Introduction

Applied linguistic accounts of identity in conditions of contemporary globalisation are beset by two kinds of bias. On the one hand, second language acquisition research tends to assume that the language it investigates is deficient. On the other, sociolinguistics is inclined to respond to linguistic difference with romantic celebration. To cut a path between these problematic subdisciplinary dispositions, this chapter focuses on the English of an adult migrant who started to speak the language later in life and it examines his speech through the prism of Silverstein’s ‘total linguistic fact’. The ‘total linguistic fact’ directs our attention to linguistic form, social interaction and ideology, but rather than simply correlating a couple of these dimensions or treating them separately, it emphasises their ‘dynamic interplay’. It insists that claims about a speaker’s control of linguistic structure, about their rhetorical effectiveness or about their political position should be grounded in a detailed empirical investigation of how these elements operate together in communicative practice, and in doing so, it reduces the scope for analysts to introduce their own a priori assumptions.

The chapter begins by specifying two linguistic concepts relevant to identity, ‘style’ and ‘second language’ (‘L2’), and it approaches these from the perspectives of quantitative style-shifting and discursive stylisation. After describing the study that it draws on, the empirical analysis begins with an account of the focal informant’s diasporic experience in London and then shows how his style-shifting and some of his L2 speech variants chime with now well-established local patterns. It then turns to stylisation in the performance of character speech in narrative, exploring the complex and not always effective relationship between linguistic form, discursive context and socio-indexical resonance, first in the informant’s performance of Anglo vs Indian styles and then in his production of vernacular Anglo. The analysis then moves to a characterisation of the informant’s participation in the London sociolinguistic economy, insisting that ‘L2 speaker’ is an integral (and influential) part of the local landscape.

Overview

Historically, style and second language have not sat easily together in language research. They have often been associated with antagonistic views of non-standard mixed speech data and as
Styling and identity in a second language

an either/or choice of how to look at one’s data (e.g. Gumperz 1982; Rampton 1995). L2 research has typically drawn on notions like learning, development, error and interference, while sociolinguistic studies of style speak of social differentiation, identity-projection, sociolinguistic markers and code-switching, but there is surely no necessary incompatibility of style and L2 (Talmy 2008). Kramsch (2009: 5) suggests that ‘imagined identities, projected selves, idealisations or stereotypes of the other … seem to be central to the language-learning experience [even though …] they are difficult to grasp within the current paradigms of SLA research’, and when Eckert (2008: 456) proposes that in ‘one way or another, every stylistic move is the result of an interpretation of the social world and of the meanings of elements within it, as well as a positioning of the stylizer with respect to that world’, there is no principled reason for excluding the L2 user from analysis. So as someone’s grasp of a different language develops, it is worth asking: Which social categories, figures and stances do they (start to) explore through the connotational – the non-referential, socially indexical – possibilities of the language they are using, how, where, with whom and with what kinds of alignment? Indeed, how far do the abilities to distinguish different social types, to recognise the ways of speaking associated with them, and then to reproduce them linguistically, develop in synchrony? To tackle questions like these, we first need to define what we mean by ‘style’ and ‘second language’.

Generally speaking, a ‘style’ can be seen as a distinctive set of linguistic (and other semiotic) features indexically linked to typifications of the social world, produced and construed in situated interaction. This has been approached in a number of different ways in sociolinguistics (see Auer 2007; Coupland 2007), and in what follows, I will draw on two in particular: ‘style-shifting’ and ‘stylisation’.

1 The notion of style-shifting derives from the tradition of variationist sociolinguistics and it uses quantitative correlation to link patterns of phonological variation to different situations (Labov 1972; see Drummond and Schleef, this volume). There are a number of well-recognised limitations in quantitative style-shifting as a window on interactional processes (e.g. Coupland 2007; also see discussion below), but it does offer a valuable account of formal linguistic variability, and its embedding in survey methods allows us to place the style-shifting of any given individual in a much wider empirical view of speech in the area where s/he lives.

2 Stylisation is reflexive communicative action in which speakers produce specially marked and often exaggerated representations of linguistic varieties that lie outside their habitual repertoire (at least as this is expected within the situation on hand; Rampton 1995, 2006). Stylisation is closely linked to the linguistic anthropological notion of register. But whereas registers/styles are distinctive forms of language, speech and non-linguistic semiosis used as a normal part of social interaction and indexically evoke specific typifications of stance, person or situation in the course of routine conduct (Agha 2004, 2007; Eckert 2008), stylisation involves a degree of self-conscious performance, a second-order meta-representation of varieties and styles (Agha 2007: 187). In what follows, stylisation is central because the focal informant’s production of distinctively different varieties of English was far clearer in instances of reported speech of the kind analysed here than in his ordinary oral language use.

Second language is a more contested term than style. Certainly, second-language learning and use are culturally recognisable practices, and there is a basic truth to the idea that adults with different lexico-grammars can be mutually unintelligible. But L2 learning and use are hugely
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politically, foregrounded as the focus of government policies, professional specialisations, educational curricula and media reporting, and there is a considerable history of the terms being misapplied, both globally and to people from South Asia, in the UK (see Rampton 1983; Pennycook 1994). To guard against this overextension, claims about L2 status and proficiency need to be properly situated in careful empirical accounts of at least three factors:

1. Focal informants’ own linguistic self-classification and classification by local others;
2. The speech of people who inhabit the same environment but have been using English all their lives. As Blommaert et al. (2005: 201) note, ‘[p]rocesses such as diaspora [that] develop over long spans of time … result in lasting … social, … sociolinguistic and discursive reconfigurations which have effects across a wide range of situations’, and what sounded ‘foreign’ 30 years ago may now no longer do so; and
3. The situated expectations associated with particular interlocutors, interpreters, analysts, genres, footings, etc., since judgements of proficiency are themselves always relational and socio-ideologically positioned and there are a great many interactions where the fact that one participant learnt to speak the language in use later in life is irrelevant to the encounter (Blommaert 2008; Young 2009).

At the same time, assumptions about shared understanding are especially precarious in the study of L2 style. If one is analysing people who are not particularly proficient in the language in use, it can be particularly difficult to know whether specific speech forms really are being used to evoke particular stances, images, categories or stereotypes. Even if an L2 speaker can discern a particular style receptively (which of course cannot be taken for granted), they may not have the linguistic resources to reproduce it accurately, in spite of their efforts to do so (cf. Preston 1989; Sharma 2005; Agha 2007).

With these perspectives in place, it is now worth moving to investigation of the relationship between style and second language use in the case study.

Methodology

My data come from the 2008–9 ESRC project Dialect Development and Style in a Diaspora Community, conducted with Devyani Sharma, Lavanya Sankaran, Pam Knight and Roxy Harris. This set out to examine the use and development of dialectal varieties of English within families of Indian origin in London and it combined the methods of quantitative variationist with qualitative interactional sociolinguistics. The project was based in Southall in West London, where in 2001, according to the UK Census (Wells no date), 48 per cent of the 89,000 inhabitants were ethnically South Asian, 38 per cent were white, 9 per cent were black and, overall, 43 per cent were born outside the UK. Most of the fieldwork involved two 1–2 hour interviews with 75 mostly adult and mainly ethnic Punjabi informants, born both in Britain and abroad, collecting speech data and constructing bilingualism, network, attitudinal and cultural consumption profiles. In addition, 10 individuals were given recorders to record themselves in a range of situations; the focal informant in this chapter – Mandeep (not his real name), who came to London in 2001 aged 28 – was one of these. With Mandeep, our data-collection involved approximately five and a half hours of audio recordings – two interviews with Lavanya Sankaran, and four self-recordings (with a group of colleagues at work (one Anglo and several people born in India); with an Indian-born friend; with a newly arrived relative; on his own in the car) (see also Rampton 2013).
The data

We can start with Mandeep’s account of coming to England and engaging with English.

What Mandeep told us in interview

In interview, Mandeep told us he had been a teacher in the Punjab, and he had left India to find a better life. Soon after arriving, he had found work as a newscaster and editor in a local Southall Punjabi-language radio station, but now he was working there only part-time because he wanted to do postgraduate teacher training and first he had to do a year’s maths enhancement course. He did not have any family in London when he had arrived, but he had known three or four people from home, and now he had married a health-care professional from India. His cultural taste in music and media had not changed, he said, but ‘it’s developed … opened up new branches’. Although he did not get any spare time to watch the game, he said he would support England in cricket against India – after all, there were now two Punjabis in each team (Harbhajan and Yuvraj vs Panesar and Bopara).

Mandeep said that he ‘wasn’t speaking English at all’ until he came to England aged 28, but actually, he had had a lot of exposure to the language through study and, among other things, most of his MA in Economics had been in English. Since arriving in the UK, he had done a year’s GCSE in English, and he regarded soaps-with-subtitles on British TV as a great resource for language learning. With the British-born English speakers on his maths course, he said, ‘it’s fine, you always mingle with them, talk with them, joke with them – obviously you don’t know every single joke’, but that was no reason for feeling ‘you are … being excluded’. He did not like it when people with Punjabi backgrounds born in Britain called him a ‘freshie’, but he was convinced that ‘if you are calibre enough, no one can stop you’, and his stock reply was that at least he was not ‘worn out’ and stale like them. With the Anglos in his maths classes, he said he avoided the Punjabi pronunciation of his name, while with people who were weak in English but could not speak Punjabi, he would de-anglicise his pronunciation of English. Lastly, he was conscious of social stratification in English speech:

accent is to do with … watching telly, talking to the other people … Sometimes, say in English, you’re swearing a lot, and ‘yo mate yo mate’ or something you’re doing, and then – you’re glorifying yourself, some other people are glorifying you, then you develop that accent for the whole of your life. Then your family says, ‘No, that’s not the way how you speak.’

And dispositions like these were not just restricted to Anglos:

the children of Indian subcontinent, [the] third generation … know other things as well – pub culture, these sorts of things – [and] now they are as bad as white partners and as good as white partners – they are now normals … of this country.

So to sum up before moving into an examination of how Mandeep actually used English himself, there are three points to take from all this:

1 Second language learning is not just our own external analytic attribution: learning to speak English as an additional language had been a significant issue for Mandeep in London, even though English had also been important in his education in India.
It is worth looking at least two major axes of local sociolinguistic differentiation: not just Indian vs Anglo, or newcomer vs local, but also high vs low and posh vs vulgar.

At the same time, it looks as though the stereotypic links between language, ethnicity and class have all been scrambled up and we could go seriously wrong if we just accepted the traditional image of a minority ethnic L2 speaker migrating into a host society dominated by an L1 ethnic majority.

In fact, we will see the significance of Mandeep’s residence among born-and-bred Londoners with family links to the Indian subcontinent in the quantitative analysis of stylistic variation in the following section.

Quantitative analysis of style-shifting across contexts

In our analyses of style in Mandeep’s English, we first carried out a quantitative variationist analysis of his style-shifting in three settings, conducting an auditory analysis of the use of Punjabi and Anglo variants in his English. Table 29.1 shows what we examined: Ts, Ts and the FACE and GOAT vowels, in three contexts (in self-recorded interaction with an Indian friend who was himself a fluent speaker of standard Indian English; in one of the interviews with Sankaran (brought up in southern India and Singapore, and a non-speaker of Punjabi); and at work, conversing together with an Anglo L1 English-speaking man and several L2 Indian English-speaking women).

What we found was that, yes, there was quantitative style-shifting: Mandeep used most Punjabi variants with his Punjabi friend at home, and fewest at work (in the presence of an Anglo colleague), and this is broadly in line with the findings of other studies of L2 speech (Figure 29.1).

The plot thickens, however, when we bring in other informants and discover that even though these other speakers have been speaking English since early childhood, the patterns are broadly similar. This is illustrated in Figure 29.2, which summarises the distribution of Punjabi and Anglo variants in the speech of Anwar, a British-born 40-year-old who ran a successful local business and travelled a lot between London and Pakistan.

| Table 29.1 Linguistic variables used in the analysis of Mandeep’s situational style-shifting |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| **Linguistic variable** | **Punjabi variant** | **Standard British English variant** | **Vernacular British English variant** |
| (t) in the environments vt#, #tv and vtv (as in ‘eight’, ‘time’, ‘thirty’) | Retroflex [ʈ] | Alveolar [t] | Glottal [ʔ] |
| Postvocalic (l) as in ‘will’ or ‘deal’ | Light [l] | Dark [ɫ̪] |
| (e) – ‘FACE’ (e) as in ‘say’ and ‘game’ | Monophthong [e] | Diphthong [εɪ] |
| (o) – ‘GOAT’ as in ‘don’t’ and ‘road’ | Monophthong [o] | Diphthong [əʊ] |
Mandeep is obviously different from Anwar in his non-use of glottal T, and I will return to this later. But before that, the comparison suggests that:

1. Nowadays, retroflexion, postvocalic clear Ls and monophthonged ‘FACE’ and ‘GOAT’ vowels are not foreign any longer in British-born London speech, so Mandeep would not have to completely erase them in order to sound local;
2. The directionality of Mandeep’s stylistic adjustment with these four variants was broadly in line with the directions of shift produced by people who have been speaking English all their lives, so on the Anglo vs Indian axis of social differentiation, Mandeep’s socio-stylistic sensibility seemed to be roughly in tune with native residents’.

In interview, Mandeep said that if you come from Punjab to Southall, ‘you won’t feel like you are living abroad’, and there is support for this in these quantitative analyses of style. In addition to the fact that Punjabi itself has a lot of local currency in Southall, the Britain–India link is inscribed in the patternings of local English.

Of course, quantitative measures like this have clear limitations: there is no control for the talk’s discursive development – for changes of footing, topic, genre, etc. – and if you just look at only four out of potentially umpteen linguistic variables, you cannot tell whether, overall, Mandeep’s speech sounded more Anglo or more Indian at different times with different people. So let’s now turn to some discourse.

**Styling in narrative discourse**

Mandeep told a lot of stories in his interviews with Lavanya Sankaran, and it was in the performance of character speech in stories that his accent became most Anglo. Extract 1 is an example from an account of the difficulties he had finding a job when he first arrived in England, where he found that all the employers were asking for experience, even in basic jobs.
Figure 29.2 Distribution of Punjabi and Anglo variants across four settings: Anwar

Key: light Grey = Punjabi origin; dark grey = Anglo origin; black = vernacular London

Note: ‘family’ here refers to his UK born children.
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Extract 1 ‘Okay wait wait’

Mandeep in interview with Lavanya Sankaran (female; aged 25–30). (Key: **Anglo variants**; **Punjabi variants**)

1  
   .
   .
   .then I was saying
   [ðən ə wəz səɪŋ]

2  
   ‘↑ no: I don have any- .that sort of experience’
   [nəʊ ɪ dən hæv ənɪ .ðæt sɔrt əv əksˈpiːrəns]

3  
   ↑ so . hhh
   [so]

4  
   → they were giving me “o: kay:
   [ðeɪ wɛr ə ˈɡɪvɪŋ mi əʊkˈeɪt]

5  
   → (0.3) wait , wait
   [weɪt , weɪt]

6  
   and then -after- (0.5) ‘two- (0.3) ‘two months
   [ænd ðən ˈeɪftər- (0.5) ‘tu- (0.3) ‘tu ˈmaʊnts]

In line 5, Mandeep marks the difference between the narrating and the reported speech with shifts in tempo, becoming much slower in reported speech, and he renders the voice of the employers in exclusively British variants.

So Mandeep could do some pure Anglo, and indeed, the fact that he mixed Anglo and Punjabi features elsewhere in the story – for example, in line 2’s ‘↑ no: I don have any- .that sort of experience’ – does not itself necessarily mark Mandeep as an L2 speaker. Mixing occurred even in the relatively formal English of Punjabis born and raised in the UK, and we can see this, for example, in Anwar’s business talk with an RP-speaking barrister (see Rampton 2011 a or b):

the reason why I called you is e:h I jus wanted to let you know that ((name)) he came.. and e:h we decided not to pursue his case.

Even so, when we looked across our data set more generally, there were very clear differences in the length of the utterances in which Mandeep and Anwar maintained exclusively Anglo-accented character speech: whereas Anwar produced one stretch of almost completely Anglo-sounding multi-clause direct speech that lasted 29 syllables, Mandeep’s exclusively Anglo-accented voicing never exceeded 12 and, as we shall see, it was actually rather rare to find a consistent separation of Anglo and Punjabi forms in the speech of the figures in his narratives.

Of course, that itself raises a question: if Mandeep’s ‘o: kay: (0.3) ‘wait , ‘wait’ was actually rather rare in the consistency of its phonological anglicisation, how did he actually manage to style narrative character speech as distinctly Anglo? If his mobilisations of linguistic code resources were somewhat unpredictable, how did he achieve stylistic effects?

To address this, we should now turn to his stylisation of the local Anglo-English vernacular, moving from an Anglo-Indian axis of differentiation to socially stratified class styles. As we do so, we will begin to see how important it is to address linguistic forms, discourse and ideology each in their own right.

Stylising vernacular English

In the interviews, there were signs of Mandeep’s class consciousness when he talked about ‘pub culture’ and linked accent to watching television, swearing and behaving in ways that got you
into trouble with your family. How far did this translate into his own dramatised speech performances, and with what kinds of rhetorical success?

The excerpt below forms part of an argument that people make too much of a fuss about racism and that you should not overgeneralise about racism on the basis of single incidents. In it, Mandeep is presenting the hypothetical scenario of a white man shouting racist abuse:

**Extract 2 Sun² reader**

Mandeep in interview with Lavanya Sankaran. (Key: *Anglo variants*; *Punjabi variants*)

1. Mndp: if someone just misbehaves with you
2. .hh ‘someone ’drunk, white person and uh (.)
3. .hhh you are just ,passing by or ,something,
4. he ,saw you
5. ((pitch step-up and shift to non-modal phonation:))
   → ↑‘you ‘bloody ’Asians ’why you ‘come to ‘my ‘country”
6. or something
7. ((high pitched:)) ↑↑that’s not ’racism-
8. ‘that’s he::-. hh may be ‘reading ’Sun’ only (0.5)
9. ,so: m- m- he may be just ‘listening about s-som-.so:me like
10. ((shift in voice quality similar to line 5:))
11. ((non-modal phonation on first three words:))
   " why ‘they came to our ‘country”
12. e- ’he may not ‘know (.)
13. ((faster:)) what the economy is
14. what the contribution of .hhh
15. LS: [As-
16. Mndp: [migrant ‘people to ‘Britidh e’conomy is-
17. so ’he don know ↑↑any↑↑’thing
18. ↑’he jus ↑’shouting a ‘you and then ‘swearing ,even

Mandeep describes the character as ignorant, drunk, uncouth and informed only by the (very lowbrow) popular press – in effect, as a stereotypical lower-class white racist – and there are two things worth noting. First, Mandeep locates the white British lower class in a global economy, and he portrays this group as the ignorant victim of restricted mobility and very limiting national horizons. Second, the segmental phonology used to enact the man’s speech in line 5 sounds more Anglo than Indian – ↑‘you ‘bloody ‘Asians ‘why you ‘come to ‘my ‘country’. But does it sound more vernacular? Here it is again in a more detailed transcript:

**Extract 3**

((pitch step-up with shift to tense muscular phonation)):  
↑‘you ‘bloody ‘Asians ‘why you ‘come to ‘my ‘country”

[ju bʌdiː əʃnəz wai ju kəm tɔ mɔi kəntɹiː]

Segmentally, the onsets of the diphthongs in ‘Asian’ and ‘why’ sounded RP, as they lacked the backed vowel quality of traditional working-class London – [ei], not [AI], and [ai], not [oi] – and in fact there was also a detectably Punjabi influence in country’s unaspirated word-initial consonant. Even so, there are lots of semiotic cues showing that Mandeep was aiming for more than just ordinary British:
• Segmentally, the onset of the diphthong in ‘my’ was relatively backed, as in popular London speech ([ai], not [ai]);
• ‘You bloody Asians’ is also very marked supra-segmentally with abruptly raised pitch and
tenser muscular non-modal phonation. This gives the impression of shouting without actu-
ally doing so, and when this is linked to swearing it is often typed as vulgar;
• In addition, of course, Mandeep used an explicit metalanguage of social types to character-
ise the speech/speaker both before and after (‘drunk’, ‘white’, ‘reading Sun’).

So even though the segmental phonetics were not especially vernacular, this was not rhetorically
incapacitating. Yes, if you extracted this impersonation of a ‘white London lout’ from its narra-
tive context, it probably would not carry very far, and the groups and networks where it would
be rated, or even recognised for what is intended, might be limited. But within the specific
narrative world and narrating event in which it was produced, the social typification worked
reasonably well, and the voice can be heard as Anglo vernacular English.

So even though Mandeep was not terribly good at doing traditional London vernacular
vowels and consonants, he knew that they sounded different and he did not mind trying to
impersonate it. In fact, there is other evidence that he was aware of vernacular London features
without accurately reproducing them, and here we can also see that his apprehension of the
vernacular’s connotational potential extended beyond social group stereotypes to typifications
of stance.

In his interview comments on accent, Mandeep linked ‘swearing a lot’ to saying ‘yo mate
yo mate’, and in fact he pronounced ‘mate’ as ‘yo [meɪ] yo [meɪ]’. In contemporary vernacular
London, the postvocalic T in ‘mate’ is a glottal, not an alveolar stop, and it looks as though
Mandeep got halfway — he removed the alveolar, but did not replace it with the glottal, doing
a zero realisation instead. In fact, the quantitative style-shifting analysis showed that he hardly
ever produced glottal Ts — 3 out of 88 possible realisations (Tables 29.2–29.4), and Sharma and
Sankaran’s (2011) survey showed that he was very similar in this to a great many other informants
born in India. But this did not stop Mandeep using zero T strategically in constructed dialogue.

Table 29.2 Mandeep’s English with an Indian friend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>retro-</th>
<th>monophthong</th>
<th>monophthong</th>
<th>light l</th>
<th>glottal</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>diphthong</th>
<th>diphthong</th>
<th>dark l</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29.3 Mandeep’s English in interview

<table>
<thead>
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<th>retro-</th>
<th>monophthong</th>
<th>monophthong</th>
<th>light l</th>
<th>glottal</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>diphthong</th>
<th>diphthong</th>
<th>dark l</th>
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<td>e</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tokens</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the excerpt below, Mandeep is continuing the argument that accusations of racism are often exaggerated. He has just been talking about the notorious Shilpa Shetty episode in *Celebrity Big Brother*, and he has taken the line that when the other contestants criticised Shilpa for touching some food they were not being racist – the complaint was ‘just normal talk’. He now follows this up with a story about being ticked off by his mum when he was small, the overall point being that there is very little to distinguish these two episodes.

### Extract 4 Spoiled carrots

Mandeep in interview with Lavanya Sankaran. (Key: **Anglo variants; Punjabi variants**)

33 one *day* (.)

34 and er my mum *bought* some *carrots* (.)

35 an I *put* *all* the *carrots* in:- (.)

36 er-as ‘outside in- on the’ ‘sand’

37 so I ‘spoiled’ ‘everything’

38 so ‘she ‘sla:pped’ me (.)

39 L: ((very quiet laugh:) hehe

40 M: ((half-laughing in ‘bought’ and ‘that’:))→ 41 *that* “I ‘bought the* fo ‘us 1.04

42 (0.2)

→ 43 a:nd *you pu* the ‘every* thing a*way’ (.)

44 hh ‘so

45 th- th- th- ↑*tha* s not ‘racism (.)

46 ↑*tha* s ‘simple ‘talk as ,well

47 and that was the-

48 and ‘other thing is

((Mandeep continues about another aspect))

The distribution of alveolar and zero Ts is shown in Table 29.5.
Table 29.5 Realisation of the postvocalic Ts in Mandeep’s ‘spoiled carrots’ story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environments</th>
<th>The setting, events and actions leading up to the reprimand (lines 33–38)</th>
<th>The reprimand in direct reported speech (lines 41–43)</th>
<th>The evaluation (lines 44–46)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V_#C, V_#V, V_C</td>
<td>[t] [ʔ] [ø]</td>
<td>[t] [ʔ] [ø]</td>
<td>[t] [ʔ] [ø]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7/7 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 3/3</td>
<td>0 0 3/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the part leading up to the reprimand (lines 33–38), there are seven potentially variable T sounds, and all of them are alveolar (‘li[t]le’, ‘bough[t]’, ‘carro[t]s’, ‘pu[t]’, ‘carro[t]s’, ‘ou[t]side’, ‘tha[t]’). But in the direct reported reprimand in lines 41–43, all three Ts are zero realisations (‘bough[o]’, ‘tha[o]’, ‘pu[o]’), and after that, the zero realisations are carried into the evaluation in lines 45–46 (‘tha[o]’, ‘no[o]’, ‘tha[o]’).

Now in the quoted utterance in lines 41 and 43, Mandeep’s approximations of vernacular London contribute to a character portrait that is very different from the white working-class figure in the Sun-reader episode. Here, the speaker is Mandeep’s mum; she is saying the kind of thing that Mandeep approves of (‘simple talk’ that only the misguided would read as racism); and indeed in its incorporation of zero Ts in the evaluation, there is a ‘fusion’ of the narrating and the quoted voices (Bakhtin 1984: 199). So if it is not just unruly working-class types that Mandeep is trying to index with the concentration of zero-Ts in lines 41–43, what is it? If we turn back to Anwar and look back at the quantitative data on Anwar’s style-shifting, T-glottalling increased with family and friends (Figure 29.2), and of course this pattern is repeated not just with other locally born individuals in our survey, but in British society much more generally. Vernacular forms often index not only types of person but also types of stance and relationship, and in the quoted speech in the carrots story, the glottal-T approximations seem designed to evoke the intimacy or informality of a mother–son relationship, a relationship which Mandeep seemed quite happy to inhabit (Mandeep’s mum had always lived in India and apparently only spoke to him in Punjabi, so this is unlikely to be an accurate copy of her speech). So yes, Mandeep’s reproduction of the linguistic specifics of emblematic vernacular English forms is only partial, but his grasp of the social meaning is not restricted to the stereotypes of people and groups that you might expect with speech styles seen from afar.

Which is not to say that the partiality of this approximation was itself cost-free, or that the impersonation was as effective as it had been with the white lout in Extract 2. Compared with Extract 2, there is very little supplementary characterisation of Mandeep’s mum in the tale of spoiled carrots, and the sociolinguistic iconography associated with ‘mums’ is generally much more indeterminate. Admittedly, low levels of T-glottalling are common in the English of local people born in India, so local people born in India might well constitute a social network where the social indexicality of the zero-Ts in the carrots narrative could be easily appreciated. But beyond those networks – and maybe even within – Mandeep’s stylised performance of his mum sounds odd rather than indexically resonant, and it certainly took our research team quite a lot of time and analysis to generate a plausible interpretation of the social typification being attempted.

Let’s now move to a more general discussion.
Ben Rampton

Discussion

So how does this case study of Mandeep’s sociolinguistic styling help us to rethink second language identity in contemporary urban settings? I shall take this in two stages, focusing first on London as a sociolinguistic space (see Block 2006; Harris 2006), and second on Mandeep’s position in London as an L2 speaker.

At a number of points in the account, I have referred to traditional imageries being scrambled: you do not feel like you are living abroad if you come to London from the Punjab; retroflexion and other traditionally Indian immigrant features now form part of the local London vernacular; children of the Indian subcontinent are fully incorporated into pub culture; and Punjabis play cricket for England. But this mixture does not end up in kaleidoscopic chaos – the analysis has not descended into what Wimmer and Glick-Schiller (2002: 326) call ‘fluidism’, in which ‘structures are replaced with fluidity [and researchers spend their time] breathlessly hunting after signifiers shooting around the globe, driven by new techniques of communication and globalised markets’. Our analyses of style have shown Mandeep positions himself within a quite well-defined sociolinguistic space – a space formed at the historical intersection of socio-economic stratification within the UK on the one hand, and migration and movement between Britain and the India subcontinent on the other. In this space, class and ethnic processes have drawn different sets of linguistic forms, practices and evaluations into the environment, and over time these sociolinguistic forms and practices have been configured in a series of conventionalised contrasts – Punjabi vs English, vernacular vs standard English and high vs low (Rampton 2011a).

What about Mandeep’s position as a second language speaker? When compared with people who had grown up in the neighbourhood such as Anwar, Mandeep’s English appeared more limited in a number of ways: in the range of English phonological variants that he commanded; in the number of identifiable distinct English styles that he performed; in the duration of the speech in which he sustained artful stylisations; and in the discursive actions achieved with switches of style. By contrast, Anwar’s English style repertoire included Cockney, standard Indian English, Indian English foreigner talk and London multi-ethnic vernacular (which included elements of Jamaican; Rampton 2011b). Additionally, his shifts of style occurred with a far wider range of footing changes, contributing to the management of non-stylised, non-artful, routine interaction as this moved between business and personal matters, between greeting and reason-for-call in telephone conversations, and so forth (Gumperz 1982; Rampton 2011b). Nevertheless, in spite of the relative limitations in his English, it would be wrong to locate Mandeep as an L2 speaker outside the London sociolinguistic economy, aspirationally looking in. Mandeep insisted that, in his maths class, ‘I am perfectly fine’, and in the interview stories he presented himself as a now-established citizen of multi-ethnic London, among other things siding with the Anglos criticising Shilpa Shetty and dismissing white racism as just parochial lower-class ignorance. Beyond this explicit self-placement, there were a number of similarities between Mandeep’s stylistic practices and Anwar’s, which invited us to treat both of them together as active participants in broadly the same sociolinguistic space. Anwar was more fully engaged with the stylistically differentiated positions in the local sociolinguistic economy, but Mandeep also actively oriented to these schemata. He referred to high/low and Anglo/Indian contrasts explicitly and he performed them in narrative stylisations. In the quantitative analysis, several of the context-sensitive variables in Mandeep’s speech were similar to others’, and the directionality of shift were also broadly similar (more Punjabi variants with speakers of English brought up in South Asia, and more Anglo ones with people brought up in England). His
reproduction of the high–low, standard–vernacular binary traditional in Anglo English had its limitations, but he could exploit the contrast between Punjabi- and Anglo-accented English, and far from being simply confined to people born abroad, this Punjabi–Anglo contrast was itself widespread and well established as a local practice. Indeed, Sharma and Sankaran (2011) have shown that, over time, the presence of people like Mandeep has made a major contribution to the development of this.

So even though Mandeep only started to speak the language as an adult, he displayed a practical sensitivity to key dimensions of local English sociolinguistic structure, and it is obvious that a label like ‘immigrant learner of English’ does not do justice to his position in the local London speech economy.

Finally, what of the analytic moves that have led to this conclusion?

**Issues for applied linguistics**

First and most obviously, we consciously avoided the a priori separation of L1 and L2 English speakers in our variationist survey and discovered that L1 speakers do not talk quite as we might have expected. So plainly, if anyone wants to talk about a target language, it is essential to be rather careful, both in a specification of the forms that compose the ‘target’ and in an assessment of the linguistic distance that newcomers would need to travel to reach it.

But at a more fundamental level, it is important to work with a properly rounded view of language itself, and in linguistic anthropology Gumperz and Silverstein provide guidance on what this might mean. Gumperz (1982: 29) argued early on that ‘we need to begin with a closer understanding of how linguistic signs interact with social knowledge in discourse’. Silverstein (1985: 220) subsequently formalised this as the ‘total linguistic fact’:

The total linguistic fact, the datum for a science of language, is irreducibly dialectic in nature. It is an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualised to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology.

Both propose that linguistic forms, situated discourse and ideology need to be analysed together, but this has certainly not been standard practice in the study of language. Variationist sociolinguistics, for example, engages with linguistic form and ideology (in work on attitudes and evaluation) but has only turned towards interaction rather recently. Conversation analysis focuses on interaction and attends to linguistic form, but generally neglects ideology. In critical discourse analysis, there is form and ideology, but often not enough on situated interactional processing. In second language research, Young (2009: 1) seeks a similar perspective to Gumperz and Silverstein’s, attending to the ‘construction and reflection of social realities through actions that invoke identity, ideology, belief and power’. But Young also suggests that

[i]n studies [of L2 discursive practice], rich descriptions of context are illustrated with superficial analyses of language, whereas in other studies, a close analysis of a newcomer’s developing utilization of verbal, non-verbal, and interactional skills is explained by a rather thin description of context.

(Ibid.: 230)

But why does this matter? What are the consequences of failing to investigate form, discourse and ideology together? The problem is that, when analysts engage empirically with only two
of the elements in the ‘total linguistic fact’, they tend to fall back on the default common-sense assumptions characteristic of their subdisciplines in order to fill the gap left by their failure to explore the third. This gap then becomes the point of entry for the romantic celebration of difference or creative agency that has been so common in sociolinguistics, and for the presumption of deficit and remedial need in SLA. And when this happens, potentially crucial aspects of their informants’ actual political, rhetorical or linguistic positioning are obscured.

In my attempt to counter this, I have examined stylistic moves individually, breaking them down into the forms, the discursive acts and the socio-ideological typifications that compose them, considering each of these in turn and then looking at the effects of their combination. As a result, we have developed a rather nuanced picture of Mandeep’s L2 English, showing how it forms part of larger sociolinguistic structures and processes, without, I hope, either romanticising or remedialising him by erasing or exaggerating the differences and limitations. So with Extract 4, we have seen that a grasp of the indexical relationship between stance and vernacular style need not be matched by accurate reproduction of the canonical structural forms, and this could make the interpretation quite tricky. At the same time, Extract 2 showed that an imperfect grasp of vernacular Anglo forms was not automatically an expressive handicap in the impersonation of a lower-class white man.

When it comes to humanising migrants, seeing them in their embedded complexity as mothers, brothers, uncles, friends and workmates who also make agentive contributions to local sociolinguistic processes, linguistics is not always especially effective. Yes, it is quite easy to focus on the structural details of second language speech or, alternatively, to study the impact of newcomers as ideological emblems, uniting long-term residents in opposition. But the old categories and distinctions cannot account for the generative splits and alignments emerging in contemporary urban environments, and we need to be very careful about the a priori distinctions we build into our research (Gumperz 1982; Blommaert and Backus 2011; Blommaert and Rampton 2011). But there is a route past these premature reifications, celebrations and exclusions in the ‘total linguistic fact’.

Summary

If sociolinguistics and second language research are treated as separate fields, linguistics cannot do justice to contemporary urban environments. To provide a rounded account of urban L2 speech, rhetorical acts, ideological positioning and limitations in the structural linguistic repertoire need to be analysed together, as the description of Mandeep’s English styling presented in this chapter has set out to do.

Related topics

Identity in variationist sociolinguistics; Language and identity in linguistic ethnography; Challenges for language and identity researchers in the collection and transcription of spoken interaction; Language and ethnic identity; Class in language and identity research; Beyond the micro–macro interface in language and identity research; An identity transformation? Social class, language prejudice and the erasure of multilingual capital in higher education; Construction of heritage language and cultural identities: a case study of two young British-Bangladeshis in London; The future of identity research: impact and new developments in sociolinguistics.
Further reading


Notes


2 The *Sun* is a national tabloid newspaper in the UK, where tabloid newspapers are traditionally associated with working-class culture.

3 In this series of the *Big Brother* reality TV show, a number of contestants were accused of racism for the way they commented on the Bollywood film star Shilpa Shetty. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celebrity_Big_Brother_racism_controversy

References


Ben Rampton


Appendix

Transcription conventions

Segmental phonology

[ ] IPA phonetic transcription

text English pronounced with Anglo variants

text English pronounced with Punjabi variants

Intonation

\ low fall
\ low rise
/ high fall
/ high rise
/ fall rise
^ rise fall
| high stress
ˉ high unaccented prenuclear syllable
↑ pitch step-up
↓ pitch step-down

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Conversational features

( . ) micro-pause
(1.5) approximate length of pause in seconds
[ ] overlapping turns
[ CAPITALS ] loud
.hh in-breath
>text< more rapid speech
“text” quietly spoken
( ) speech inaudible
(text) speech hard to discern; the analyst’s guess
((text:)) ‘stage directions’
“text” direct reported speech
→ words and utterances of particular interest to the analysis