2

Social Patterns

> *It is the mechanisms which link the extra linguistic with patterned linguistic diversity which are the goals of sociolinguistic understanding.* (Sankoff 1988a: 157)

This chapter reviews the prevailing social patterns and principles in the LVC framework. A critical vantage point I take in this chapter is retrospective. The LVC approach to analyzing language in use began in the 1960s (Labov 1963). Substantial research has emerged over the intervening decades yet little of these important developments have made their way into sociolinguistic textbooks. To understand these developments it is critical to synthesize the basic principles. LVC studies began with the correlation of linguistic variables with major demographic categories. The regularity of the findings across many different studies and contexts led to the formulation of a number of important generalizations. This chapter consolidates those generalizations.

Social Class

The LVC enterprise began with the correlation of language use and social class. According to Labov (1972c: 212), "the social situation is the most powerful determinant of verbal behaviour." In LVC research social class is meant to model the socioeconomic hierarchy of a community rather than impose "a discrete set of identifiable classes" (Labov 2001a: 113).

Early sociolinguistic research consistently demonstrated the meaningful correlation of linguistic variables by class. Certain variants are used more frequently by the highest status classes and less frequently by the lowest status classes and at intermediate frequencies by the classes in between. The proportion of variants is ordered systematically by social class, often with each class occupying its own "strata" in the community (Labov 1972c: 8). This type of patterning is readily observable in many figures in sociolinguistics textbooks where the lines on the graph representing each social class appear as parallel lines. Labov (2001a: 114) argues that "it is necessary to divide that hierarchy into at least four sections" in order for significant

Variationist Sociolinguistics: Change, Observation, Interpretation, First Edition. Sali A. Tagliamonte.

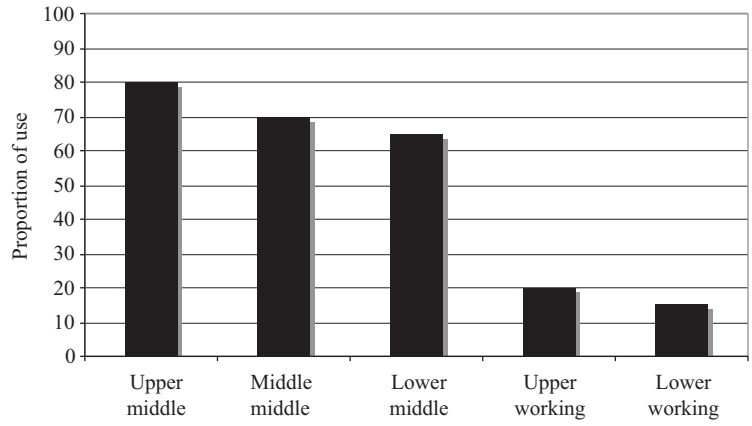

Figure 2.1 Idealized pattern for sharp stratification by social class.

results to emerge. However, many studies of social class subsequent have been successfully carried out with binary divisions, such as middle-class vs. working-class or white-collar vs. blue-collar (e.g. Cravens and Giannelli 1995). This contrast represents a major social divide in the speech communities where most sociolinguistic studies have been carried out (Chambers 2003: 42). Although such divisions are very broad, the fact that the same patterns of behavior have been found across a wide range of studies involving many different varieties and languages increases the confidence that there is a causal link between social status and the use of a given linguistic variable.

In sum, when a linguistic variable has a clear standard vs. nonstandard social evaluation it is sure to be aligned with the prevailing social hierarchy in the community, whatever that might be. Where social class is a relevant social category, linguistic variables will correlate with it. The patterns of the linguistic variable will reflect the social structure.

Sharp Stratification

When there is a wide gap between middle-class and working-class subgroups (e.g. Trudgill 1974b), this pattern is referred to as "sharp" social stratification. The typical pattern of sharp stratification is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Sharp stratification has been the typical pattern found in the United Kingdom. As Trudgill (1974b) points out, there is often a marked clustering of middle-class and working-class subgroups, but a large expanse between working and middle class. Examples of sharp social stratification for phonological features often come from England where class distinctions (at least up to the 1970s) were quite distinct. Working-class dialects tended to contain features not found in middle-class dialects (e.g. Trudgill 1974b; 1978). In the United Kingdom this pattern is found for both phonological and grammatical variables. In the US, however, this type of stratification is more typically found for grammatical variables. For example, negative concord in Philadelphia exhibited relatively low values for middle-class subgroups, and relatively high values for all working-class subgroups (Labov 1972b). Other examples in the literature include: use of *ain't*, variable use of the copula, leveled past tense forms (e.g. *I seen,*

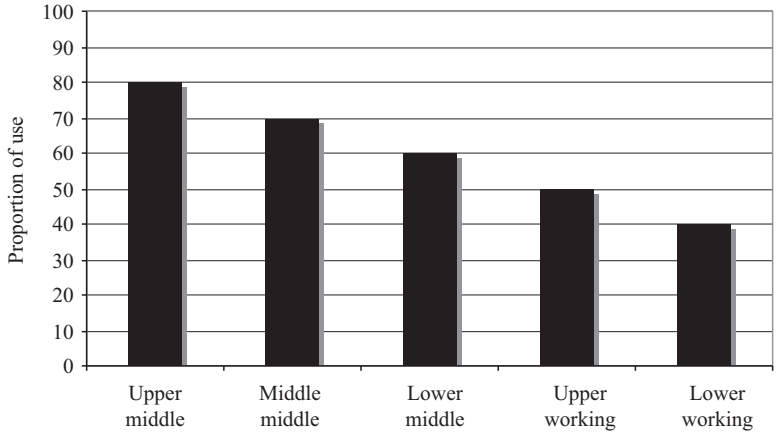

Figure 2.2 Idealized pattern for gradient stratification by social class.

he come), genitive reflexives (e.g. *hisself*), and others. Later studies confirmed the same sharply divided patterns in the social distribution of grammatical variables in other languages. For example, in Canadian French the complementizer *que* "that" is obligatory in the standard language; however absence of *que* is widespread among working-class speakers (Sankoff 1974: 348, Table 5), as in Example 2.1.

Example 2.1

C'est la fille *Ø* j'ai vue.	instead of	C'est la fille *que* j'ai vue.
"That's the girl I saw"	instead of	"That's the girl that I saw"

Gradient Stratification

When there is a continuous stepwise pattern across social groups this correlation is referred to as "gradient" social stratification. The typical pattern of gradient stratification is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

This pattern is also referred to as a "monotonic function" of social class (Labov 1972c: 240; 2001a: Chapter 5). It is easy to see what "monotonic" means by looking at Figure 2.2. There is a regularly decreasing proportion of use from highest to lowest social class.

Linguistic variables that correlate with social class were traditionally divided into three main types: (1) indicators, (2) markers, and (3) stereotypes (Labov 1972c: 237). A key determinant of this typology is the effect of style. Style was originally defined as the amount of attention paid to speech, varying on a scale from casual (vernacular) through to minimal pairs in a word list.

Casual style may vary considerably from individual to individual as will the nature of speech in an interview situation. As anyone who has conducted or even listened to a sociolinguistic interview will know, "the degree of spontaneity or warmth in the replies of individuals may vary greatly" (Labov 1972c: 80). In contrast reading, wordlists and minimal pairs are more constrained and predictable. Despite these differences across style, a key

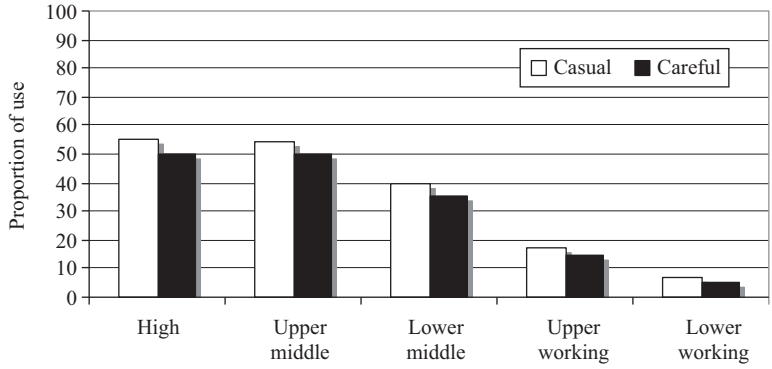

Figure 2.3 Idealized pattern for stratification by social class and style – indicator.

finding for LVC research is that the pattern of variation according casual vs. careful speech will stay constant within a speech community.

The study of how style is produced and organized in speech has developed substantially over the past 30 years, evolving into broader conceptions of style as actively constructed by speakers as part of their personae (Eckert 2000) and according to indexical order (Silverstein 2003). I will focus here only on the basic distinction between casual vs. formal style that can be studied from within a sociolinguistic interview (Labov 2001b: 87). However, there are many ways of pursuing stylistic variation and change and how it relates to speakers, audiences, and identities (for discussion and ideas, see Eckert and Rickford, 2001).

Indicators

A linguistic variable is referred to as an indicator if it correlates with social class, but does not vary by style. Indicators are used in more or less the same way in careful and casual contexts by the individuals that use them. Such variables are typical of regional dialects. A classic example of a sociolinguistic indicator is variable (a:) in Norwich which designates the relative backing of the vowel in words such as *path, bath* (Trudgill 1974b: 98). While the standard variety in England uses a front vowel, in Norwich people use a back vowel and this remains stable across styles. Indicators are not stratified by age so they are not interpreted as change in progress. Figure 2.3 shows an idealized pattern for stratification by social class and style where the linguistic variable is an indicator.

Markers

Linguistic variables are "markers" when they exhibit both class differences and stylistic stratification. Such variables are thought to be "more highly developed" features in the speech community. Speakers are more consciously aware of the variation in the speech community and they represent a more advanced stage in the sociolinguistic diffusion of the linguistic feature (Labov 1969: 237).

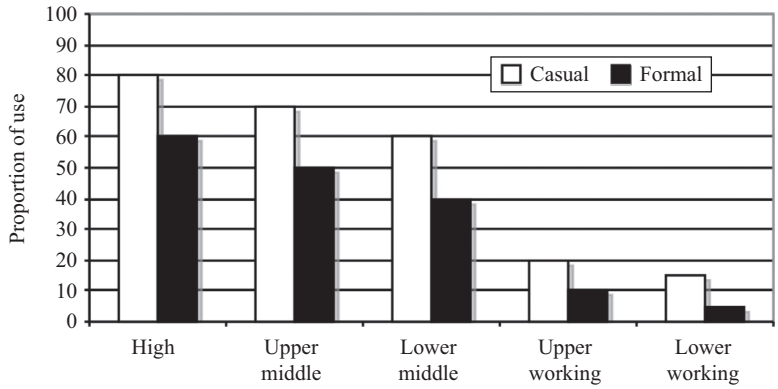

Figure 2.4 Idealized pattern for stratification by social class and style – marker.

The distinction between indicators and markers is particularly relevant in contexts where there are distinct regional dialects (as in England) and where pronunciation varies according to place. Sociolinguistic markers are more prevalent in the LVC literature. There are innumerable cases of clear-cut sociolinguistic markers, including variable (ing), as in Example 2.2a, variable (th), as in Example 2.2b, variable (dh), as in Example 2.2c, negative concord, Example 2.2d–e, etc. (Labov 1972b: 784).

Example 2.2

Variable (ing) – /n/ for /ŋ/
(a) We used to go *fishin*' [n].

Variable [th] – /d/ for /ð/
(b) [wIduwt] "without"

Variable [dh] – /t/ for //
(c) [tIŋk] "think"

Variable (neg concord)
(d) That ain't *nothing* new.
(e) I didn't find a proof of the theorem in *none* of these texts.

The association of linguistic variants with social categories is a common result of LVC research; however, the precise nature of the patterns will be locally determined. In one place a variant might be stigmatized; in another place is might be prestigious. Use of an interdental fricative in Louisiana marks Cajun identity (Dubois and Horvath 1998) but in Newfoundland, Newfoundland identity (Clarke 2010). Use of past reference *come* marks rural, uneducated speech in American English (Atwood 1953) but is maintained by young speakers in York, England (see Chapter 11). Use of zero adverbs is typically associated with American English, but is correlated with working-class male speech in York (Tagliamonte and Ito 2002) (see Chapter 8). Unlike early LVC studies, many later projects did not include an independent measure of style as defined by attention paid to speech. Because linguistic markers also

correlate with less education or lower socioeconomic scale or occupation these factors have often taken as a proxy for measuring the formal/casual dimension.

NOTE Patterns can only be inferred from findings that emerge from analyzed data, typically displayed in figures and/or tables. When you are a sociolinguist you get used to seeing patterns.

Stereotypes

Linguistic stereotypes are linguistic variables that are overtly recognized. They become objects of discussion in the communities in which they are known. Often these features are highly stigmatized. New York City's (r)-lessness is stereotyped in the phrase "toity-toid street" for "thirty-third street" (Labov 1972a). The expression hoi toide for "high tide" in Ocracoke identifies the local accent (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995), while Canadian Raising is stereotyped by "oot" for "out" (Chambers 1991).

In successive stages of a change in progress, a linguistic variable may undergo transition from indicator to marker to stereotype (Labov 1972c):

dialect differentiation →	social and stylistic differentiation →	metalinguistic commentary
indicator	*marker*	*stereotype*

The correlation of linguistic features with social categories is also found, in part, in the notion of indexicality, the link between a linguistic form and social meaning (Silverstein 2003). Indexicality is complex and has many nuances; however, the core principle is that linguistic behavior has a social interpretation. When a speaker uses *tu* instead of *vous* to address an interlocutor in French these pronouns index a certain power relationship between the two people. Similarly, use of a particular intensifier rather than another can encode certain social characteristics. Use of *so* encodes informality and youth while use of *very* encodes formality and likely an impression of an older or more learned person. Although practitioners working with theories of indexicality and identity in sociolinguistics are focused more on discourse interaction and analysis (e.g. Bucholtz 2005), the central place of linguistic variables and their sociolinguistic correlates is still evident. The nature of the indexing process to involve all levels of linguistic structure, to have regional correlations, developmental phases, and to evolve through time runs parallel to Labov's model of sociolinguistic diffusion. For a good example involving the evolution of variable verbal (s) see Trudgill (1998).

Mini Quiz 2.1

Q1 Consider the following table from Wolfram (1969: 136). What pattern best describes these results?

(a) Sharp stratification
(b) Gradient stratification
(c) Hypercorrection

(d) The kind of stratification typical of phonological variables
(e) There is no pattern.

Percentage of [z] absence in third person singular present tense agreement in Detroit black speech according to class.

	Upper middle class	Lower middle class	Upper working class	Lower working class
[z] absence, e.g. he say/ she say	1.4%	9.7	56.9	71.4

Curvilinear Hypothesis

An unexpected finding in LVC research and one that is "difficult for previous theories of language change to account for" (Labov 2001a: xii) is that change tends to be led from centrally located groups as opposed to peripherally located groups (Labov 2001a: 32). In other words, linguistic changes do not originate in the highest or lowest social classes, but in the middle class. This produces an arching pattern by social class and has been called the "curvilinear hypothesis." Figure 2.5 shows an idealized version of this pattern where the distribution of the variable by age is monotonic (not shown) (Labov 2001a: 32) and the individuals in the sample are adults (Labov 2001a: 460).

The higher frequency of the represented linguistic variable among the upper middle and lower middle classes reveals that the change is being led by these social groups. Note that, aside from the higher social class, the main difference is between the middle classes and the working class, a difference that demarcates white-collar professions and blue-collar labor. This binary division has been shown to be the most relevant contrast in contemporary western speech communities (see Cravens and Giannelli 1995). Further distinctions in the social hierarchy,

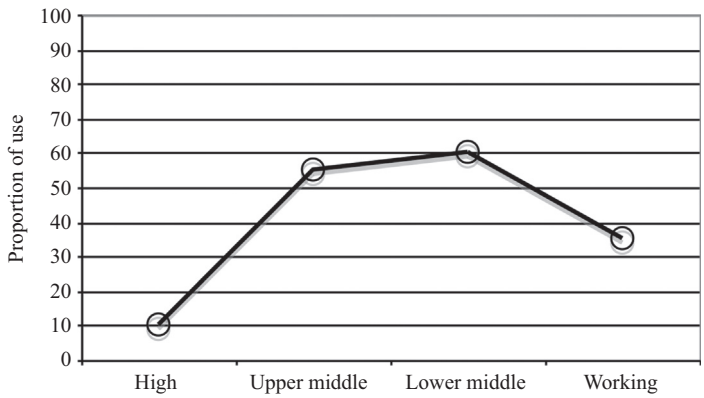

Figure 2.5 Curvilinear pattern for social class when change originates from the middle class.

where possible, can provide additional nuances to a community's social organization and will be better able to measure the details of a change in progress (see Labov 2001a: 31, n.25).

Sex (or Gender)

> Gender is the socially constructed counterpart of biological sex. (Cheshire 2002: 427)

Of all the sociolinguistic principles, the clearest and most consistent one is the contrast between women and men (Labov 1990: 205). This ubiquitous correlation has been stated in many ways. In the following observations, notice how each observation makes a link between women and standard language use.

> Females show a greater sensitivity to socially evaluative linguistic forms than do males. (Wolfram 1969:78)
>
> In careful speech women use fewer stigmatised forms than men, and are more sensitive than men to the prestige pattern. (Labov 1972c: 243)
>
> Females show more more awareness of prestige norms in both their actual speech and attitudes towards speech. (Wolfram and Fasold 1974: 93)
>
> Women, allowing for other variables such as age, education and social class, produce of average linguistic forms which more closely approach those of the standard language or have higher prestige than those produced by men. (Trudgill 1983: 161)
>
> Women on average deviate less from the prestige standard than men. (Cameron and Coates 1988: 13)
>
> Women adopt linguistic features with a relatively wide geographical distribution, the supra-local or national norms. (Cheshire 2002: 430; Milroy *et al*. 1994b; Watt 2002)

The generalization that can be made from these observations is straightforward: women tend to avoid stigmatized forms. This correlation is so strong that Fasold (1990: 92) refers to it as "the sociolinguistic gender pattern" and Chambers calls it "a sociolinguistic verity" (cited in Cheshire 2002: 426, confirmed by Chambers p.c., June 18, 2008).

Figure 2.6 shows an idealized view of what the male–female contrast typically looks like in conjunction with class stratification.

Explanations for the Sex Effect

The big question is why do women and men behave in this way? A number of explanations have been put forward in the literature to explain the sex difference.

1. *Biology*. Women's innate linguistic ability is superior to men's (Chambers 2003: 149–153).
2. *A cultural pattern*. Labov (2001a: 283) argued that "the mechanism of the change crucially involves the initiating role of women at the outset, and the later adoption of the change

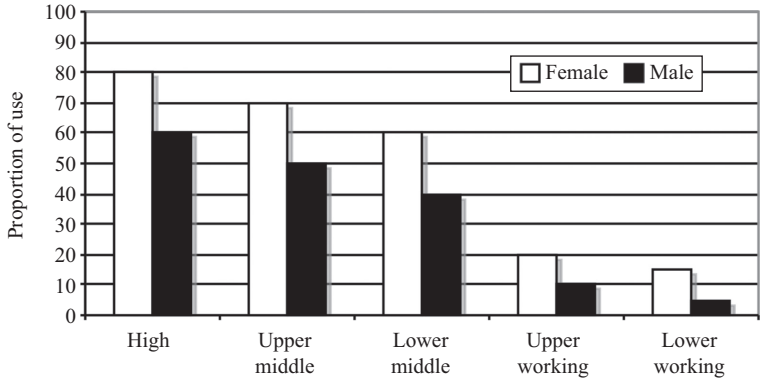

Figure 2.6 Idealized pattern of stratification by sex and social class.

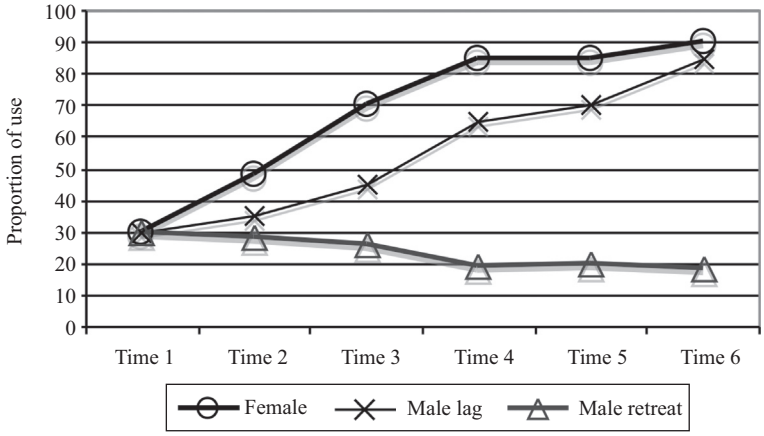

Figure 2.7 Idealized pattern of female-led linguistic change.

by men" typically a generation behind (Labov 2001a: 306). Figure 2.7 includes an idealized view of such a pattern. While the females accelerate in their use of a new form, the males (in the X-marked course) lag behind. If each time interval indicated on the figure is ten years, the male level of use of the innovating form at Time 5 is equal to the female use at Time 3, making the males about a generation behind the females.

3. *Male retreat* from female-dominated change (Kroch 1978). Working-class men, in the face of female-dominated change, march "resolutely in the other direction" (Trudgill 1972b). This hypothetical pattern is also included in Figure 2.7. As the females accelerate a change forward in time, the males (in the triangle-marked course) move in the opposite direction, leading to more extreme differentiation between males and females at Time 6.
4. *Covert prestige*. Men give "covert prestige" to working-class features but women do not (Trudgill 1972b: 182–183). Trudgill elaborates on covert prestige as follows:

> covert prestige reflects the value system of our society and of the different sub-cultures within this society, and takes the following form: for male speakers, and for female speakers under 30, non-standard WC [Working Class] speech forms are highly valued, although these values are

> not usually overtly expressed. These covert values lead to sex-differentiation of linguistic variables of a particular type … covert prestige also appears to lead to linguistic changes "from below." (Trudgill 1972b: 194)

5. *The social position of women*. Women have less economic power, so rely on symbolic capital – language (Trudgill 1972b: 182–183). In this view, the careful sociolinguistic behavior of women is seen as a reflection of socioeconomic weakness, and of a psychological as well as sociological insecurity (Labov 2001a: 275).
6. *Societal norms and practices*. Differences between men and women relate to the sociolinguistic dynamics of the speech community (Eckert 1989). This involves the linguistic market and how men and women have access to it, the social value and prestige associated with men and women's work, the systems of dominant vs. subordinate groups and other prestige systems in the community (Eckert 2000: 196).

NOTE The linguistic market refers to how a person's job in the speech community influences language use (Sankoff and Laberge 1978). Compare school teacher to plumber.

Despite the expansive statements about the relationship between language use and female–male differences, it is also critical to remember that they are oversimplifications. Not all women avoid stigmatized forms and not all men embrace nonstigmatized forms. It is obvious from the foregoing statements that the differences between women and men is intricately tied to the social context and social evaluation of the forms in use. Important questions to consider are what makes one form prestigious and another form stigmatized or why women favor certain forms while men prefer others.

In more recent research the focus has shifted perspective so that individual differences within aggregated groups are investigated. Such studies expose individual variations within groups and attempt to interpret and understand the reasons for these differences (Eckert 1988, 1999, 2000). In this research enterprise female–male contrasts are linked to the social evaluation of variants (prestige or stigmatized) as well as their status in the speech community (i.e. which social groups are using them the most).

> It is only through an analysis of variation that the reality and meaning of a norm can be established at all. (Edward Sapir 1921 – and also Gregory Guy's email signature)

Style and Register

Language variation and change is strongly linked to style or register. Register and style are often used interchangeably in the literature; however, they reflect different perspectives of the same sociolinguistic pattern. The pattern is that people tend to use higher prestige variants more often in more formal styles and lower prestige variants more often in informal styles. Herein lies the difficulty. How is style defined? Is it defined by attention to speech? Is it defined by the audience, e.g. a conversation with a friend vs. a lecture to a group of university students, or is it defined by the nature of the media, e.g. spoken language vs. written language? Perhaps the best way to make this distinction is to say that style refers to

the linguistic repertoire of an individual speaker. For example, certain variants have informal connotations, e.g. the [n] variant of variable (ing), as in *workin'* and individuals will exhibit use of this feature in a way that demonstrates style. Register, on the other hand, refers to how an individual performs in particular contexts or social settings. This means that a full exploration of style requires analysis of the range of linguistic variables according to different social purposes, social settings, and media.

A key element of style is that it intersects with sex and social class. The joint mapping of social and stylistic stratification of stable sociolinguistic variables has been replicated in many cities and towns around the world. A prominent finding is that, other things being equal, men style-shift less and women style-shift more (e.g. Eckert 2000: 195). The regularity of these patterns across this wide range of studies attests to the systematic social nature of linguistic variation.

The linguistic marketplace is another way of seeing the relationship between linguistic variables and style and register. This is a concept developed by Sankoff and Laberge (1978). They found that correlations based on social class membership were not very well motivated, since they force the analyst to ignore the fact that people like teachers or receptionists have to conform to "official" speech standards more than do other members of the same socioeconomic strata. With this in mind, a linguistic market index was designed to measure "specifically how speakers' economic activity, taken in its widest sense, requires or is necessarily associated with, competence in the legitimized language" (Sankoff and Laberge 1978: 239). This index was applied to the analysis of several sociolinguistic variables in Montreal French, showing that the higher market index scores correlated with greater use of standard variants. However, it is not clear how the linguistic market should be related to class stratification analysis and social network analysis. Fine-tuning the methodological and analytic relationship between large-scale surveys and other sampling methods and how each reflects language use remains an important issue.

NOTE Given the prevalence of recording devices today, I am surprised that no-one has explored stylistic variation more extensively using LVC methods. All that is required is to record yourself (and willing others) across a wide range of different contexts. Which linguistic variables are used differently from one context to another? How do they shift? (frequency or constraints or both?) When do they shift? With whom? Under what conditions?

Mobility in Space and Mobility in Class

Language variation and change is also correlated with location, whether defined geographically or socially. The correlation of language use and location is, in essence, dialectology. People tend to sound like where they come from. This led to the well-known dialectological technique of seeking out the most isolated speakers to find the most distinctive regional speech varieties (e.g. Orton 1962: 15–16).

However, people tend to move from one place to another. Traditional dialectological laws attempted to explain mobility vs. isolation, i.e. "mobility causes people to speaker and sound

more like people from other places" (Chambers 2003: 73). Similarly, when people move from one social class to another, this is reflected in their use of language. The same tendency can be viewed in terms of language contact: "contact breeds imitation and imitation breeds linguistic convergence. Linguistic divergence results from secession, estrangement, loosening of contact" (Weinreich 1953/1968: viii). From this can be formulated yet another sociolinguistic observation, that people adjust their use of certain linguistic variants according to where they live, who they are surrounded by, and who they also wish to emulate. With respect to social mobility, Chambers says it best:

> upwardly mobile individuals adjust the frequency of certain variables in order to sound more like the class they are joining and less like the one they are leaving. (Chambers 2003: 62)

Yet we know that sociolinguistic patterns are not binary. Another aspect of mobility is that it is reflected differently in men and women. Men are typically more oriented to local norms, while women show more extensive usage linguistic features, often incorporating into their repertoire features from outside their local situation, i.e. that are "supralocal" (Milroy, Milroy, and Hartley 1994a). In many cases such features are not necessarily aligned with the standard language. Perhaps the best recent example of this is the repeated finding that women use more quotative *be like* than men (see Chapter 9). In most communities where this feature has been studied, the feature is not local but has been imported from elsewhere. Further, it is a decidedly nonstandard feature. Thus, on two counts, (1) expanded repertoire and (2) expanded orientation, woman exhibit their expected tendency.

Social Network, Communities of Practice

In the early days of LVC research, the basic social units for the correlation of linguistic features with extralinguistic phenomena were very broad, with social class being the major unit for aggregating speakers. Recall that the aim was to model the prevailing socioeconomic hierarchy. However, in some cases social class is not the key feature of social organization in a community.

Social groups need not be differentiated by class, but may be grouped according to some other factor. One of the first attempts to explore other dimensions of linguistic variability was Milroy's (1980) study of language use in Belfast, Ireland. Milroy discovered that the linguistic behaviour of individuals could not "be accounted for in terms of corporate group membership" (Milroy 1980: 135), but were instead linked to social network. Social networks measured the degree of integration of individuals by measuring an individual's personal network ties with others. These networks could be dense or multiplex. In dense social networks a lot of individuals know each other. In multiplex social networks individuals know each other in more than one capacity, e.g. work together, live in the same neighborhood, and socialize together. Milroy demonstrated that "the closer an individual's network ties are with his local community, the closer his language approximates to localized vernacular norms" (Milroy 1980: 175), i.e. the norms of local, often working-class or rural communities. In essence, the social network functions to maintain norms of communication, what Chambers (2003: 75) refers to as a "norm enforcement mechanism." According to Milroy (1987: 108–109) the network concept has three advantages:

1. it is a useful tool for studying small, self-contained groups;
2. it provides a means to analyze linguistic data in situations where the concept of social class is difficult to apply;
3. it offers a procedure for dealing with variation between speakers at the level of the individual.

Milroy's study brought to the forefront the role of locally defined groups. Focussing in on this type of social categorization schema enables the analyst to examine "the specifics of local practice and local conditions" (Milroy and Gordon 2003: 116).

Mini Quiz 2.2

Q1 The social function of networks is to promote diversity.
(a) True
(b) False

This was the beginning of a new direction in the study of language in use. Some researchers started to focus in on the relation between linguistic variation and more narrowly defined social categories. Eckert's (1988) study of a Detroit high school examined divisions within adolescent social networks, i.e. Jocks vs. Burnouts. Many new studies have followed in this tradition by focussing on subgroups within a larger whole, including clan affiliation (Meyerhoff 1997), gang membership (Fought 1999), nerd girls (Bucholtz 1999), Beijing yuppies (Zhang 2005). In these studies, when linguistic features were found to be used more frequently by one group or the other they were interpreted as identity markers. This research is showing how general patterns of linguistic variation also impact finer-grained differences within the social strata. Speakers can take linguistic variants that have salient social meanings and use them in ways that create new social meanings.

A further development of the trend in the study of linguistic variation and style turns the tables on the object of study and, instead of beginning with the linguistic phenomenon, begins with the behavior of speakers. In this development social meaning is primary and the analysis is focused on any linguistic material that serves a social or stylistic purpose. This development opens up an entirely new area of sociolinguistics in which the operative questions depart substantially from the LVC approach. This area of the field is often referred to as the "third-wave" sociolinguistics. What are these waves? According to Eckert (2000), this book would be first wave, namely research that studies linguistic variables in community-based corpora using quantitative methods to examine the relation between linguistic variables and social factors such as age, sex, socioeconomic class, occupation, ethnicity, etc. The second wave is distinguished by its ethnographic methodology and its goal to examine the relation between variation and local, participant-designed categories and configurations. Where linguistic variants were associated with broad categories, these studies would focus in on more fine-grained meaning, e.g. the difference between a linguistic variant associated with say, female, as opposed to female nerd, for example. The third wave focuses in even more on the social meaning of variables. It views styles, rather than variables, as directly associated with identity categories, and explores the contributions of variables to styles. The target of investigation is not only the linguistic variable, but any linguistic material that serves

a social/stylistic purpose (Eckert 2008; Podesva 2007; Zhang 2005). A prevailing goal is how speakers construct their personalities using these materials. An idealized overview of the waves can be constructed something like this:

First wave →	Second wave →	Third wave
Social groups	*Social networks*	*Styles*
Sex, age, education	*Communities of practice*	*Identities*
	Jocks, Burnouts	*Individuals*

First-wave studies focus on how, for example, more educated speakers use more consonant cluster simplification. Second-wave studies would focus on how different communities of practice use it, e.g. Jocks vs. Burnouts. Third-wave studies would consider how the same feature is deployed in different styles by the same individual.

Ethnicity and Culture

Another critical influence on variation is ethnicity and cultural orientation. In many countries around the world the populations are made up of people of different backgrounds and ancestries who may not speak the dominant language(s) of the country. For example, English is the dominant language in the United States, Australia, Canada, and United Kingdom. Yet the peopling of these countries from the time they were settled to the present day has involved a multitude of people with different home languages. For populations whose home language is not English, their use of English may be different from those whose home language is English. Does their use of English model the mainstream speech community? Like linguistic differences across social groups, ethnic background, and cultural orientation may act as a barrier to the diffusion of linguistic features in the same way as other social barriers do (Trudgill 2000: 45–46).

What types of patterns are found in the study of variation and change in ethnicity? First, as is well known, certain linguistic features often identify ethnicity. In such cases, an ethnic community will use one word or pronunciation while the mainstream community will use another. Second, certain linguistic variables may be shared, i.e. the variation will exist in both the ethnic community and in the mainstream community; however, the two populations will differ with regard to either the frequency of variants or the patterning of usage of constraints operating on the variation (Fought 2002: 446). A good linguistic variable to consider in this regard is consonant cluster simplification, as in Example 2.3, an omnipresent feature in of all varieties of English.

Example 2.3

These things are going through my head so *fasØ*, going through my head so *fast* (TOR/038)

The frequency of variable (t,d) and the way linguistic constraints operate on it differ across groups. Comparing the well-known constraints on this feature across ethnic varieties reveals subtle differences in the underlying patterns of variation. In the early days of LVC research, Labov (1966), Fasold (1971), and Wolfram (1969) found that people of African

American descent had higher rates of simplification than those of European descent. Further, deletion occurred in more contexts than in European-American dialects, before consonants, pauses, and vowels.

Hazen (2002) demonstrated that three different cultural groups in Warren County, North Carolina (African Americans, European Americans, and Native Americans) showed varying rates of usage of three key linguistic variables: copula absence (Example 2.4a), *was* regularization (Example 2.4b), and past tense *wont* (Example 2.4c) (Hazen 2002: 240):

Example 2.4

(a) They *Ø* real nice people.
(b) We *was* going.
(c) We *wont* gonna go.

Much of the early LVC research in the United States suggested that people of African descent (African Americans) and people of Spanish descent (Hispanics) speak differently than European Americans. Further, linguistic changes are not occurring in these groups in the same way as in mainstream populations (Bailey 1987; Labov 1966; Labov 1994: 157). Labov (1966) Fasold (1971), and Wolfram (1969) found that the frequency of variable (t,d) and its linguistic constraints operate differently across groups. For example, African Americans had higher rates of simplification than those of European descent. Further, deletion occurred in more extended contexts, such prevocalic contexts, e.g. *fas'asleep*, whereas it rarely occurs in these contexts in European varieties. However, once a fuller range of variable had been studied it was discovered that African American populations are different from European populations for some features, but not others (Wolfram 2000; Wolfram and Thomas 2002). For example, Mallinson and Wolfram (2002: Table 7) found that three features distinguished Elderly African Americans from Elderly European Americans: variable (s), copula absence with *is*, and variable (t,d) in prevocalic contexts. Other features, however, were entirely the same: variable (s) in third person plural, variable (was), copula absence with *are*. Moreover, the nature, type, and extent of linguistic differences varies across ethnic groups. Wolfram and his associates also studied the Lumbee Indians in North Carolina, United States (Wolfram *et al*. 1997). While they exhibited regularization of the past paradigm of the verb "to be" (Torbert 2001) they also had grammatical markers of Lumbee ethnicity that other varieties in the region did not share, including perfective *I'm* (Wolfram 1996).

Thus, certain types of linguistic variables appear to be diagnostic of ethnic differences generally, e.g. consonant cluster simplification; while others may be unique to one group or another. Attitudinal factors are also implicated in ethnic differences. To what extent does an individual identify with their own, or another ethnic background? This will always be a matter of degree. Thus, differences in the linguistic behavior of ethnic groups can be due to at least two factors: (1) the continuing effect of the ancestral language spoken by these groups or (2) the effect of identification or alignment with the ethnic group and culture that the individual associates with. For example, non-native pronunciation by first-generation speakers can be inherited by second-generation speakers and developed into a stable dialect with phonological norms of its own.

There can even be influence from a minority ethnic variety onto the surrounding mainstream version of the regional dialect. An early paper by Wolfram (1974) suggested that European-Americans in the Southern United States had acquired copula absence from

African-Americans. Although the rates of deletion of the copula were considerably less frequent among white Southern Americans than in studies of AAVE in the north (Labov 1969; Wolfram 1969), the constraints underlying the use of the copula were the same. Similarly, Feagin (1997) concluded that r-lessness in White Alabama English was influenced by the speech of African Americans.

NOTE A shibboleth of Italian ethnicity in Canada is the pronunciation of "sandwich" as *sangwich*. My husband who has ancestors on both sides of his family going back to the Loyalists, calls a "sandwich" a *sangwich*. It is interesting to speculate why he does this. Ethnic markers may emerge in innocuous ways in day-to-day speech.

Notice that interethnic contact and integration in the community as well as an individual's gravitation toward the ethnic community are reflected in patterns of language variation and change. To what extent do ethnic groups within large urban speech communities influence ongoing linguistic change? Horvath's (1985) study of Sydney, Australia revealed that ethnic minority speakers were leading linguistic changes that were affecting the entire speech community. If this is true, then it is likely that a similar trend may be found in other communities, particularly where the ethnic populations are very large in proportion to the locally born residents.

How is the analyst to determine the influence of ethnicity and identity in a speech community or in an individual? Methodologically, it is crucial to be able to separate the frequency of use of a feature, its level of linguistic structure, and its systemic nature in the grammar. Given the appropriate methodology, comparisons across different ethnic groups in the same community can reveal important information about linguistic variation and change.

The focus on frequency of linguistic features in much of the early LVC research has evolved to consider the constraints that underlie them. Santa Ana (1996) found that variable (t,d) in Chicano English, the variety spoken by people of Mexican descent in Los Angeles, United States, was governed by slightly different constraints from those found in dialects spoken by people of British descent. In Toronto, Canada, Walker and Hoffman (2010) studied three ethnic populations across three generations: (1) British origin speakers, (2) first-generation Italians and Chinese, and (3) second- and third-generation Italians and Chinese. Then, they examined two phonological features, one stable feature, variable (t,d) and one change in progress, the lowering and retraction of front lax vowels. They found that the first-generation Italian and Chinese speakers differed in their linguistic conditioning from the second and third generations. The first- generation speakers were not participating in the ongoing change of the Canadian Vowel Shift. However, the second and third generations paralleled the British control group in the operation of constraints. This research shows that by the time individuals are born and raised in the Toronto speech community (second- and third-generation individuals) their internal grammar mirrors the speech community that all the groups share (Walker 2010: 58).

Yet the findings emerging from another major urban center, London, England (c. 2000s) suggest quite a different picture. Kerswill *et al*. (2008) show that ethnic varieties are influencing the language of the whole population. Much of the variation they found in phonological changes originated from the non-Anglo sectors of the population rather than the locals. Cheshire and Fox (2009) report similar findings for variable (was) where well-known constraints on this variable were not operational in London generally. The same trend

is emerging in other large European cities where varieties of the host language are spoken by large ethnic minority groups who are immigrants or recent descendants of immigrants. What researchers are demonstrating is that cross-ethnic social contacts allow new forms of speech to diffuse to other speakers and from there enter the old-line populations of the speech community (e.g. Cornips and Nortier 2008; Kotsinas 2001). The effect of ethnicity enables the analyst to understand patterns of convergence or divergence within and across populations of speakers. As large-scale comparative work is undertaken, the understanding of how ethnicity influences language variation and change will increase and provide important windows on global trends and patterns.

The Mass Media

Does television affect the way we speak? Most lay people would say "yes" to this question. Yet a somewhat surprising LVC research says "no" (Trudgill 1986: 40). Linguistic influence must arise through tangible human interaction. Thus, despite the expansion and homogenization of the mass media, linguistic change is proceeding at a rapid rate:

> language is not systematically affected by the mass media, and is influenced primarily in face-to-face interaction with peers. (Labov 2001a: 228)

This finding is based on the numerous studies conducted on American cities (Labov 2001a) and is affirmed in LVC research in many other locations, including Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Dialects – particularly urban dialects – are developing and there is ongoing maintenance of local varieties (Chambers 1998b; Milroy and Milroy 1985). Yet new types of communication are developing rapidly. Romaine (1994: 34) cites the example of the word *nerd* emerging in Scandanavia through an American movie and suggests that "the possibilities for change of this type are indeed enormous nowadays, considering how much more mobile most people are, and how much exposure people get to speech norms outside their immediate community through the mass media." The same process is undoubtedly involved in the word *zee* in Canadian English from an American children's song (see below). However, these examples are all lexical items. Borrowing nouns across dialects and languages like this is one of the most pervasive types of language change. What about other levels of grammar?

LVC research on television language presents intriguing new findings. In some cases, media language appears to faithfully reflect ambient community norms. The forms and ranking of intensifiers *very*, *really*, and *so* in the television series *Friends* mirrored reported usage (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005). However, a study of quotative *be like* in American films found neither sufficient tokens nor the patterns (i.e. constraints) that had been consistently reported in the literature (Dion and Poplack 2007). This suggests that the rapid spread of *be like* in North America was not the result of, nor influenced by, the media. Jane Stuart-Smith recently completed a large-scale analysis of media influence in Glasgow, Scotland (Stuart-Smith 2010). The data come from a working-class community and comprise 36 adolescents from 10–15 years of age and 12 adults. Four phonological changes diffusing from southern England were targeted for investigation, including TH-fronting, the use of [f] for [T], DH-fronting, the use of [v] for [D], T-glottaling, the use of [/] for [t], and L-vocalization. The claim is that these forms are increasing in Glasgow due to the influence

of the television show *EastEnders*, one of the most watched shows in the United Kingdom. Yet the findings from the study reveal that actual contact with Londoners is a better predictor than is exposure to television in the appropriation of incoming variants. Simple exposure to television or to *EastEnders* in particular was not significant. Yet measures of "engagement with television" were highly significant for all four phonological changes, suggesting that television does play some role. The results from these studies are puzzlingly equivocal, perhaps because the precise nature of media influence is difficult to define or measure. This is a tantalizing new horizon for development in future research. Further, it remains to be discovered what type of linguistic feature – lexical, morphology, syntax, pragmatic – can arise from contact with the media. Moreover, what will be the effect of the different *types* of new media? Television and print media are being swamped by the Internet, android phones, and new vistas of communication media (see Chapter 11).

Mini Quiz 2.3

This example comes from a study of a single individual (Mike) who is attempting to sound like an African American rather than his own ethnic background, Euro American (Cutler 1999: 433). Figure 2.8 shows the results of Cutler's distributional analysis of three phonological variables and an idealized display of her anecdotal report of grammatical features in Mike's speech compared to those of African Americans and European Americans.

1. Schwa pronunciations of "th," as in "the other side" = "duh oda side"
2. r-lessness, "her" = "ha"
3. TH-stopping of voiced dental fricatives in word initial position, "the" = "duh"

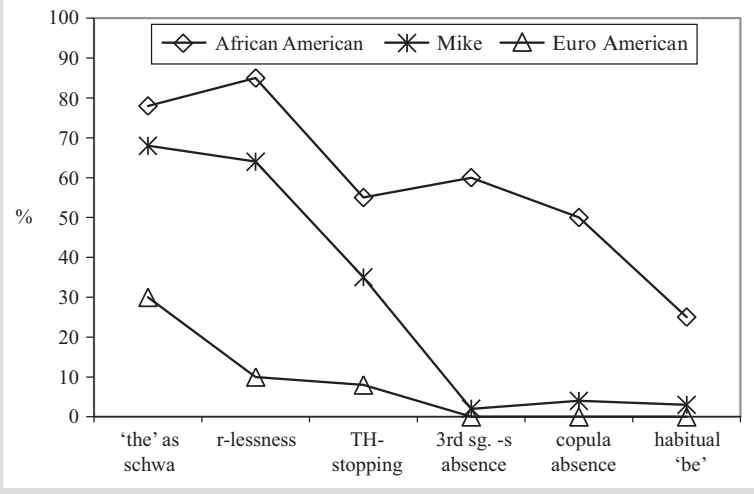

Figure 2.8 Frequency of phonological and grammatical variables.
Source: Cutler 1999: 433, Figure 1.

4. third singular -s absence, "he say"
5. copula absence, "what up?"
6. habitual "be," "I be talking"

Q1 What overall finding does the figure reveal?
Q2 What does this tell us about Mike's linguistic ability to "align" with AAVE vernacular norms?
Q3 What do these results suggest?

An important question for future research is to explore the impact that ethnic groups may have within large urban speech communities. Can ethnic groups influence ongoing linguistic change? If so, why and how? What are the implications for language change? When generation, ethnic, and other standard social factors are also brought into the analysis, what will this reveal?

> If teenagers spoke only to octogenarians, there might indeed be a breakdown in intelligibility. (Chambers 2002b: 365)

Age

Language use is intrinsically correlated with speaker age. Everyone notices that older people and younger people do not sound the same. A person who was born in 1900 will not speak the same variety of English as a person born in 2000. The question is why? Is it due to linguistic change? Or is there some other explanation? To figure this out, sociolinguists have utilized two important kinds of analyses. The most obvious one is the analysis of linguistic features in chronological time. However, an even more important perspective comes from the construct of apparent time, an important and useful analytical tool for the analysis of variation (Bailey *et al*. 1991b). In an apparent time study, generational differences are compared at a single point and are used to make inferences about how a change may have taken place in the (recent) past. Age differences are assumed to be temporal analogues, reflecting historical stages in the progress of the change. The technique has been in use since the early 1900s (e.g. Gauchat 1905; Hermann 1929) and has become a keystone of Variationist Sociolinguistics (Bailey 2002; Bailey *et al*. 1991b; Labov 1963, 1966). A gradually increasing or decreasing frequency in the use of a linguistic feature when that feature is viewed according to speaker age can be interpreted as change in progress (Sankoff 2006). This pattern has provided the basis for a synchronic approach to language change. Analytically, apparent time functions as a surrogate for chronological (or real) time, enabling the history of a linguistic process to be viewed from the perspective of the present. However patterns of linguistic features correlated with speaker age can also identify other types of change in the speech community. Sometimes there is ongoing linguistic change in the underlying grammatical system. Sometimes speakers change the way they speak at different ages. Sometimes the whole community is changing the way they speak. Sometimes both types of change happen at the same time. The only way to tell is to uncover the patterns and interpret them.

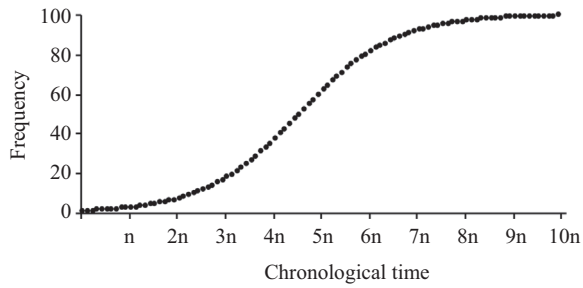

Figure 2.9 S-curve of linguistic change.

Generational Change

Linguistic change (generational change) is one of the cornerstones of sociolinguistics. The fact that linguistic change exists is not in question. All languages change over time. Models of linguistic change from historical linguistics (diachrony) have provided the basic model of how change happens. Innovations initially spread slowly as new forms gradually replace older ones. As this happen, there is acceleration with a maximum rate at mid-course. Then at the end of the period of change, the increase of new forms slows down and the older forms remain rare until they disappear or get left behind in specific contexts. Typical contexts in which linguistic features get "left behind" are formulaic utterances, sayings, songs, and poetry, as in Example 2.5.

Example 2.5

(a) My friend, who *shall* remain nameless … (TOR/034)
(b) I was going "Oh no, *shall I, shan't I*?" (YRK/049)
(c) Auld Lang Syne "old long time" "The good old days"
(d) The north wind *doth* blow …

When a change has reached this point it is considered complete (Altmann *et al*. 1983; Bailey 1973; Kroch 1989; Labov 1994: 65–67; Labov 2001a; Weinreich *et al*. 1968).

NOTE Diachrony is the development a linguistic system (language) over a period of time in the past. Synchrony is the development a linguistic system (language) in the present time.

The progress of linguistic change has been enshrined in the form of the now familiar S-curve, as in Figure 2.9 which was generated using the values given by Labov (2001a: 452, Table 14.1; Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2009: 58).

A critical contribution of Variationist Sociolinguistics is the ability to identify and study this type of linguistic change in present day speech communities. According to Labov (1994: 84) the classic pattern of linguistic change in progress when viewed in apparent time is a monotonic slope by age (Labov 2001a: 171), as in Figure 2.10.

Figure 2.10 shows a steady increase in the proportion of use of a linguistic feature from one age cohort to the next. Note the stepwise pattern. This is referred to in the literature

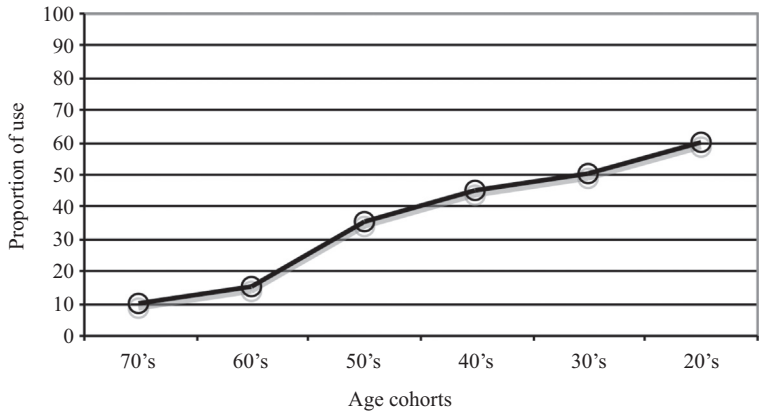

Figure 2.10 An idealized pattern of linguistic change in progress (generational change).

as a "monotonic" trajectory of change since there is a steady advancement of change, either increasing or decreasing. In generational change individual speakers acquire the characteristic frequency for a particular variable from their caregivers. This frequency may increase in adolescence and even undergo reorganization (see below), a typical characteristic of change in progress. However, by late adolescence (approximately age 17) an individual's linguistic system is thought to stabilize and from that point onwards is maintained for the rest of his or her life. In this way regular increases in the values adopted by individuals from one generation to the next lead to linguistic change for the community (Labov 1994: 84).

Mini Quiz 2.4

This figure plots the development of quotatives across the current youth population in Toronto (Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2004a). Note that since the view is with regard to a developing system from young to old, the view shows increasing age from left to right.

Q1 Which of the following observations is consistent with Figure 2.11?
- (a) The frequency of *be like* rises incrementally across speakers.
- (b) The frequency of *say* falls from youngest to oldest speakers.
- (c) The frequency of *be like* rises sharply, then remains high.
- (d) The frequency of *think* shows rapid change.
- (e) The frequency of *go* is stable.

Q2 Which individual quotative is the most stable in apparent time?
- (a) *be like*
- (b) *think*
- (c) *go*
- (d) zero
- (e) other

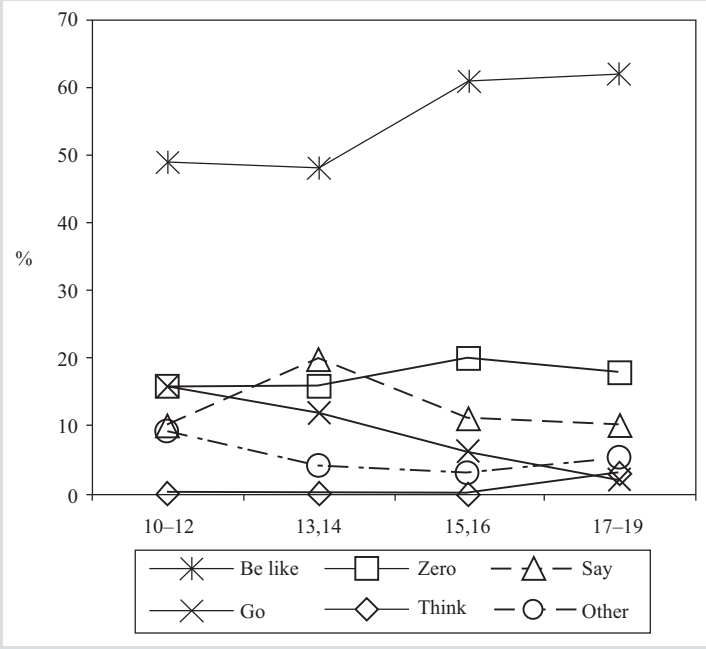

Figure 2.11 Overall distribution of quotatives by age in the Toronto English, c. 2002–2004. *Source*: Tagliamonte and D'Arcy, 2004a.

Q3 Which quotative declines in apparent time?
- (a) *be like*
- (b) *think*
- (c) *go*
- (d) zero
- (e) other

Q4 Of the sociolinguistic observations that could be made about Figure 2.11, which is the most dramatic?
- (a) Canadian Youth use a lot of different quotatives.
- (b) Canadian Youth use the *say*, *go*, and *think* as quotatives.
- (c) Use of quotatives is important to Canadian Youth.
- (d) Canadian Youth use *say* more in some age groups than others.
- (e) Canadian Youth use *be like* more than any other quotative.

Age Grading

When linguistic features are viewed in apparent time and exhibit age differences as in Figure 2.10 this is not necessarily evidence of generational change in progress. The same pattern could potentially reflect another phenomenon – age grading.

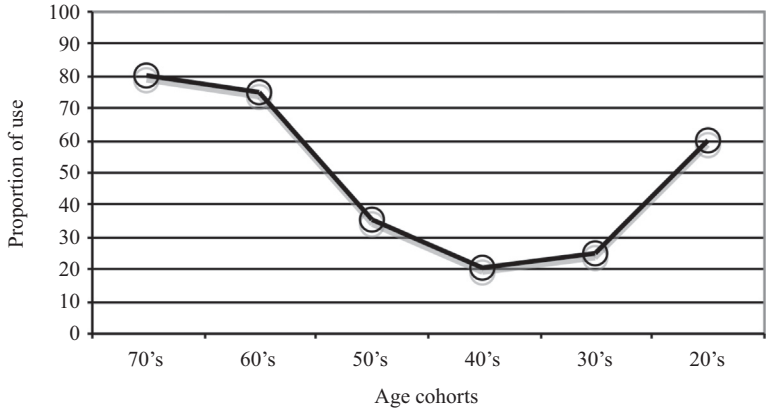

Figure 2.12 An idealized pattern of age-graded change.

Age grading is when people of different ages use language differently simply because they are at different stages in their life. They use "speech appropriate to their age group" (Wardaugh 2002: 194). Labov's definition of age grading is:

> If individuals change their linguistic behaviour throughout their lifetimes, but the community as a whole does not change, the pattern can be characterized as one of age grading. (Labov 1994: 84)

Age grading accounts for the fact that as people age their use of certain features may wane or vanish altogether. Alternatively, certain features may emerge as a person gets older. Note that there is no ongoing linguistic change of the grammar of the language, but rather change is localized to the behavior of a certain age group.

The classic pattern of age grading is a u- or v-shaped curve (Downes 1984: 191). (Of course, the inverse can also be true, i.e. a curve with a hump or point in the middle.) Figure 2.12 presents an idealized pattern of an age-graded change.

Figure 2.12 depicts the expected pattern for a nonprestigious linguistic feature that is age graded. When such features are not part of the standard language, they tend to peak during adolescence "when peer group pressure not to conform to society's norms is greatest" (Holmes 1992: 184). In middle age when societal pressure, job advancement, and child rearing come to the fore people tend to become more conservative. According to Holmes (1992: 186) "in their 'middle-years' people are most likely to recognize the society's speech norms and use the fewest vernacular forms." The use of standard or prestige forms peaks between the ages of 30 and 55 when people experience maximum social pressure to conform to the norms of the standard language. Then in old age, "when social pressures reduce as people move out of the workforce and into more relaxed phase of their life," the nonprestigious forms may resurface (Cheshire 2005: 1555; Downes 1998: 24; Labov 1994: 73).

Age-graded change typically involves linguistic features that: (1) have a high degree of social awareness (Labov 1994: 111–112), or (2) "have a rapid life-cycle" (Wolfram and Fasold 1974: 90). This is why features that become age-graded are those that are more able to be consciously controlled. The typical example used in the literature is the adolescent to adulthood transition. Adolescents use more slang terms (whatever they may be at a given

time), more swear words, etc. (see Holmes 1992: 183) but as they get older and enter the workforce their use of these features is thought to recede. This process is called "sociolectal retrenchment" (Chambers 2003: 95). Adolescent lexical items are typically cited as examples of age-graded phenomenon. For example, Wolfram and Fasold's (1974) description of age grading refers to pre-adolescents as "teeny-boppers" and adolescents are cited as using slang expression such as *heavy* for "nice." Today (c. 2010) pre-adolescents would not know what *either* of these words mean. Both these words have already come and gone.

An example of stable age grading is the pronunciation of the alphabet letter "Z" (Chambers 2003). In most places in the world, including Canada, the pronunciation of the letter is [zɛd]. In contrast, the US the pronunciation is [zi]. This creates a dilemma for Canadian children who watch American television shows and learn their alphabet by singing a popular American song that pronounces the last letter of the alphabet as [zi]. The children acquire this pronunciation but as they get older they change over to [zɛd] to align themselves with the adult population. However, what scenario can account for the upswing of the pattern shown in Figure 2.12? It is doubtful whether the middle-aged Canadian adults will change back to pronouncing [zi] in their old age. But then, who knows? When they sing that alphabet song to their grandchildren, what pronunciation will they use? To my knowledge, no one has checked (see also Boberg 2004: 259–260).

NOTE I am Canadian and my youngest son happens to have a name that has two zeds, *Dazzian*. One time he was hospitalized in a US hospital. On several occasions the hospital's personnel asked me to spell his name. I replied, "D, A, zed, zed, I, A N." Different people kept coming back to ask me the same question. Eventually someone asked me directly, "What is 'zed'? Is it a nickname?" It finally dawned on me that they were having trouble establishing the correct spelling of Dazzian's name. So, I spelled it out again "properly" "D, A, zee, zee, I, A N."

The Adolescent Peak

In early sociolinguistic research it was assumed that the step-by-step, monotonic pattern of linguistic change visible in Figure 2.2 would simply extend into the younger age groups, i.e. those under 20 (Labov 2001a: 454). However, when a number of early studies began to include preadolescents and adolescents in their analyses (e.g. Ash 1982; Cedergren 1973, 1988) a crest in the curve of change appeared in the late teenage years. This pattern is shown in Figure 2.13.

Figure 2.13 shows that the frequency of the incoming form is highest among 15–17 year olds. In fact, evidence from many studies has revealed that pre-adolescents use incoming forms less frequently, not more frequently, than their immediate elders. Postadolescents use the same forms less frequently. The difference in usage between these critical age groups creates a peak in the apparent time trajectory.

The discovery of a peak in apparent time marked "an idiosyncratic or at least unexpected feature" (Chambers 2003: 223) in the progress of change. Ash (1982) suggested that the peak might indicate that the change was receding. Cedergren (1988: 53) alluded to the social

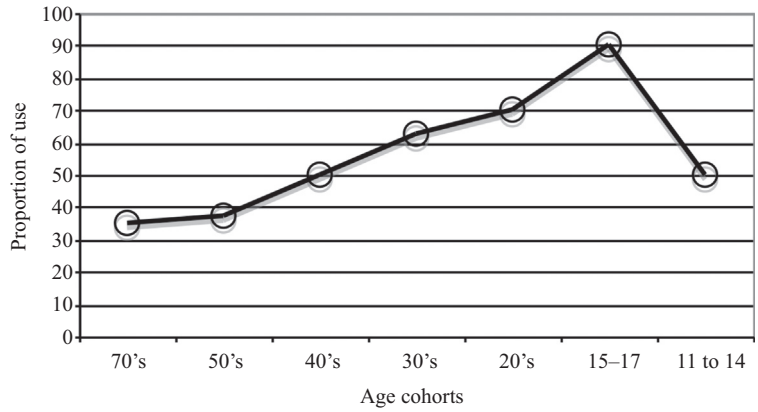

Figure 2.13 An idealized pattern of the adolescent peak

importance of the incoming form in the "linguistic marketplace" (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1975), suggesting that there was pressure from the community to use the feature. Chambers (2003: 195) argued that the dip in frequency after adolescence could also be explained as a return to adult norms following the adolescent years, i.e. sociolectal retrenchment. In this latter view, the peak simply reflects age grading because it is associated with a particular phase in life. Others suggested that the incoming forms had reached their limit and were receding (Labov 2001a: 454–455). However, the recurrence of a pattern with a peak within similar age cohorts across a variety of different linguistic variables in numerous localities suggested a more principled explanation (Labov 2001a: 454–455; see also Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2009: 59).

Labov (2001a: 458) offered the findings from nine ongoing female-dominated sound changes in Philadelphia to provide empirical support for a model of linguistic change that incorporates this peak. Among women a peak was visible for every variable, eight among 13–16 year olds and one among 17–29 year olds. Labov (2001a) argued that the peak is created by the logistic incrementation of linguistic change. Remember that the view of the data is from the perspective of apparent time – a snapshot in time. Not real time. In this frozen moment, the peak is the crest of an advancing wave of change. The drop-off above the maximum is due to the fact that the older speakers stabilized at an earlier point in the advancing change when the incoming form was that much less frequent. The drop-off below the maximum, among the younger speakers, is due to the shorter time period of time they have been participating in the change. They simply have not yet amassed the increments that the next oldest adolescents have.

NOTE Incrementation refers to an increase in the frequency of an incoming linguistic change. A peak in the incrementation process is simply an artifact of the apparent time construct. It is really the leading edge of a change in progress.

Vernacular Reorganization

How does the vernacular form and develop? A strong and recurrent finding from LVC research is that children acquire the vernacular of their primary caretaker, typically their mother (Kerswill 1996a; Kerswill and Williams 2000; Labov 2001a). This basic fact coupled with the pervasive finding in LVC research of gender asymmetry suggests a further gender difference. Which vernacular are children going to acquire? Undoubtedly, it will be the language of their caretakers. If women are the caretakers and women are ahead in the progression of linguistic change, then children will get an enhanced step forward on this cline from their mothers. A question that arises is: there are differences between young male and female children in the adoption their mother's vernacular? Further, it is quite obvious that children must at some point come to speak differently from their caretakers otherwise change would never happen. This means that at some point children adopt a norm that is different from the one they have acquired. This changing of the vernacular is known as vernacular reorganization and it occurs in the preadolescent and adolescent years (Labov 2001a: 415). Vernacular reorganization is necessary for linguistic change to advance.

Evidence for vernacular reorganization comes from several sources. Payne's (1980) research in Philadelphia showed that the children of out-of-state parents were able to acquire ongoing changes in the local community that their parents did not use. Kerswill and associates (Kerswill 1994, 1995, 1996a, 1996b; Kerswill and Williams 2000) studied the ideal laboratory for examining this process. Milton Keynes in England was created in the early 1970s by the in-migration of people from many dialect areas. When the community was studied in the early 1990s the youngest children used the dialect of their caretakers; however, the 8 years olds exhibited departures from the parental pattern and the 12 year-olds even more so. Such findings reveal that vernacular reorganization is already underway by age 8 and continue to advance into adolescence. LVC research in the late 1990s and early 2000s continues to demonstrate that the age span between approximately 8 years of age and the 20s is a key timeframe for studying the advancement of linguistic change in progress (e.g. D'Arcy 2004; Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2007a; Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2009).

Mini Quiz 2.5

Figure 2.14 shows some of the results from two surveys of Panama City, Panama, one in 1969 and one in 1982–84 (Cedergren 1973, 1988). The years on the "x" axis are birth dates of the speakers in the sample. The figure shows the percentage of ch-lenition. The phoneme /tS/ has the standard variant [tS], a voiceless palatal affricate. The lenited variant is [S], a voiceless palatal fricative. Lenition is regarded as a process of weakening because the stop articulation is lost to aspiration.

Q1 What is the most obvious sociolinguistic pattern in Figure 2.14?
- (a) The stability of the linguistic change.
- (b) A steep peak in the use of the lenited variant among the second youngest group.
- (c) Greater use of the lenited variant among the youngest Panamanians.

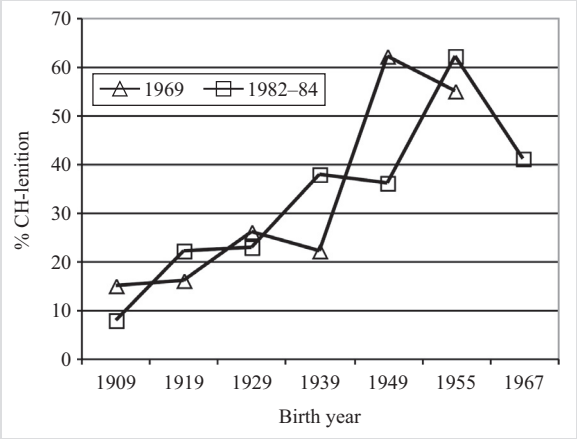

Figure 2.14 Ch-lenition in Panana c. 1969 and 1982–84.
Source: Cedergren, 1988: 53, Figure 4.

(d) Greater use of the lenited variant among older Panamanians.
(e) Age grading.

Q2 The pattern in Figure 2.14 can be interpreted as:
(a) Change in progress.
(b) Stylistic variation.
(c) Stable stratification.
(d) Age grading.
(e) Social stratification.

Q3 What aspect of this study provides the strongest possible test for the apparent time hypothesis?
(a) The sample of members across age groups.
(b) The second survey on the same random sample of all age groups, with the addition of a new group born in 1967–77.
(c) The use of survey techniques.
(d) The study of a linguistic variable undergoing change.
(e) The study of the city of Panama where changes were occurring very quickly.

Q4 Given the results in the figure when do Panamanians acquire the accelerated rates of ch-lenition?
(a) Before they are 3 years old.
(b) In adolescence.
(c) In their twenties.
(d) In their forties.
(e) Not until they are over 40.

Q5 What could explain the peak for the second-youngest age group in both surveys?
(a) Age grading.
(b) Statistical hypercorrection.

(c) The postadolescents are on the leading edge of change.
(d) ch-lenition is a stigmatized variant.
(e) ch-lenition is a stylistic marker in the speech community.

Q6 By the time of the second study in 1988 ch-lenition had become the object of social awareness and overt social commentary, something that had not been the case at the time of the first study. When linguistic features reach this stage, what are they called?

Social Change

Age differences within a speech community may not be the result of ongoing generational change or age grading. Instead, a u-shaped pattern in apparent time may indicate sociocultural changes and speakers' different responses to that change. Consider the case of Cajun English in Louisiana. Dubois and Horvath (1998) found a u-shaped pattern by speaker age for the use of stopped variant, [d], of the interdental fricatives [T] and [D], as in Example 2.6.

Example 2.6

(a) variable (th) "this" → [dIs]
(b) variable (dh) "that" → [dæt]

The middle-aged speakers had a dip in apparent time, just as in Figure 2.12. The older and younger generations had heightened use of the vernacular forms; their use of the [d] variant was as high as their grandparents. In explaining this u-shaped pattern in apparent time, Dubois and Horvath (1998: 257) did not appeal to age grading as an explanation, but instead linked it to the sociocultural situation. Over the period represented by the data there had been a decline in positive evaluation for Cajun identity followed by a Cajun renaissance. They argue that the resurgence of older Cajun features among the younger generation of speakers is due to the positive evaluation of Cajun identity. The linguistic variables involved, variable (th) and (dh), were not changing incrementally over time, as in generational change, nor were stable among for people of a particular age. Instead, there was recycling from one generation to the next of specific variables with socially correlated meaning. The social meaning of the variables had changed so that they could be used again.

How can the analyst assess whether an apparent-time correlation between the use of a linguistic feature and speaker age is generational change, age grading, recycling or some other type of change? The best way to tell is to have a real-time perspective – ideally a comparison with data from two points in time. Unfortunately, the vast majority of sociolinguistic data in the literature comes from apparent time. The easiest way to remedy the apparent-time–real-time problem is to conduct an apparent-time study but then compare the findings with an earlier study of the same community. Labov's (1963) study of Martha's Vineyard, for example, was supported with dialect data that had been collected in the *Linguistic Atlas of New England* (Kurath 1939). The problem was that studies from the early nineteenth century or older were not conducted with the same methods nor with the detail of later studies. This means that the data are often quite different, making comparisons at best suggestive.

The issue of disentangling linguistic change from age grading is of such great consequence that in the 1980s and 1990s resurveys of classic sociolinguistic study sites emerged. Cedergren (1988) and Trudgill (1988) led the way with their resurvey of Panama City and Norwich. In the 2000s came resurveys of Martha's Vineyard (Blake and Josey 2003; Pope, Meyerhoff, and Ladd 2007). Other communities that have been re-surveyed include Montreal, Canada (Blondeau 2001; Sankoff and Blondeau 2007; Sankoff, Blondeau, and Charity 2001), and various locales in Finland (Nahkola and Saanilahti 2004; Nordberg 1975; Nordberg and Sundgren 1998; Paunenen 1996). These are trend studies. Trend studies involve resampling the same age range of speakers with similar social attributes in the same speech community at different points in time (Bailey 2002; Sankoff 2006).

Trend studies have consistently established an increase in the frequency of incoming forms, affirming the validity of the apparent time construct. Cedergren (1988) reported that in the 13 years intervening between her initial and follow-up investigations in Panama, the frequency of (ch) lenition had increased among speakers between the ages of 40 to 70 years (see Figure 2.14). Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2007a) demonstrated that in a period of just seven years, young people in Ontario, Canada had substantially increased their use of quotative *be like*. Sankoff (2006) summarizes research testing the apparent time construct by saying:

> Together, trend and panel studies of the past decade have confirmed the validity and usefulness of apparent time as a powerful conceptual tool for the identification of language change in progress.

Nevertheless, there have been clear indications from trend studies that individuals may be able to shift the frequency of linguistic features well into adulthood. It seems, therefore, that the assumption of postadolescent linguistic stability that underlies much sociolinguistic research may not reflect the actual situation as accurately as initially believed (see also Labov 2001a: 446–447). Recall that the apparent time construct relies on the assumption that individuals' grammars stabilize in late adolescence. But what if they do not? There is yet another type of change to consider – change through the lifespan.

Lifespan Change

> Age-graded diversity … demonstrates that the ontogeny of language must continue through a speaker's lifetime. (Guy and Boyd 1990: 16)

Community change is when "all members of the community alter their frequencies together or acquire new forms simultaneously" (Labov 1994: 84). In this type of change "individual speakers change over their lifespans in the direction of a change in progress in the rest of the community" (Sankoff 2005: 1011). This type of change has come to be referred to as "longitudinal change" (Sankoff 2005: 1011) or lifespan change (Sankoff and Blondeau 2007: 562).

The ideal way to test for linguistic change across the lifespan is through a panel study. In panel studies the same individuals are followed for an extended period of time. Unfortunately, this type of study is rare. Most panel studies are small (e.g. Brink and Lund 1979; Nahkola and Saanilahti 2004; Palander 2005; Robson 1975; Tagliamonte 2007); however, there are at least two large-scale studies, such as in Finland (e.g. Sundgren 2009) and Denmark (e.g. Gregersen, Maegaard, and Pharao 2009). Some show that individuals change the frequency

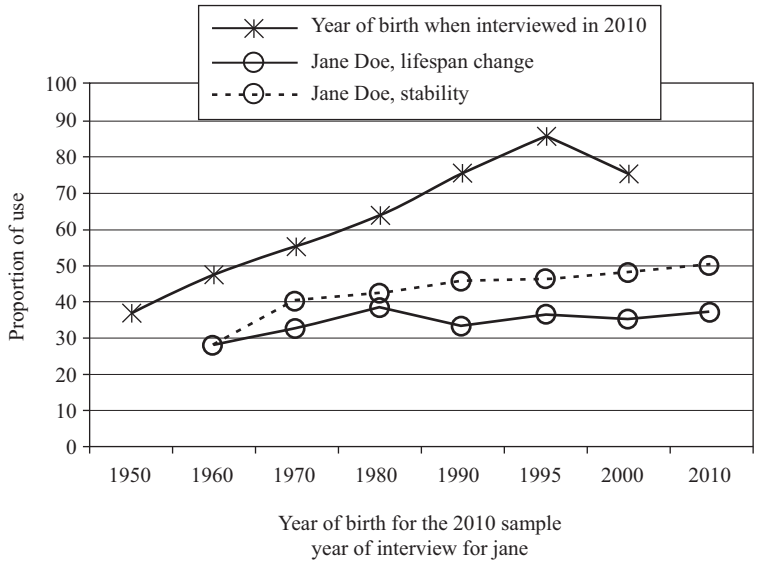

Figure 2.15 Pattern of a feature increasing in use over 60 years in real time for Jane Doe and apparent time for the speech community.

of features involved in change. Sankoff (2004) performed a case study of two of the boys involved in the British documentary series *Seven Up*, filmed in seven-year increments from 1963 when the children were seven years old. She found that both boys had made "some significant phonetic […] alterations to their speech after adolescence" (Sankoff 2004: 136).

Montreal French is unique in having been sampled in 1971, 1984, and 1994 (e.g. Blondeau 2001; Sankoff and Blondeau 2007; Sankoff and Cedergren 1973; Thibault 1986; Thibault and Daveluy 1989). This is a unique window on linguistic change in real time. Blondeau discovered an increase in the use of simple personal pronouns (*on, tu, vous*) and Sankoff and Blondeau (2007) found that use of posterior [R], an incoming change from above, was also more advanced. Thus, in both cases, the older speakers had moved long with the change in progress. The Swedish town of Eskilstuna was sampled in 1967–1968 (Nordberg 1975) and again in 1996 (Nordberg and Sundgren 1998; Sundgren 2009). The frequency of changes in progress in the late 1960s had increased in 1996. Given the results of these studies, apparent time actually underestimates the rate of change (see also Boberg 2004; Sankoff and Blondeau 2007).

An idealized picture of apparent time compared to real time can illustrate the difference between lifespan change vs. stability. This is shown in Figure 2.15. Suppose there was a sociolinguistic study that followed a single individual through her lifetime – *Jane Doe* – born in the year 1950. The study interviews *Jane* every year from the time she is a pre-adolescent in 1960 until 2010 when she is 70 (the circled line). In 2010 a study is undertaken of the same speech community with representation from individuals in their 70s (the same age as *Jane*) down to the pre-adolescents born in 2000. Two plausible lifespan trajectories are shown for *Jane*. The solid line models the hypothesis of incrementation to a peak in late adolescence followed by stability. The dashed line models the hypothesis of modest lifespan change. An incoming linguistic change in progress is at an early stage of development in 1960. In 2010 an apparent time sample shows the incoming form has increased in frequency across the

members of the speech community. The younger the individual the more they use the incoming form, particularly the adolescents born in 1995 who are on the leading edge of the change and exhibit the expected peak in apparent time. Compare the cohort of 70 year olds in 2010 with *Jane* who is also 70 in 2010. They have more or less the same rate of use of the incoming form in 2010; however, the precise frequency of use among these speakers would depend on the extent of lifespan change. This is something that will hopefully be made more precise in future studies.

This same linguistic question can be tackled in historical data by utilizing data from the past over lengthy periods of time. In this case, researchers rely on written documents in the historical record produced by the same individual over their lifetime (e.g. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 83–109; Raumolin-Brunberg 2005; 2009). One can imagine all manner of different corpora from the past that might be used to make observations about linguistic change: print media, literary works, radio broadcasts, etc. The more difficult part is to find the data, devise a sample and construct the appropriate data set.

Distinguishing generational change from lifespan change from community change from age grading is one of the big questions in contemporary LVC research (Labov 1994: 46)

TIP Any claim for linguistic change requires evidence from two points in time. Apparent time is good. But real time is better. If you can, find a real-time point of comparison for your study.

Stability

Despite all this discussion of change, at any given point in time, the vast majority of the grammar is stable and categorical. However, there are also many features that are variable but not changing. This demonstrates that variability is inherent to language rather than simply a transition from one state of a linguistic system to another (Labov 2001a: 75). Features that are variable but stable include those that correlate with social factors and/or differentiate styles, e.g. variable (ing), (t,d) (see Chapter 7) as well as those that cue levels of formality or processing effects, e.g. variable use of the complementizer *that* (see Chapter 5). Stability is easily recognizable by a flat pattern when a linguistic feature is viewed according to speaker age, such as in Figure 2.16.

Figure 2.16 shows that the frequency of a form remains stable across the adult community. Substantial research has demonstrated that certain linguistic variables exhibit stable variation of this type. In fact, some linguistic variables have been like this for centuries, e.g. variable (ing), (th], (dh) and negative concord (Labov 2001a: 85–92) cites.

The stability of these features confirms that linguistic variability is not simply a conduit for linguistic change, but also pervades the speech community as an inherent part of the linguistic system.

> If variation is nothing but a transitional phenomenon, a way-station between two invariant stages of the language, it can have only a limited role in our view of the human language faculty. Inherent variation would then be only an accident of history, a product of the unsurprising finding that human beings cannot abandon one form and adopt another instantaneously. (Labov 2001a: 85)

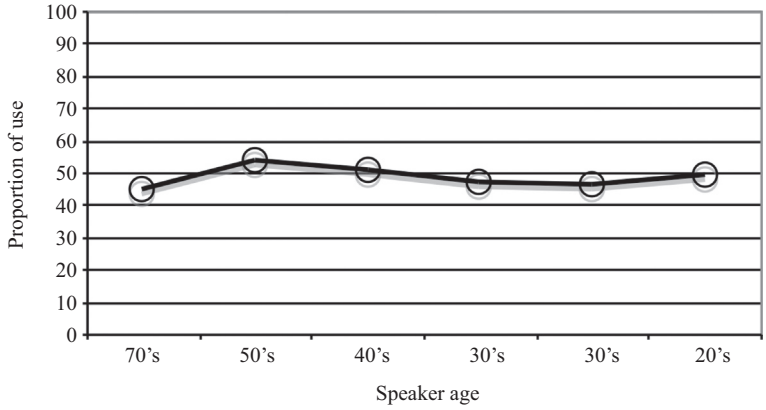

Figure 2.16 An idealized pattern of a stable linguistic variable.

Types of Change

> Not all variability and heterogeneity in language structure involves change; but all change involves variability and heterogeneity. (Weinreich *et al*. 1968: 188)

Linguistics has a long history of attempting to explain language change. When it comes to the quantitative study of linguistic variation and change, the prevailing question is how did this variation come to be? An important part of explaining change requires in-depth knowledge of where the change originated, its underlying mechanisms, and its stage of development.

Trees and Waves

The earliest model of linguistic change was the family tree model which is based on the notion of linguistic descent, the idea of one language being a later stage of another according to mother, daughter, sister relationships (Bloomfield 1933: 316 ff; Hoenigswald 1960; Labov 2007). In this view languages and their linguistic features descend from earlier stages of the same language over time such as the development of the Romance languages, Italian, French and Spanish, from Latin, e.g. Latin *annus* (year) became Italian *anno,* Spanish *año*, French, *année*, with the English derivative *annual*. The underlying assumption is that this history is a progression from generation to generation that is regular and without exception. The same pattern is repeated in synchronic change as a monotonic pattern in apparent time as we saw earlier in Figure 2.2. However, in actuality languages are influenced by a host of other factors. Another model, the wave model (Bailey 1973), is the idea that new features of a language spread from a central point outwards like waves just as when a stone is thrown into a body of water. This allows for more than simply change by descent. In this model dialects that are closely associated with each other in ways other than genetics – socially, economically, culturally – will influence each other in such a way that changes can arise *across* the branches of a linguistic family tree. For example, the Norman invasion of England in 1066 lead to

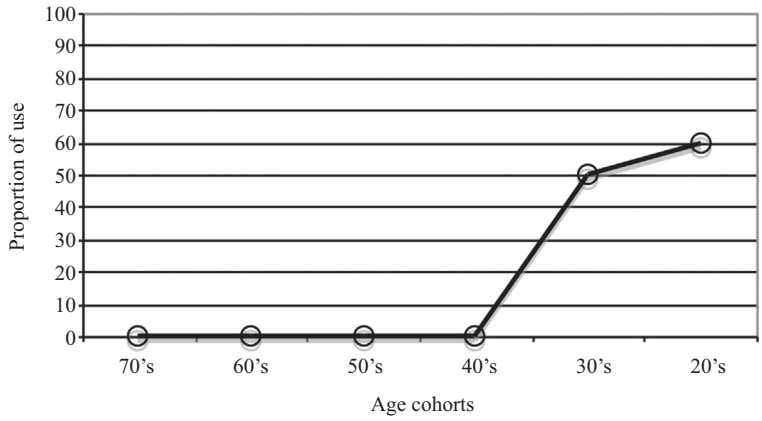

Figure 2.17 An idealized pattern of linguistic change from across the branches of the family tree, i.e. from outside the community.

heavy borrowing from French which led to innumerable vocabulary and spelling changes in English. Even today, in England the pronunciation of the borrowed French word "restaurant" may have a final nasal vowel (as in French) rather than some kind of final consonant. According to recent research both family tree models and wave models are needed to account for the history and relatedness of language families (Labov 2007: 382).

The dichotomy between linguistic change that is inherited from within the family tree vs. linguistic change that comes from external sources is an important distinction for interpreting patterns of LVC at any given point in time.

What kind of sociolinguistic pattern would be expected from a borrowed change as opposed to a change in progress? Such a change would not show a regular monotonic shift from one generation to the next. Instead, a change would happen abruptly in response to some external influence. Figure 2.17 provides an idealized view of what such a change might look like. Watch for it!

Above and Below

In traditional sociolinguistic studies the nature of change was also described in terms of: (1) change from below and (2) change from above (Labov 1994: 78). Change from below is "the normal type of linguistic change." It is a development that comes from within the system itself (Labov 2007: 346) (Figures 2.2 and 2.9). Such changes include processes such as generalization, extension, analogy and the like (see Chapter 3). Change from above on the other hand is "the importation of elements from other systems" (Labov 2007: 346). It is important to keep in mind that the term "above" is not meant to imply that the changes are higher on the socioeconomic scale. The critical dimension is the place of origin of the linguistic feature. While these may often be prestigious features, they need not be. For example, in early sociolinguistic research Trudgill (1974b) showed that nonstandard features from London were spreading to other British cities. These were changes from above since they were imported from elsewhere. The change idealized in Figure 2.17 above is this type of change.

Change from above has these identifying characteristics:

- imported from outside the speech community;
- speakers are aware of it;
- socially motivated;
- may involve a reversal the trajectory of change.

Change from below has these identifying characteristics:

- develops spontaneously within the speech community;
- speakers are not consciously aware of it, at least in initial stages;
- linguistically motivated, but may be driven by social motivations.

Drift vs. Contact

> Every word, every grammatical element, every locution, every sound and accent is a slowly changing configuration, moulded by the invisible and impersonal drift that is the life of language. (Sapir 1921: 149)

Somewhat the same dichotomy has been referred to in another way, namely whether the change in question has arisen: (1) naturally from within the system itself; or (2) through contact. Natural changes can be considered the traditional type of change which is thought to be phonetically gradual, exceptionless and every token of a phoneme in a phonological context is affected (Kerswill 1996a: 178). This type of change is often called drift as in the quote above. Contact-induced change comes from any factor of the external world which causes languages to change. While geographic factors may facilitate or impede development, society and culture provide innumerable influences on change as well.

Leveling

Another way of looking at these processes is through the lens of dialect leveling, a phenomenon that has been most extensively studied in the United Kingdom and in Europe where longitudinal jockeying among many different dialects, dialect regions, and countries (e.g. Scotland, England, Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Wales) has been going on for centuries. Peter Trudgill (1986: 98) has been at the forefront of research on dialect leveling, which he defines as a process which leads to "the reduction or attrition of marked variants," where "marked" refers to forms that are "unusual or in a minority" (Trudgill 1986: 98). Dialect leveling involves two different processes: (1) leveling across geographic space – geographical diffusion, and (2) leveling of linguistic forms as an outcome of accommodation (mutual convergence) between speakers of difference dialects. Such processes are not straightforward, however, as linguistic change progresses quite distinctly in different types of communities (e.g. Kerswill 2003, 2009a,b). In the United Kingdom the typical situation is a largely monolingual base and people moving from one dialect region to another. UK researchers report that mobility has increased dramatically over the past 50 years leading to disruption in traditional community norms. As Kerswill points out, a high degree of mobility leads to the weakening of group-internal linguistic norms. The population, in turn, becomes more

receptive to linguistic innovation, taking up diffusing change more readily and thus change proceeds more rapidly (Kerswill 2003: 224). This is why research in the United Kingdom has been dominated by studies that share a concern with the spread of features in geographic and social space (e.g. Foulkes and Docherty 1999) and several large-scale research projects have arisen which track these changes in apparent time (e.g. Kerswill 1996b, 2003, 2009a,b; Kerswill and Williams 2000; Kerswill *et al.* 2008). One of the major trends is that regional dialect speakers are eschewing linguistic features which are "particularly indicative of their local roots while at the same time adopting some features which are perceived to be non-local" (Kerswill 2003: 225). The pattern for dialect leveling at the community level would be consistent with Figure 2.17 with the added proviso that the frequency and use of the feature used by the under 30 year olds is a supralocal norm and potentially a more common variant in the larger pool.

In some cases, very high-contact communities with large populations of adults not only from different dialect areas but also from different countries speaking different languages (e.g. London) might be expected to lead to imperfect learning, and thus simplification and rapid change of the host dialect. It is difficult to conceive how these different processes could be disentangled in practice. Ethnic influences must be distinguished from differences relating to social class, education, age of arrival, social networks, identity, allegiance, and potentially many other factors.

Transmission vs. Diffusion

In the United States linguistic change across communities is viewed somewhat differently. The two leading questions are as follows: Has the change evolved within the speech community through transmission, i.e. descent from earlier version of the same language, i.e. tree model? Has the change evolved through diffusion from one community to the next, i.e. wave model? Transmission involves change from below. It is "the unbroken sequence of native-language acquisition by children" which results in "the continuity of dialects and languages across time" (Labov 2007: 346). Transmission emerges in the context of change internal to the speech community (Figure 2.10). Children advance a linguistic change to a level beyond that of their caretakers in the same direction over successive generations (Labov 1994: Chapter 14). This is said to produce a "faithful reproduction" (Labov 2007: 345) of existing patterns. Incrementation is the increase in frequency from childhood to the age of stabilization (somewhere around age 17). Diffusion involves change from above. It is change that originates from outside (Figure 2.17). This typically arises in the context of "contact between speech communities" and the "transfer of features from one to the other" (Labov 2007: 347). In the situation of change from above where change is diffusing from one place to another, the original patterns weaken and there is loss of structural features. This crucially implicates the constraints on variation as key indicators of the mechanisms of change.

Given the essential differences between these types of change as well as the overlaps between them it is critical for the analyst to observe and interpret both the pattern and its social and linguistic correlates. The nature of linguistic patterns in the speech community will provide clues as to the origins of a particular linguistic phenomenon. When children participate in a linguistic change we can expect an increase in the frequency of incoming forms and a faithful replica of the extant patterns. However, in diffusion there will be changes in the "extent, scope, or specificity of a variable" (Labov 2007: 346). The question is how to identify these processes. What does a process of weakening look like? What does it mean to lose structural features?

Table 2.1 Difficulty of acquisition of linguistic variables.

Rank	Linguistic feature	Age of acquisition
1 (most difficult)	i. Lexically unpredictable phonological rules	By 3 (?)
	ii. new phonological oppositions	By 3–13
	iii. grammatical change; parameters	By 8 (?)
2	iv. prosodic systems	
3	v. grammatical change	Adolescence? Lifespan?
4	vi. morphologically conditioned changes	Not before 4–7; then lifespan
5	vii. reassignment of words or lexical sets to other morphological classes	Lifespan
6	viii. mergers	Lifespan
7	ix. Neogrammarian changes	Lifespan
8	x. lexical diffusion of phonological changes	Lifespan
	xi. borrowing, new lexical forms of old words; new phonetic forms of existing morphological categories	
9	Borrowing, vocabulary	Lifespan

Source: Kerswill 1996a: 200, Table 4.

Levels of Grammar

Transmission of linguistic features from all levels of grammar is not in question in the case of linguistic descent. Children learning their native language are able to acquire the grammar of their parents regardless of whether it is a unique pronunciation or a pragmatic nuance. However, when linguistic features are imported from one speech community to the next (diffusion), the level of grammar becomes critical. Are all features perfectly replicated linguistically and socially? It is well known that people of different ages have different abilities in acquiring language. Kerswill (1995) argues that the age of the transmitters of linguistic change is a critical factor in diffusion. Children are capable of learning new linguistic forms, their frequency and their underlying linguistic patterns. Adults, on the other hand, may be able to learn a new form and use it to a certain degree, but they are unable to acquire the structural detail of underlying linguistic patterns. According to Labov (2007: 371), "an unbroken sequence of parent-to-child transmission is required to maintain complex patterns of phonetic, grammatical, and lexical specification." In essence, there are tangible and complex contrasts between transmission by children and diffusion by adults. Moreover, according to research by Kerswill (1995) and Labov (2007: 371) the nature of linguistic change found under different sociolinguistic conditions can be predicted and identified according to patterns of the variation. Kerswill (1996a: 200, Table 4) proposed a difficulty hierarchy for linguistic variables, as in Table 2.1. Such a hierarchy along with a consideration of the origins and nature of a linguistic change in a given community can provide analysts with a new way of explaining linguistic variables and the mechanisms of change that underlie them.

As changes propagate across the landscape from urban centers to smaller cities to outlying communities how are the changes evolving? Do they maintain the underlying constraints and patterns found at the source? Or are they modified, extended, simplified or otherwise? Kerswill's model can be used to interpret change within and across communities. It can determine whether a change has been transmitted or diffused, or whether it is the result of some other process. Examination of the details of variation from a cross-community perspective, as detailed by Kerswill (1996a) and Labov (2007) will enable scholars to provide a rich interpretation of the patterns of variation they find in their data.

TIP Notice that Kerswill puts a question mark on grammatical change. Given the widespread grammatical changes going on in English over the past 100 years exploring cross-dialectal patterns of grammatical change stands out as a promising new research agenda.

Phase of Development

Another important dimension to interpreting patterns of linguistic variation in time is to consider the change in terms of its stage of development, i.e. how long has it been going on? Where is it on the S-curve? (see Figure 2.9) A linguistic change can be: (1) nearly completed, (2) mid-range, (3) new and vigorous, or (4) incipient (Labov 1994: 67, 79–83). Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1996: 55) apply the following classification in their research on incoming forms they studied between 1410 and 1681 in the history of English.

Each phase in the history of a change is thought to have a particular social nature. When a change is incipient it may not have strong social correlates. However, when the change starts up the middle section of the S-shaped curve (Figure 2.9), social factors become significant. By the time changes reach the middle-range their association particular age cohorts and/or social characteristics weakens. Then, as changes near completion, social differences level out and there tend to be fewer distinctions across the socioeconomic hierarchy. Such a progression might be mapped onto the frequency metric proposed by Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1996: 55), as in Example 2.7.

Example 2.7

Incipient	≤15%	no age or social correlates
New and vigorous	15–35%	social factors become significant
Mid-range	36–65%	social factors weaken
Nearing completion	65–85%	social differences level out
Completed	≥85%	

This model presents a testable hypothesis for the examination of data. In a series of articles Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2004a,b, 2007a) set out to explore these phases in an linguistic change in progress as well as nature of incrementation, vernacular reorganization and lifespan change. We discovered that the male/female contrast was developmental in the rise of use of *be like*. The frequency of the incoming form incremented through

adulthood; however, the grammar underlying the change did not change (see Chapter 9). These findings require corroboration from other speech communities and across communities.

In sum, the key to understanding linguistic variation and change is to be able to interpret sociolinguistic patterns. The rich body of research that sociolinguistic studies have provided over the past 40 years or more has substantiated that sociolinguistic patterns are fundamental – generational change, age grading, lifespan change – each leave different "tracks" in the speech community. The next phase in sociolinguistic research will be to determine whether the same patterns are relevant for all types of variables and to determine to what extent these patterns are applicable to diverse sociocultural contexts, both local and supralocal, on the world stage.

NOTE Watch a senior sociolinguist at a conference talk. He or she might be staring at the handout scribbling on the figure or table that depicts the study's findings. Why? Because sociolinguists know that the key to explaining linguistic variables lies in interpreting the patterns. Once you understand the patterns, you will understand the variable.

Principles of Linguistic Change

Due to the overwhelming consistency of patterns of linguistic change and their associated social correlates, Labov (1990) first formulated two principle of linguistic change. The original principles were: Principle I: In stable sociolinguistic stratification, men use a higher frequency of nonstandard forms than women; and Principle II: In the majority of linguistic changes, women use a higher frequency of the incoming forms than men. These were revised to four principles of linguistic change (Labov 1994, 2001a).[1]

Principle 1 (change from below)
"Linguistic change from below originates in a central social group, located in the interior of the socioeconomic hierarchy" (Labov 2001a: 188). This principle emerges from findings that exhibit the curvilinear pattern shown earlier in Figure 2.5. The so-called "interior" social classes (lower middle and upper middle class) lead linguistic change. They have a higher frequency of incoming forms.

Principle 2 (stability)
For stable sociolinguistic variables, women show a lower rate of stigmatized variants and a higher rate of prestige variants than men (Labov 2001a: 266). Principle 2 strongly implicates women's social role in the speech community. This situation is exemplified in Figure 2.6 where women consistently have higher frequencies than men.

Principle 3 (change from above)
In linguistic change from above, women adopt diffusing forms at a higher rate than men (Labov 2001a: 274). Principle 3 suggests that one of the identifying features of change from above would be the greater use by women of diffusing forms and a greater use by men of local and/or dialectal variants.

Table 2.2 The gender paradox.

Women	Men
Conform to sociolinguistic norms that are overtly prescribed, i.e. stable stylistic variables, variable *(who)*	Conform less to overt prescription
Conform to innovations from within the speech community (transmitted changes)	Conform less to innovations regardless of origin
Conform to diffusing innovations even when they are not overtly prescribed, e.g. variable *(be like)*	

Principle 4 (change from below)

In linguistic change from below, women use higher frequencies of innovative forms than men do (Labov 2001a: 275, 292–293). Principle 4 suggests that an identifying feature of change from below would be the greater use by women of innovative forms.

Notice that there is an essential paradox in male–female behavior, the gender paradox, as in Table 2.2:

Labov repeats the gender paradox: "While women consistently conform more closely than men to variants that are overtly proscribed, they conform less than men to variants that are not overtly prescribed (change from below), but which are innovative." His explanation continues:

> both conservative and innovative behaviours reflect women's superior sensitivity to the social evaluation of language. In stable situations women perceive and react to prestige or stigma more strongly than men do, and when change begins, women are quicker and more forceful to employing the new social symbolism, whatever it might be. (Labov 2001a: 291)

Eckert explains it another way:

> Generalizations about the use of standard language can be linked to generalizations about women's position in society … women have to do much more than men simply to maintain their place in the standard language market … women may have to use linguistic extremes in order to solidify their place, wherever it may be … (Eckert 2000: 192)

Why do woman always lead in the innovations of language wherever they originate? After all, the behavior of men and women in one community may not be identical to another and what is considered prestigious may also vary and change over time. Glottalization was once a lower-class dialect feature in England. Trudgill's (1972b) study of Norwich showed that the men were using t-glottaling the most. Ten years later the use of t-glottaling was accelerating among young women in Wales (Mees 1987). Another 10 years later it had spread north to Newcastle (Milroy *et al*. 1994b) and York (see Chapter 7). The use of this feature by woman was apparently instrumental in reversing the traditional stigma that this feature once had.

> The explanation that is suggested by the diffusion of the glottal stop in England "is not that females favour prestige forms … but that they create them." (Milroy *et al*. 1994b: 351)

So, is the evaluation of diffusing changes as "prestigious" an artefact of their use by women? A larger question that is of pressing concern is to understand the social and cultural mechanisms that lead to the diffusion of linguistic change. All this emphasizes how critical it is to take a broad and in-depth perspective of the context in the study of variation and change. The interaction of multiplex social factors and also the nature of the linguistic change itself must be considered.

Mini Quiz 2.6

Q1 What type of linguistic variants are favored by women in change from above?
- (a) In any type of change women favor the standard forms.
- (b) The conservative variants.
- (c) The nonstandard variants.
- (d) The local variants.
- (e) The incoming prestige variants.

Q2 In stable sociolinguistic stratification:
- (a) Women lag behind men.
- (b) Men use a higher frequency of nonstandard forms than women.
- (c) Men and woman behave the same.
- (d) The incoming prestige form is subject to overt criticism.
- (e) Women favor the incoming prestige forms more than men.

Sex vs. Gender

The sociolinguistic literature alternates between sex and gender as terms for describing male/female differences. Straightforwardly, "sex" refers to the physiological distinction between males and female. "Gender" on the other hand refers to the social and cultural roles that individuals appropriate depending on their opportunities, expectations and life experiences. A complicating factor is whether a person's innate sex influences their use of language or whether it has more to do with how a person is socialized. Some researchers have argued that the social construct of gender provides a more accountable explanation of linguistic variation than a binary contrast between male and female (e.g. Eckert 1989, 1999, 2000, 2008; Eckert and Rickford 2001). Considerable research from the late 1980s onwards has uncovered this pattern in the behavior of men and women in different speech communities. In an American high school in Detroit, Eckert (1988, 1989, 2000) demonstrated that there were greater differences between different groups of girls and boys (Jocks vs. Burnouts) than between girls and boys generally. Subsequent research focussing on "micro" groups, i.e. subgroups within the broad social categories of age, sex, education, etc., has proven to be highly insightful for understanding the dynamics of sociolinguistic variation.

These studies emphasize how important it is to check individuals' patterns within the broad categories of sex, social class, and education to determine if, and where, parallels exist across individuals. Of course, any one researcher cannot do everything, so individuals tend to focus in on aspects of linguistic variation and change that most interest them.

Sociolinguistic Diffusion

Labov's (2001a) model of the diffusion of linguistic change within the speech community evolves by stages:

Stage 0: Stability.
Stage 1: Association of a variant with a reference group. This association occurs near the bottom of the S-shaped curve; the change begins to be accelerated within the reference group, and to a lesser extent, with those who interact most frequently with members of the group.
Stage 2: Gender specialization. The sound change becomes associated with one or the other gender.
Stage 3: Gender split. Males in the lower social classes show a consistent pattern of retreating from or resisting a female-dominated change.
Stage 4: First generation acceleration. When the children of the young women of Stage 2 enter the speech community, males show a sharp step upward.
Stage 5: Second generation acceleration.
Stage 6: Third generation approximation. As changes near completion, the difference between men and women becomes smaller. If the variable becomes a social marker or stereotype, a linear alignment with social class develops, along with [ ] interaction between social class and gender … If the change is generally adopted in the community, gender differences will disappear (Labov 2001a: 309).

> The changing temper of the period in which we live is reflected in a changing language. (McKnight 1925: 16)

Summary

Patterns in language data can implicate language external influences or language internal processes or both. The frequency of linguistic variants examined accountably with careful circumscription of the variable context and arrayed according to the age of the individual, can reveal much about the nature of the linguistic variable. Is the pattern of distribution of a feature flat, sloping, peaking or otherwise? This will inform the interpretation of language usage in the community. What type linguistic change is in evidence? The patterns provide an important clue. The study of linguistic change in progress has repeatedly demonstrated several key characteristics of the social context are crucial to the understanding language change. Three features pointing to the social nature of linguistic change are the following (from Labov 2001a: 75): (1) the unpredictability of change, (2) the unrestricted directionality of change, and (3) the existence of stable variation.

The classic sociolinguistic patterns are based on independent variables which were defined according to major sociological categories such as class, education, style, and sex. When sociolinguistic surveys are based on large-scale samples such as the city studies of the 1960s and 1970s, speakers were categorized based on these gross social categories. There are, of course, innumerable (if not infinite) ways of delineating groups in society. Other correlates that have also been considered include ethnicity, race, mobility, network, register, interactional context,

attribute of the interlocutor, group affiliation, among many others. At the same time it has become increasingly obvious that speakers utilize the variation within their linguistic repertoires to accomplish plenty of other social meanings (e.g. Eckert 2000). All of these external, socially defined, characteristics may influence the choices people make when speaking or writing.

Yet the structure of the variable grammar is also a critical facet of structured heterogeneity. The explanation for any array of data does not arise from overall frequencies alone, nor from an apparent time display of those frequencies. The analyst must consider the constraints that underlie the frequency of linguistic features, whether these relate to the nature of the grammatical structure, the relationships among syntactic categories, etc.

In sum, the study of LVC requires reference to external conditions and internal conditions to explain variation. The level of grammar of a feature is important and so is its geographic origin and social evaluation and these different facets all contribute to understanding the whole. A grammatical pattern may be the key to determining where a linguistic feature came from. A feature's history in a community may explain its social value. The type of social correlates a variant has may reveal its evolution. The development of a linguistic feature reflects social and economic change.

NOTE A common problem in LVC presentations is that researchers show a lot of output from statistical modeling (numbers, probabilities, coefficients, etc.) and then go on to expound an interpretation that cannot be found in the analysis. Make the link between evidence and explanation!

Exercises

Exercise 2.1 Tips on interpreting sociolinguistic patterns

In LVC research patterns in language are usually presented in a table or a figure. These display the story of the linguistic variable under investigation. It is critical to know how to present data informatively and how to interpret what you see.
When you read a table or a figure, make note of the following:

- What variant is being charted? If the measure is of [n], do not interpret it as [ŋ].
- You cannot make claims about things that are *not* shown.

Exercise 2.2 Identifying sociolinguistic patterns

Figure 2.18 shows the distribution of variable (h) in York, United Kingdom, c. 1997, as in Example 2.8:

Example 2.8

(a) I'm *'anding my* notice in tomorrow. (YRK/090)
(b) Why are you *hasslin'* now? (YRK/090)

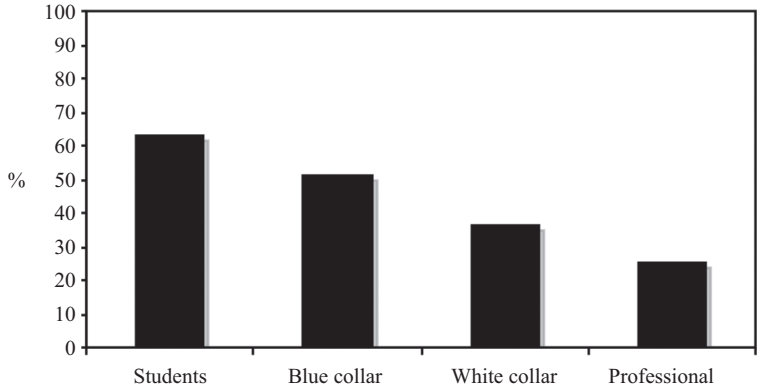

Figure 2.18 Distribution of variable (h), York English, c. 1997.

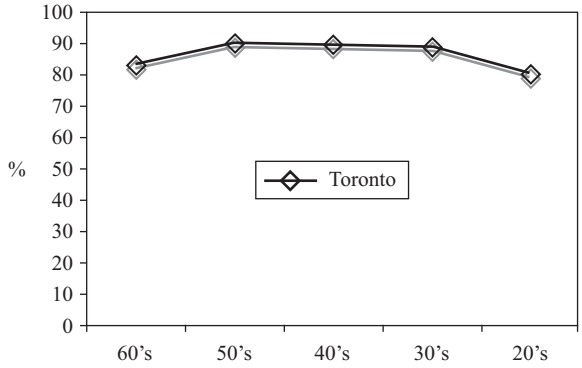

Figure 2.19 Distribution of variable (that) Toronto, c. 2003–2004.

Question 1 What type of stratification is evident?
Figure 2.19 shows the distribution of variable (that) in Toronto, Canada, as in Example 2.9.

Example 2.9

I don't think *that* that's a matter of choice. I think Ø it's a matter of helping our system out. (TOR/127)

Question 2 What type of linguistic situation is evident?
Figure 2.20 shows the distribution of [f], [t] and Ø variants as opposed to [θ] Wolfram (1969: 92). Answer the questions below.

Question 3 What is this variable a clear example of?
(a) hypercorrection
(b) free variation
(c) a gender indicator
(d) a social class indicator
(e) a social class indicator and a gender indicator

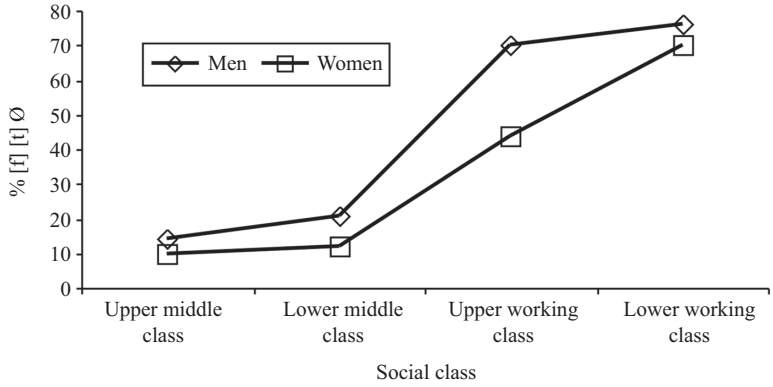

Figure 2.20 Distribution of [f], [t] and Ø variants as opposed to [θ]
Source: Wolfram, W. (1969) *A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), p. 92, Figure 21; reproduced by kind permission of CAL.

Question 4 What does this figure also reveal?
(a) The gender groups in each social class are consistently stratified, with women scoring lower than the men.
(b) The gender groups in each social class are not consistently stratified.
(c) The gender groups are highly variable and there is no consistent pattern
(d) The gender groups in each social class are consistently stratified, with men scoring lower than the women.
(e) The relevant gender pattern is obscured by social class.

Question 5 What is the main cause of sex and gender differences in language use?
(a) ability
(b) education
(c) mobility and social contacts.
(d) women like the standard language more.
(e) men are not as innovative as women.

Exercise 2.3 Interpreting sociolinguistic patterns

Figure 2.21 presents data from Trudgill's study of Norwich, England (Trudgill 2000: 37). It shows the distribution of local Norwich forms, which Trudgill refers to as "non-RP." The three linguistic variables are: (i) variable (ing), (ii) variable (t) and (iii) variable (h), as in Example 2.10.

Example 2.10

(a) *dancin'* for "dancing"
(b) *be*[/]*r* for "better"
(c) *'anding* for "handing"

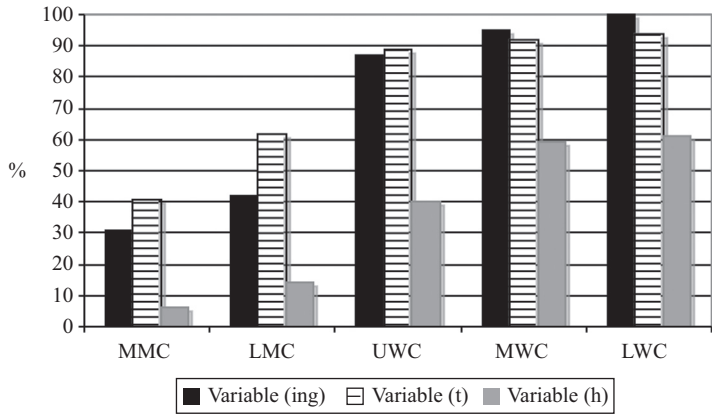

Figure 2.21 Distribution of non-RP variants for three linguistic variables in Norwich English, c. 1972.
Source: Trudgill 2000: 37, Table 5.

NOTE The term "RP" refers to the most prestigious Upper-Class pronunciation of British English. Why "received"? In Victorian English "received" meant "socially acceptable."

The data are presented as overall proportions according to six socioeconomic classes: Lower Working Class (LWC), Middle Working Class (MWC), Upper Working Class (UWC), Lower Middle Class (LMC), Middle Middle Class (MMC) and Upper Middle Class (UMC).

Figure 2.21 reveals several important sociolinguistic patterns. What can you say about the linguistic behavior of members of each of the socioeconomic groups? What differences in behavior between the various groups can you observe? Can you be more confident of some observations than of others?

First, the social classes clearly differ. This can be confidently stated because of the parallel results for three different variables. However, there is less confidence in the details of these patterns and on their interpretation, e.g. the extent of difference between MC and WC, without further information about how the data were collected and analyzed.

Question 1 How important are the various differences among the various working classes between UWC, MWC, LWC?
Question 2 How important are the various differences between MMC and LMC?
Question 3 How important are the various differences between the middle classes as a whole and the working classes as a whole?
Question 4 How important are the various differences between LMC and UWC?
Question 5 How does performance on the (h) variable appear to be different from performance on the (ing) and (t) variables in all social classes?
Question 6 Is there any difference in performance in variable (ing) and (t)?
Question 7 What other information would you require to strengthen any conclusions you would wish to draw?

Mini Quiz Answers

2.1 **Q1**: *a*

2.2 **Q1**: *False*

2.3 **Q1**: *Mike's speech follows that of African Americans more closely than northern whites across phonological variables but patterns with European Americans with grammatical features.*
Q2: *While he was able to acquire features of phonology, prosody, and lexis, he did not acquire grammatical patterns.*
Q3: *A conflict between wanting to participate in urban black male youth culture and the reality of being apart from this social sphere.*

2.4 **Q1**: *c*
Q2: *d*
Q3: *c*
Q4: *e*

2.5 **Q1**: *b*
Q2: *a*
Q3: *b*
Q4: *b*
Q5: *c*
Q6: *Stereotypes. Ch-lenition had made the transition to from marker to stereotype*

2.6 **Q1**: *e*
Q2: *b*

Notes

1 Current Principle 2 used to be Principle 1; Current Principle 3 and 4 used to be Principle 2.

Background Reading

Gregersen *et al*. 2009; Labov 1963, 1966, 1969, 1971, 1972a,b, 2001a,b; Macaulay and Trevelyan 1977; Ochs 1992.
Silverstein 1976, 1979, 1985; Trudgill 1974a,b; Wolfram 1969, 1971, 1974.