid person (Although its origin is different, jaggoff sounds similar enough to jack off, 'matureate', to be useable in strategically ambiguous ways.)</td>
<td>A t-shirt says I'm surrounded by jaggoffs. Another t-shirt represents its pronunciation the way a dictionary would (jag'off) and defines it using other colloquial terms: &quot;1. idiot 2. jerk 3. butthead&quot;. A chalked sign in a bar in Washington, DC that caters to Pittburghers says Stillers ain't no jaggoffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n'at, n'atu</td>
<td>'and that; et cetera, and so on, and stuff like that'</td>
<td>A magazine advertisement for Iron City beer depicts a Thanksgiving bird made from <em>chipped ham</em> (a Pittsburgh specialty, and also an often-represented term in Pittburghese) with <em>pirogus</em> (eastern European dumplings thought of as the typical local food) for wings and beer bottles for legs. The caption is Who needs turkey n'at?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Like it? Some Pittburghese words and their uses**

Almost every linguistic feature that is included in written representations and oral imitations of Pittburghese is a feature that some Pittburgh-area speakers actually produce in everyday, unsselfconscious speech, although the representations almost always suggest that the range of the feature's use is...
narrower than it is. For example, the monophthongal pronunciation of /aw/ that is almost inevitably represented in the word *daintily* is, for people whose phonological systems dictate a monophthongal realization of /aw/, not confined to the word *daintily*. Rather, it occurs whenever this phoneme occurs in a closed syllable (Johnstone, Bhasin & Wittkofski, 2002). Pittsburgh speech and Pittsburghese are related not as an accurate and an inaccurate depiction of the same thing, but as interacting forces, one linguistic and one ideological, that shape Pittsburgh speech today and its trajectory of change. Like any other regional variety Pittsburghese is thus both not real — there is no set of linguistic forms with tightly bundled isoglosses surrounding the city — and very real — consequential for how Pittsburghers imagine themselves and the city and for how they use language. We are led, then, to ask when and why a regional variety like Pittsburghese might emerge as a useful category for making sense of the world. To answer this question, we need to think about how people experience linguistic variation and how ideas about language, space, and place shape their experience, linking linguistic forms with experienced places.

4. Enregistering variation

Geographic mobility associated with economic change has historically resulted at the same time in the collapse of linguistic distinctions among people from different places (Milroy 2002; Trudgill 1986) and, at least in some places, in increased popular attention to regional variation (Beal 2009; Johnstone & Baumgardt 2004). This is because the social and economic conditions that cause people to speak more alike are the same as those that give rise to the activities in which dialects or regional varieties are constructed as shared representations of ways of talking linked to place and other aspects of social identity. Linguistic anthropologist Asif Agha provides a framework for understanding this apparent paradox.

In a study of the history of Received Pronunciation (RP) in Britain, Agha (2003, 2006) points to some of the mechanisms involved in the identification of a set of linguistic forms as a “linguistic repertoire differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register” which has come to index “speaker status linked to a specific scheme of cultural values” (Agha 2003: 231). While became RP was once a set of phonological features the use of which was more or less automatic consequence of growing up in southeastern England where everyone spoke that way. Accordingly, the features had no social meaning to the people who used them. Over the past three centuries, however, via a variety of prescriptivist ideas and discursive and metadiscursive
tivities that circulated these ideas, a set of these features were "enregistered" as an accent. That is to say that a set of pronunciation features that were once heard only in part of southern England came to be represented collectively in the public imagination as a prestige variety, RP, and the value of this variety was maintained across time and region via practices like schooling that reiterated its value and its link to social status.

To reiterate, a form that is enregistered is one that is linked with a way of speaking (or "register") associated with a personal or social identity. RP is a set of enregistered forms linked with social prestige. Regional varieties are sets of forms that are enregistered according to a different ideological schema (or set of cultural values), one which links variation in speech with place. This ideological schema comes to the fore when people encounter people who are from elsewhere and who sound different. Being from Pittsburgh and using particular speech features become linked by virtue of a variety of discursive practices: people argue about "our local dialect" on an internet discussion forum; people who have moved away share nostalgic memories of how people talk at home; someone realizes that t-shirts imprinted with local words and phrases will sell. In the remainder of this chapter, I explore the role of personal-experience narrative in the enregisterment of Pittsburghese. I show that personal narrative is one of the discursive practices through which certain speech features that can be heard locally are typified as signals of localness, and normative instructions about how to hear and use this (imagined) vernacular variety are disseminated.

5. Narrating encounters with linguistic difference

My colleagues and I have described elsewhere how geographic, linguistic, and historical facts came together after 1950 or so to set the stage in Pittsburgh for the enregisterment of Pittsburghese as a variety linked ideologically with place (Johnstone, Andrus & Danielson 2006). Onto this stage have emerged discursive practices and artifacts that serve to enregister Pittsburghese in the local imagination as unique and unchanging. One of these practices is the telling of stories about encounters with linguistic difference, either as an outsider coming to the city or as a Pittsburgher going elsewhere. To highlight the similarities and differences among these personal experience stories, I draw on Vladimir Propp's (1968) structural analysis of folktales. To account for their ideological force, I turn to Labov & Waletzky's (1997) well-known work on the structure and function of personal-experience narrative. Thus in the pro-

This section is adapted from Johnstone 2007a.
cess of illustrating how regional-variety enregisterment can work, I also point to the value of discourse analysis in the study of dialectology.

In narratives by Pittsburghers about linguistic encounters elsewhere, local speech is evoked in one of two ways. In some, the Pittsburgher is told that some word or bit of grammar he or she uses is nonstandard, or at least different from what someone from elsewhere would say. The narrative in example (1) arose as Molly G., a woman in her 30s, answered an interview question, “So, have you ever heard of Pittsburgheese?”.

Example (1)

Molly G. Well, I was in college- ((Laughing)) This is so embarrassing and this is going to be on the tape. ((Intake of breath)) My roommate said, “You know, that isn’t proper English”. I said, “What?” And she said, “You- you said your ‘shirt needs ironed.’” I’m like, “Well, it does”.

BJ ((Laughs))

Molly G. She said, “Well, it either ‘needs ironing,’ or it ‘needs to be ironed.’” And it never occurred to me ...

I had never been corrected [all] the way through school

[Mm-hmm.]

Bj

Molly G. even though we studied grammar and everything else that ...

Mm-hmm.

BJ

Molly G. And that’s a Pittsburgh thing. ((1 second pause)) I- I think.

This narrative enregisters “needs ironed” in two ways. The roommate’s reaction, as Molly represents it, enregisters the form as non-standard (not “proper English”). Molly reinforces this link between “needs ironed” and non-standardness in saying that she “had never been corrected” for using it,

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4 The interviewees’ names are pseudonyms. In the transcribed extracts, I use normal orthography and punctuation as much as possible, for readability.

- [ ] Single square brackets enclose simultaneous speech, which is left-aligned.
- [[ ]] Double square brackets enclose phonetic transcription, when it is necessary for following the extract.
- = Equals signs indicate that the second utterance follows immediately on the first.
- ( ) Empty single parentheses indicate the presence of verbal material that could not be made out.
- ( ( )) Double parentheses enclose transcriber comments about voice quality, gaze, or nonverbal sounds.
framing it as incorrect. In the final line, however, Molly further enregisters the form with Pittsburgh: “that’s a Pittsburgh thing”.

Kristi G. was a student in her early 20s, talking about an experience at her university in another state. Here is her answer to a question about whether anyone had ever told her she spoke like a Pittsburgher.

Example (2)
Kristi G. Um, the only people that, I’ve really noticed, like, get on me because of my accent is, I called, I asked for a gumband from some kid from Ohio, and he didn’t know what that was, and I was like, “A gumband, I need it for this”, and so, bout five minutes later he, like, figured out it was a rubber band, or something like that, so, they got me on that one.

Here, “gumband” is enregistered with place both by virtue of the fact that Kristi cited the word in connection with a conversation about place and by virtue of how she identifies her interlocutor: “some kid from Ohio”, making place relevant by using it as a membership categorization device (Sacks 1972).

In other stories, someone recognizes the Pittsburgher’s origin on the basis of his or her accent. Jen R., a woman in her 40s, and her daughter, Donna R., who was 13, co-narrate such a story. They were talking about local speech.

Example (3)
Jen R. Well when I’ve been in [different] states, in different cities,
Bj [Mm hmmm]
Donna R. They’ll- they’ll say “You’re from Pittsburgh”.
Jen R. Yeah, they’ll immediately [say],
Donna R. [When we were in] South Carolina, right?
Jen R. “You’re from Pennsylvania=”,
Donna R. “=Yeah, you’re- you’re [definite-]”
Jen R. [“Are you-], are you from the Pittsburgh area?”
Donna R. Yeah. (laughing)
Bj Does that happen to you, too, or=?
Donna R. =Yeah. I mean, I remember one time, we were in South Carolina visiting my, my uncle and my two cousins and my aunt. And we went to (s- some) store, and we were talking about how like the South kind of moves slow,
[You know?]

Jen R. [Yeah, ] [God, it drives you crazy.]

Donna R. [And then she's like] she's like, “You guys from Pennsylvania?” We're like “Yeah”. And she's like “You guys wouldn't happen to be from Pittsburgh, right?” And we're like, “We're from Pittsburgh”. And she's like, “Oh, okay. I can tell by your accent”.

In this narrative, what is enregistered with Pittsburgh is not a particular word or structure but an “accent”. This creates (or, more likely in this situation, reinforces) the idea that there is a Pittsburgh variety rather than any particular idea of what it consists of.

Outsiders’ stories have to do with communicative difficulties they encounter in Pittsburgh. An example comes from a radio talk show on which I was interviewed. The interviewer, Lynn Cullen, moved to Pittsburgh as an adult, to take a new job. She introduced the topic of the interview with a personal-experience narrative.

Example (4)

Lynn Cullen: The first night I ever spent in Pittsburgh, uhm, I had come in to look for an apartment, or a home, somewhere to live because I was going to be moving here to live, and there was a horrible blizzard, that night, and I found myself snowed in at a Holiday Inn on the Parkway East, and, I just tuned on the TV, thought I might as well watch Channel 4 where I was going to be employed, and the first interview was with a guy who owned a gas station, right off the Parkway. His name was Peewee.

(1.5 sec)

And Peewee was talkin’ to the reporter about how he was knee deep in people coming in off the Parkway and he couldn't help ’em any more and there wasn’t any gas, and there wasn’t any help, and people were stuck, and his tow truck couldn’t this and that.

((breath intake)) ((2 sec))

I think that's what he was talking about. I did not really understand a word the man said. And I remember sitting there and thinking, “Is he talking English?” wondering why, this wasn’t being subtitled.
As with extract (3), the "I can tell by your accent" story, what Cullen does here is to link Pittsburgh with an accent (arguably even a language, given the fact that she represents herself as wondering whether the garage owner was "talking English").

Another such story has to do with an outsider's more specific communicative difficulty having to do with a pair of words, *towel* and *tile*, that are homophonic in some Pittsburghers' speech. I am the narrator in this example; my interlocutor, Raymond T., is a native Pittsburgher.

Example (5)

BJ In fact, one of the first, encounters I had when I moved to Pittsburgh was a, walking, the dog in the, in Frick Park in the morning and there was a, gentleman who also walks his dog who's a real estate agent, from Squirrel Hill, he's, we were talking about what we were going to do during the day, he said, that he was gonna have some workmen come in and replace the [[taz]] in his bathroom.

Raymond T. [([laughing)])

BJ [[I thought "Why would you need workmen ([laugh voice]) to replace the towels in your bathroom, why couldn't you do that yourself?"]]

Raymond T. [([laughs)])

BJ Turned out he meant the *tiles*, (in the bathroom).

Raymond T. [([laughing)]) They were heavy [[taz]].

BJ They were heavy towels, yeah, ([laughing voice]) yeah.

Here, as in examples (1) and (2) above, it is a particular feature of speech that is enregistered with Pittsburgh, represented as something that happened "when I moved to Pittsburgh" and narrated in the context of a discussion of Pittsburgh speech.

6. Plot types and ideological work

Not two personal narratives of linguistic encounter are identical, and all are based in some way in personal experience, which is necessarily idiosyncratic. Thus what circulates as a model for the discursive practice of telling stories like these are not actual stories but rather plots, or semantic scaffolds on which stories can be built. To describe these plots, we need a way of abstracting away from the particular details of stories. Proppian "morphological" analysis is useful for this. Vladimír Propp's (1968) system of functional analy-
sis was intended to aid in the classification and comparison of fairytales.\footnote{Propp's structuralism can be interpreted as implying that there is a universal deep structure underlying the fairy tale genre that is drawn on to generate particular tales. I do not adopt this view. I see Propp's formulation as a useful way of making post facto generalizations about the structure of narrative, not as a generative mechanism.} A "function", for Propp (1968: 21), "is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action". Functions are repeatable from tale to tale, no matter which character fulfills them and how, and in a class of stories with the same functions, their sequence is always identical. The structure of a given fairytale type is described as a series of Roman-numbered clauses, each encapsulated in a noun such as 'interdiction', 'flight', or 'departure'. Annotations following each clause provide descriptive detail and examples.

Using Propp's method to describe the plot types exemplified above, we might arrive at something like Figures 2 and 3.

I. THE TELLER/PROTAGONIST IS A PITTSBURGHER (initial situation)
II. THE TELLER/PROTAGONIST LEAVES HOME (move)
1. The move may be that of a student going to college, someone moving for work, someone going on vacation.
III. THE TELLER/PROTAGONIST ENCOUNTERS AN OUTSIDER (encounter)
IV. THE TELLER/PROTAGONIST SAYS SOMETHING (utterance)
1. Typically, the teller/protagonist says very little, a word or a phrase.
V. THE OUTSIDER REACTS (reaction)
1. The reaction orients to or comments on some aspect of the form of the teller/protagonist's speech.
2. The reaction can take the form of a correction, indication of failure to understand, or recognition of the Pittsburgher's provenance.
VI. THE REACTION CAUSES THE TELLER/PROTAGONIST TO MAKE A GENERALIZATION ABOUT PITTSBURGH SPEECH (generalization)
1. Usually, this generalization is explicit and functions as the point of the narrative.

Fig. 2. Encounter with linguistic difference: Type 1
I. THE TELLER/PROTAGONIST IS NOT A PITTSBURGHER (initial situation)
II. THE TELLER/PROTAGONIST COMES TO PITTSBURGH (move)
   1. The move may be that of a student coming to college, someone moving for work, someone on vacation.
III. THE TELLER/PROTAGONIST ENCOUNTERS A PITTSBURGHER (encounter)
IV. THE PITTSBURGHER SAYS SOMETHING (utterance)
   1. The Pittsburgher may say very little, a word or a phrase.
V. THE TELLER/PROTAGONIST MISUNDERSTANDS OR FAILS TO UNDERSTAND (reaction)
   1. The misunderstanding has to do with some aspect of the form of the Pittsburgher’s speech.
VI. THE REACTION CAUSES THE TELLER/PROTAGONIST TO MAKE A GENERALIZATION ABOUT PITTSBURGH SPEECH (generalization)
   1. Usually, this generalization is explicit and functions as the point of the narrative.

Fig. 3. Encounter with linguistic difference: Type 2

Thinking about linguistic encounter narratives in this abstract way highlights similarities and differences among them and points to how they work ideologically to circulate claims about what counts as Pittsbughese and who speaks it, to link this variety with place, and to differentiate it sharply from other varieties. For one thing, both plot types require geographic mobility (Function II) and an encounter between a Pittsburgher and a non-Pittsburgher that is usually face-to-face. Encounters by Pittsburghers with outsiders happen outside of Pittsburgh, and encounters by outsiders with Pittsburghers happen in Pittsburgh. Thus speech is ideologically linked with place not just in the details in the stories, but on the more abstract level of their plots.

The two story types are different with regard to the social identity of the encounteree (Function III). Pittsburghers’ stories (Type 1) tend to name and describe the non-Pittsburgher they encounter in ways that link linguistic variation with place, while non-Pittsburghers’ stories (Type 2) tend to name and describe the Pittsburghers they encounter in ways that link linguistic variation with class and ethnicity. In the stories in which the teller/protagonist are Pittsburghers narrating encounters elsewhere, the encounter is often with someone identified as a social peer: students’ encounters are with fellow students, for example. Social identities are suggested only indirectly if at all (“my roommate” (1), “she” (3)), with the exception of identities connected
with place: "this kid from Ohio" (2). In these stories, then, linguistic difference is correlated with place, and not with such social identities as class or ethnicity. In the Type 2 stories, by contrast, non-standard speakers are linked with class identities. Cullen’s encounter in (4) is with a gas station owner whose identity is further linked with class via his name, "Pee wee." In my encounter in (5), I identify my interlocutor as "gentleman" and as "a real estate agent," and further by naming his upper-middle-class neighborhood, "from Squirrel Hill." Although the class differential between outsider and Pittsburgher is maximized in Cullen’s story and minimized in mine, both stories link local speech with social class.

Both plot types include a "reaction" function (Function V). In both subtypes, communicative difficulty is sometimes represented as a complete failure to communicate: In (4), Cullen’s character "did not really understand a word [Pee wee] said," despite the fact that she is able to paraphrase him at length, and wonders whether he is actually "talking English." In (2), it took the kid from Ohio "five minutes" to figure out what the narrator was asking for. In (5), I represent my character as having failed to understand what my neighbor was talking about, wondering aloud why he would need a workman to replace his towels, rather than, as actually happened, figuring out immediately and silently that he must be talking about tiles. In stories like this, the non-Pittsburgher is represented as failing to do the kind of interpretive work that would be expected from people communicating across (fairly minor) linguistic difference. Rather than drawing on contextual factors to figure out what could be going on, the outsider runs into an interpretive wall. In (1), for example the roommate reacts to the narrator’s saying her shirt needs ironed not with the sort of second-assessment move (something like "Yes, it sure does" or "Oh, no, it doesn’t") that would be expected as the second part of this adjacency pair but by pointing out that the phrase "isn’t proper English." These narrative representations of communicative difficulty as communicative failure work ideologically to differentiate Pittsburgh speech far more sharply from other ways of speaking than is justified by the empirical facts.

When the reaction function involves recognition of fellow Pittsburghers, as in example (3), the recognition is immediate and unambiguous "they’ll immediately say ‘You’re from Pennsylvania’;" "You’re definitely [from Pennsylvania]." Even the wording of Donna R.’s representation of the South Carolina woman’s question gets edited in production from a hedged yes/no question to a confirmation-seeking tag question that projects a much more certain stance: "You guys wouldn’t happen to be from Pittsburgh, right?" Representing the recognition and what is recognized in this way also works
to link speech with place and differentiate Pittsburgh speech from other varieties.

The generalization (Function VI) that follows the reaction continues this ideological work. Before a difference between a Pittsburgher's speech and someone else's is noticed, it is completely unnoticeable: "It never occurred to me", says Molly G., that needs ironed wasn't "proper English". When the difference is noticed, it is linked with place as "a Pittsburgh thing".

7. Narrative evaluation and enregisterment

Personal experience narrative is not the only discursive practice in which the enregisterment of linguistic variation takes place. Among many other such practices are more dialogic conversation (Johnstone 2007b), online talk (Johnstone & Baumgardt 2004), and the production and consumption of t-shirts (Johnstone 2009), as well as labels for ways of speaking, public sphere mediations such as newspaper cartoons and educational policy, and elicited judgments such as the results of opinion polls (Agha 2003). But personal narrative is perhaps a uniquely effective genre for purposes of enregisterment, because there are interactional reasons for boundaries between varieties to be drawn more sharply in this genre than in others, more so than the facts on the ground might justify. The plot types I have described are realized as conversational narratives, told in real time in face-to-face interaction. Thus, as Labov (1972b: 345–396) showed, they need to be highly evaluated. Evaluative material states or highlights the point of the story, why the audience should keep listening and allow the teller to keep talking. Evaluation may occur in clauses that comment on the story from outside: "I did not really understand a word the man said" (4); "This is so embarrassing", or in clauses that attribute evaluative commentary to characters in the story: "I remember sitting there and thinking, 'Is he talking English?'" (4). Alternatively or in addition, evaluation can be embedded in the narrative, in the form of such things as extra detail about characters ("some kid from Ohio"), suspension of the action via paraphrase or repetition ("They'll say, 'You're from Pittsburgh.' / Yeah, they'll immediately say, 'You're from Pennsylvania, are you from the Pittsburgh area?'"), and intensifiers ("bout five minutes later"; it never occurred to me" (1)).

"I did not really understand a word the man said" makes a stronger bid for interlocutors' continued attention than would "He was a little hard to understand", or "He sounded a little different", even though the latter formulations might be truer. In these stories, in other words, the interactional demand for evaluation pushes narrators to exaggerate the differences between
their speech and that of the others they encounter and the scale of the interactional difficulty to which these differences give rise. By the same token, Pittsburghers narrating encounters with fellow Pittsburghers elsewhere are interactionally constrained to exaggerate the recognizability of their accent by fellow Pittsburghers. This means that narratives like these are particularly well suited for producing and circulating ideological differentiation (Irvine 2001) among (imagined) regional varieties.

8. Discussion

Representations and celebrations of regional linguistic variety often arise in the context of economic and social changes that lead to linguistic leveling. As Newcastle speech levels to a regional standard in the wake of cutmigration (Watt 2002), people start to talk about the “Toon” (Beal 1999). As island-dwellers in the eastern U.S. encounter more and more outsiders, and their regional varieties die, they cling to one or two local forms (Schilling-Estes 1998, 2002). According globalization theorist Stuart Hall, “[t]he return to the local is often a response to globalization” (Hall 1991: 33). People symbolically readopt local practices and identities, claims Hall, when they are overwhelmed by political and economic processes larger than they can control.

But economic globalization is not a new phenomenon. Globalization began in the 16th century with the European voyages of discovery, and the early 21st century is not the first time that economic change and widespread geographical mobility have led people to notice the loss of linguistic diversity. Joan Beal (2009: 139) shows how contemporary popular discourse about the loss of regional speech differences in Britain echoes the discourse of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when “the enclosure of common land, the mechanisation of agriculture, and the Industrial Revolution ... caused people to move from the countryside into rapidly-expanding industrial towns and cities”. Beal points out that many of the regional varieties of English that are now considered endangered were themselves the result of leveling processes sparked by geographic mobility. In England, a boom in dialect dictionaries in the 19th and early 20th centuries was accompanied by a surge in dialect literature and the development of regional dialect societies. In the U.S., 19th-century ‘local color’ fiction featured repelled representations of regional varieties, and actors performing stereotypical regional characters were popular on the entertainment circuit. The American Dialect Society was founded in 1889, at the height of the Gilded Age of industrialization and the accompanying immigration from Europe and geographical mobility in the U.S.
Regional dialectology, along with efforts to document and/or preserve linguistic diversity, might thus be seen as attempting to push back against the homogenizing forces of industrialization and widespread geographic mobility and linguistic leveling that industrialization sparked. The dialect atlases of the 19th and 20th centuries recorded distinctive regional forms just as, or sometimes well after, the geographical and social isolation that maintained these differences was abating. Current efforts to document endangered languages emerged after many of the languages in question were already past reviving. It is tempting to adopt Hall's account, assuming that linguistic and metalinguistic practices like these represent (belated) reactions to the economic and social processes and pressures of globalization.

I argue against such accounts. At least when it comes to language, renewed attention to the local is not a nostalgic or desperate response to globalization but an inevitable concomitant of globalization. This is because changes attendant on globalization — geographic mobility, the increased heterogeneity of local demography, and economic change that forces people to re-imagine themselves — are precisely the conditions that most effectively foster language awareness. As we have seen in this chapter, narratives about encountering people from other places who speak differently serve to de-link nonstandard forms from social class and link them instead with place. Such narratives arise only when people actually encounter people from other places, and this happens only when people are geographically mobile.

References


