Demographics, Religion: When religious identity shapes linguistic patterns

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Religion as a sociolinguistic variable

Abstract

When considering variables that are rarely coded for in sociolinguistic studies, we discovered that general demographic studies [e.g., the census, Pew Research studies] have only recently realized that the question sets provided for demographic information rarely permit coding of religion, or when they do, provide only coarse grained coding; yet recent studies in sociolinguistics and social anthropology have demonstrated that fine grained distinctions in religious identification are necessary to account for sociolinguistic variation. This paper reviews the information from both sociolinguistic studies and demographic studies which should be considered when developing a protocol for analysis of speech variation. The paper also points out that the variation is often due to network effects from the ‘community of practice’, but at least some of the variation can be traced to ideological positions or choice of referee, both of which appear to influence language use.

1. Introduction

A recent issue of *Linguistics and Language Compass*, edited by Mukherjee (2013) explores the interaction between language use and religious choices. The introduction states that there are two ‘fundamental realities’ which tie language to religion:

- “It is through the various forms of language that the living vitality of a community’s religious beliefs is passed down from generation to generation.” (Mukherjee 2013: 1)
- Both language and religion are social constructs “conceived as ideologically saturated . . . as a world view, even as concrete opinion, insuring a minimum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life.” (Bakhtin 1981: 271).

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1 Many thanks to the NSF for their support of the workshop (Grant #1144480), which provided the opportunity for sociolinguists to develop a more robust set of standards for metadata. This paper was written within a framework proposed by Christopher Cieri of the LDC. I would like to thank all those who have discussed the contents with me as the paper was being prepared: Bob Bayley, David Bowie, Christopher Cieri, Corky Feagin, Lauren Hall-Lew, Uri Horesh, Catherine Miller, Rich Steiner, Ben Tucker, Keith Walters and Michael Wreblowski… for their willingness to provide input from their own research which bears on the topic of this paper, as well as for many fruitful discussions of both theoretical and technical material discussed here. I would also like to thank the attendees at the LSA Satellite Workshop funded by the NSF which goaded me to expand on this theme. My thanks as well as to those who have put up with me as I took this side trip into research protocol and metadata for archival storage…
Those points being accepted, it seems appropriate to consider the extent to which religious affiliation influences linguistic choices. Moreover, over the last few years many studies have shown the extent to which speakers’ linguistic choices are influenced by the social groups they belong to, with religious groups being one of the overlapping possible communities of practice. As a result, there are 5 main purposes for the present paper. We hope this paper will convince you that each of the following factors has an independent possible influence on language choices, and should therefore be considered as a possible source of variation in a linguistic study.

a) Religion should be considered consistently, rather than subsumed as one aspect of ‘ethnicity’ which a researcher might presume can be ignored if it isn’t obvious that it is relevant in a given instance. Even if redundant within a given study, and therefore not actually analyzed in a given study, the information should be retrievable.

b) Multiple religious designations should be permitted for those whose parents are from two different religious groups, those whose significant-others belong to some ‘other’ group, and those who have changed affiliation during their lifetime.

b’) Speakers should be allowed to designate for themselves which of a possible multiple set of designations they affiliate with most strongly – and which other groups they also affiliate with.

c) The set of choices for ‘religion’ should be fine-grained.

d) A speaker’s expressed degree of ideological commitment to a given sect should also been shown to influence linguistic choices.

e) Who the interviewer is, where the interview is carried out, and how the questions are posed are all likely to influence the answers given to all demographic questions, and to questions of religious identity quite as much as other self-identifiers. Thus how to phrase the questions, and who should present them, should be determined in advance, and specified in the protocol to ensure the comparability of responses.

It is obvious from the preceding list that the options proposed for coding of ‘religion’ will be more extensive and detailed than many previous studies have assumed.

2. ‘Ethnicity’ and ‘religion’ are not synonymous, and ‘religion’ cannot be subsumed under ‘ethnicity’
It appears that what has often in the past been labeled ‘ethnicity’ could be better regarded as at least three independent variables (Yaeger-Dror/Cieri 2014), which – at least initially – should all be considered separately:

- **Race**\(^2\) – While this paper will be devoted to the Religious aspect of ‘ethnic’ identity, Racial Identity has to remain in the mix, as many previous studies have shown: Dubois and Horvath (1999), Fix (2014), Blake and Wong & Hall-Lew (in this issue), as well as Prewitt (2013a,b) reinforce the conclusions of such earlier studies.

In addition, we should not conflate:

- **Linguistic heritage** – as in the papers by Wong & Hall-Lew and Bayley in this issue.
- **Regional heritage** – as in the papers in this issue by Wong & Hall-Lew, Bayley and Blake, where studies have considered religion and regional heritage separately they have shown that each is independently variable. Of course, it is a mistake for researchers to assume a strong interdependence between religion and linguistic or regional heritage (e.g., Pandharipande 2006; Hary/Wein 2013: 87, Kulkarni-Joshi 2013, forthcoming).

- **Religious heritage and present religious adherence**

It is tempting to simplify the complexity of speakers’ identities (say, Lebanese and Christian or Jewish instead of Muslim, or Cantonese and Baptist instead of, say, Confucian or Buddhist) much less permit a nuanced sense of identity where parents’ heritage groups differ, or where the heritage group, and the present beliefs are no longer the same.

In addition, while racial heritage and regional heritage have been foci for sociolinguistic coding for many years until recently religion was [generally] ignored, or was conflated with other variables. For example, the Lower East Side study of NYC (Labov 1966/2006) was concerned with speakers who had come from various countries, and “Jews”, who were coded as a uniform group of speakers, although their parents may have come from several linguistic, regional, and doctrinal backgrounds. At the time, it was a great innovation to conceptualize religion as a potential sociolinguistic variable; inevitably, nowadays we find that the metadata for religion AND other factors previously treated as ethnicities need to be more nuanced.

\(^2\) After duly considering more linguistically appropriate ‘titles’ for this variable, we found that since none of them was perfect, we would settle for mnemonics over accuracy; thus, the three ‘r’s..and an L..
Geertz (1973: 87-125) and Gumperz & Wilson (1971) were two of the early proponents of coding for religious/cultural distinctions as well as for regional and linguistic distinctions. So many studies have come out in the last 20 years to support this point that only the most superficial review of their findings is possible here. However, the interested reader will find ample evidence in the publications discussed in the following sections.

3. Multiple Religious Identities (Affiliations)

The main focus in this section will be on evidence of religious affiliation – specifically, ambiguous or multiple affiliations within the US—but with evidence from linguistic studies elsewhere which demonstrate the importance of such affiliation(s) to linguistic variation. Our understanding of religion in the United States has changed over the last generation: Bengston, et al (2013) document that only 43% of grandparents now share a religion with their grandchildren, and that while there is a ‘rise of the nones’ [those who profess no religion] there is no sense of community within that group. The Pew Foundation (2008) provided a careful study of religious commitment in the US. They show that even members of minority racial or regional-heritage communities cannot be assumed to share a single religious community affiliation. The Pew study found that “more than one-quarter of American adults (28%) have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion - or no religion at all. If change in affiliation from one type of Protestantism to another is included, 44% of adults have either switched religious affiliation, moved from being unaffiliated with any religion to being affiliated with a particular faith, or dropped any connection to a specific religious tradition altogether.” Moreover, “among people who are married, nearly four-in-ten (37%) are married to a spouse with a different religious affiliation. …Hindus and Mormons are the most likely to be married to someone of the same religion (90% and 83%, respectively).” Thus, in the US we must assume that interviewees may be coded for multiple religions -- the one(s) they were raised in, as well as the one(s) they profess at the time of recording. A single coding option is even less likely to be sufficient in some other parts of the world: While it is well known that Japanese- Chinese- or Korean-ancestry speakers have a greater tendency to religious syncretism (e.g., Goh 2009), as do many Latin cultures (e.g., Marzal 1996; Hill 2001; Corr 2003; Uzendowski 2003; Capone 2010; Koechert & Pfiler 2013), the Pew study implies that such syncretism is increasing in the US, making casual reliance on single coding for religion obsolete in the US as well. Not surprisingly,
syncretism and language or dialect code switching are likely to go hand in hand (e.g., Koechert & Pfiler 2013).

A point made by Walters (p.c.) that bears repeating here is that the nature of religious identity varies from culture to culture: While it is now common for speakers to have multiple religious affiliations, in the Middle East or Africa, religion is a more salient variable both culturally and linguistically (Walters 2007; Germanos & Miller forthcoming). The extent to which this is also the case in Europe varies by country, is in flux in recent years, and is worthy of sociolinguistic (as well as anthropological) inquiry. Certainly Milroy’s work (1980ff) demonstrates that language variation may follow sectarian lines. Vajita’s work in Alsace (2013), Kulkarni-Joshi’s in India (2013), and Kaiser’s in the US (2013) have shown that religious identity may be independently correlated with language choice as well as language attitudes.

In order to permit results to be compared an accurate assessment of speakers’ religious affiliation, it is clear that all interviewers should provide the same choices to be specified in the protocol.

We also draw the conclusion that given the independence of these different strands of family heritage and belief, the metadata for ‘ethnicity’ should permit independent analysis of all possible ‘ethnic’ factors—race, regional heritage, linguistic heritage, religious heritage. If one religious code suffices for a given speaker, that implies that s/he self-identifies as the same religion that both parents and spouse also identify with, and that s/he was raised in that faith; the coding system should permit, for that study, that extra variables can be supplied redundantly at a later time. The ideal study should allow for possible multiple religious affiliations for the subject, his/her parents and life partners: In this way, we may discover that the linguistic evidence reveals the importance of only one specific religious affiliation [say, the earliest], but it is more likely that just as individual histories differ, so do personal language choices.

In actuality, informally, we already permit redundancies which can be expanded on in later studies: To choose a very different feature: if the metadata permit the researcher to code for speakers’ means of income, a study could subsequently interpolate a hypothetical linguistic marketplace rating (Sankoff & Laberge 1978), and perhaps educational level, for such a job; however, it is inevitable that such assumptions would prove wrong a certain percentage of the time.
Similarly, we are not necessarily advocating allocating separate coding slots for each of the factors above in an initial study. If for example in a mythical version of LES described in SSENYC, all of the "Italians" were children of immigrants and Catholic, and all of the "Jews" were Russian immigrants, it would be reasonable to reduce the dimensionality of the coding to a single ethnicity label for each so that "Italian" becomes an abbreviation for a string of features unique to that group. However, somewhere in the protocol and discussion, the researcher should always be clear enough so that future studies can make use of the data. For example, in the early Montreal French Study (Sankoff & Sankoff 1973; Thibault & Vincent 1990), all the Francophones sampled are local, L1 French-speaking Catholics, religion and heritage could later be inserted to permit the corpus to be merged with a larger multi-group corpus which includes, say, the local anglophone speakers. Subsequent studies, like those of Boberg (2005, 2011), would then be able to share an enlarged database, which includes the earlier Montreal studies. To choose another American example: Most studies of US Hispanic communities assume that all speakers are Catholic, but recent studies like the Pew Research Center’s (2014) or Münch’s (forthcoming) demonstrate that this is no longer the case. The problem is not only the range of metadata initially encoded, but whether sufficient information is retrievable in a way that will permit future research comparisons.

4. The need for finer-grained coding for religion

Even a coarse-grained religious model has been shown to be useful in sociolinguistic studies which have coded for religion: e.g., Jewish, Christian and Muslim (Blanc 1964), Catholic and Protestant (Milroy 1980), Christian and Muslim (Walters 2006, 2007), Jewish and Muslim (Amara 2005; Chetrit 2007). Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo (1990) showed the extent to which church affiliation in the Solomon Islands influences language choice, and showed that the importance of religious choice is not only an effect of the audience design/ accommodation, but of strategic power-related choices discussed by Bourdieu (1991).

Mukherjee (2013b) appears to emphasize cases where the lack of linguistic unity entails splitting of a single religious identity into smaller linguistic units, with a given macro-religious identity insufficient for maintaining a coherent sense of social identity.

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3 As a reviewer stated: “If a study insists on a single religious affiliation, it not only fails to store useful metadata, but also fails to consider the same in the analysis which suffers as a result: …Provided that the fieldworker had confirmed the consistency of this relationship, why not indicate that in the metadata?”
A Pew study (2008) of religious affiliation in the US supports his claim. “Even smaller religions in the U.S. reflect considerable internal diversity. For instance, most Jews identify with one of three major groups: Reform, Conservative or Orthodox Judaism; but in a more recent study (Pew 2013), they found that three choices were insufficient. Similarly, more than half of Buddhists belong to one of three major groups within Buddhism: Zen, Theravada or Tibetan Buddhism. US Muslims affiliate primarily with one of two major groups: Sunni and Shia. If we notice the wide variation in dress codes in some of these communities, it becomes obvious that even in the US finer-grained distinctions will be needed for these ‘minority’ religious communities as well as for, say, Christians.

Notice also that Pew’s ‘major groups’ are not intended to be exhaustive, but indicative of the fact that the coarse-grained set of choices generally incorporated into the metadata (such as Jewish, Christian, Muslim) is unlikely to be ideal, even within the US, and even within one urban area.

As a consequence, we may assume that when speakers choose a macro-level religion, the online questionnaire [or the interviewer] could offer more fine-grained options. The survey demonstrates as well that interviewees from [say] Latino families, cannot be assumed to conform to their heritage religion, with only 55% of Latinos now considering themselves Catholic (Pew 2014); there is a reasonable likelihood that even populations that have been traditionally assumed to share a single religious community affiliation can no longer be assumed to do so (Pew 2008), and it may well be that a community of practice for the newly religious is as tight knit as more long term multiplex communities.

Even finer distinctions have been found to be critical for an understanding of language choice among Hindus (Kulkarni-Joshi 2013, forthcoming), Muslims (Mukherjee 2013; Joseph 2004; Alam & Stuart-Smith 2013; Eakin & Roth 2013), Jews (Levon 2006, Benor 2010), as well as Christians (Baker and Bowie 2009, Childs and Mallinson 2007, Milroy 1980).

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4 Note that “more than half” is far from an exhaustive list of choices for even those who self identify as Buddhist in the US.

5 Hary and Wein (2013:fn 11), provides an interesting folk-framework showing that coarse grained frames are not limited to the Western world: “The dichotomy, in Kerala is not necessarily between the various religious communities, but rather between /ambalakkar/ ‘those who go to temples’ [various sects of Hindus, Buddhists, Jains- myd] and /pallikkar/ ‘those who go to prayer-shrines’ [Jews, Muslims, Christians- myd]”.
To further complicate the picture: several recent studies have emphasized the importance of degree of affiliation within a religion and the resultant splintering of a single religious group into finer-grained communal affiliation, and will be discussed in the next section.

Conversely, the work of Wagner (2012, 2014) reveals the extent to which even in a single South Philadelphia parochial [Catholic] girl’s high school cohort, the girls’ use of English demonstrates the extent to which language is used to distinguish their self-defined Irish or Italian regional heritage, despite the fact that none of the girls is first generation, and that many of them actually share both Irish and Italian ancestry; she found that the girls’ accent varied relative to the regional identity of the grandparent they choose to affiliate with during their high school years (Wagner 2014), rather than their religious affiliation, which is shared with (nearly) all their classmates.

Similarly, Weinreich (1980), Prince (1988), Fader (2007), and Zuckerman (2014), among many others, have demonstrated the extent to which Yiddish speakers from different religious sects, or from different locales, dress and speak quite differently. Blanc (1968) and Yaeger-Dror (1988, 1993), and Leffkowitz (2004) among others, have demonstrated that Israeli Jews from different regional communities have quite different phonologies as well.

In short, not only the religious distinctions themselves need to be fine-grained, but even in one fairly close-knit community, like the high school studied by Wagner, ‘religion’ cannot stand in for THE ‘ethnic’ variable, but must be supplemented by other heritage factors.

These studies demonstrate that a finer grained set of distinctions may be called for than has previously been the case when ‘religion’ is coded, and future research should permit a finer set of coding distinctions than has been available until now.

5. Not just religion but degree of ideological commitment to a given sect is often relevant to sociolinguistic variation, and should be considered separately.

A further complication arises in studies which have shown that religious ideology may have an independent influence on speech. That is, certain studies have shown that degree of ‘orthodoxy’ of speakers’ affiliation with their religion also impacts on their use of language:

Childs/Mallinson (2007) found that the speech of two groups of African American women from a small community in Appalachia could be distinguished from each other by whether the women were religious or not, although they all attended the same church. Like Milroy (1980), they
presented this as a result of social network rather than of religious commitment or ideology, although it was understood that it was the more religious women whose speech was most strongly influenced by the dominant norm.

Baker & Bowie (2009, Bowie & Baker-Smemoe forthcoming) similarly demonstrate the extent to which varying degrees of religious commitment are documentable from Utah Mormon speakers’ choice of specific sociophonetic variables.

Spolsky & Walters (1985) first noted the extent to which the phonology of Hebrew used for liturgical purposes reflects a speaker’s religious affiliation -- both the degree of religious commitment, and the ‘community of practice’ within that religious community. Poll (1981), Isaacs (1999), and Assouline (2010, refs) among others demonstrate the extent to which ultra orthodox Jewish speakers of Yiddish vary their phonology of both Yiddish and Hebrew – not, as in the study by Prince (1988), to demonstrate affiliation with their audience, but to demonstrate their affiliation with a ‘referee’ community’s degree of religious observance (Bell & Gibson 2011). Avineri’s work documents that nonreligious users of Yiddish also adapt their dialect to foreground their religious (dis)affiliation (ref).

Similarly, Levon (2006) showed sociophonetic variation reflects a speaker’s degree of Jewish religious commitment importance as well, while Benor (2010, 2011, 2013). Benor (2011, 2013) finds that the Yiddish lexical infiltration of English used by ‘newly’ orthodox-affiliated Jewish speakers is as indicative of their community affiliation as is their choice of attire, and differs systematically from the use of Yiddish and Hebrew loans by those who have been religious all their lives.

All these studies show that religion -- and even degree of religious affiliation, or length of attachment to a specific religious community -- should be separately coded from linguistic, racial and regional heritage.

In Israel, Sfardi speakers’ retention of more *sprachbund* affiliated phonology (Blanc 1968; Yaeger 1988)⁷ may be heard as evidence for a given socioeconomic class (Gafter forthcoming),

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⁶ Here the focus is on Bell’s (2001) contrast between adapting your speech to who you are speaking to, which he refers to as ‘audience design’, and adapting your speech to some role model, or shared understanding of a specific community’s speech, which he refers to as ‘referee design’.

⁷ That is, retention of features which are consistent with the phonology of the local region, as described in Chambers and Trudgill (1980): in this case, the Sfardi speakers are more likely to retain pharyngeal
but also of retention of their religious-identity, and commitment to a particular religious practices and a specific degree of observance which differ consistently from that of the local dominant norm (Blanc 1968; Smooha 1987; Ben-Rafael, pc; Ben-Rafael & Sharot 2008).

Johnson-Weiner (1998) found that sense of affiliation within the Anabaptist communities in the US and Canada influences linguistic choices. Raith (1992) and Keiser (2012, this volume) demonstrate the extent to which Mennonite speakers whose forebears came to the US from one small area in Germany vary their use of language to demonstrate their degree of affiliation with one or another degree of Mennonite orthodoxy. In their studies it is obvious that the linguistic choices are not just referee designed, but are ideologically meaningful to the speakers; that is, their religious philosophy helps formulate their decisions about the relatively humble religious expression of linguistic ‘choices’.

Alam and Stuart-Smith (2013, in press) show that in the UK as well, Muslim Pakistani-Glasgow girls who are more observant speak differently from their Muslim classmates; in this case, the less religiously observant speakers’ English more closely reflects the dominant norm, while the more observant speakers are more likely to display their affinity with the religious community by singling out a specific nonlocal variant of a feature. In this case, we might infer that it is not ideology but ‘referee design’ which causes the easily calibrated difference in the girls’ consonant system. Samant (2010) found that in the US, just as in Glasgow, Muslim community members who are more religious are less likely to adopt local sociophonetic features. Abu Alhidja (2013, pc) showed the extent to which even the internet text choices made by Arabic speakers can reflect their degree of religious commitment; she suggests that these choices are not merely referee designed, but reflect ideological commitment.

In short, it appears that not only community of practice is relevant to the analysis of religion and language choice, but consideration of the contrast between audience and referee design, and some concomitant consideration of the community’s understanding of social characteristics appropriate for a religious person, whether in Appalachia, in the Anabaptist community, or elsewhere.

consonants, and anterior. rhotic position, while Ashkenazi speakers are more likely to lose pharyngeal consonants, and shift to a dorsal-rhotic position.
6. Practical questions: WHO asks a question, and the way you ask a question are likely to influence the answer you get.

Another issue is the importance of the question-situation to a speaker’s choice of religious designation: When speakers have been asked their religion, it is likely that however coarse-grained the set of choices offered, speakers will generally provide an answer consistent with that degree of generality, and with their perception of the questioner’s understanding of the speaker’s religion(s). A protocol for inquiring about religion might therefore permit the interviewer (or the computer questionnaire) to prompt a participant by asking for a finer-grained coding option than the one initially provided; in fact, a neutral computer-survey questionnaire may ultimately permit a greater degree of detail than a non-ingroup interviewer.

As already hinted, the phrasing of the questions to speakers should be consistent across speakers, to maximize the likelihood that the answers will be comparable, and the question itself should be retained so future researchers know what has been coded: Are speakers being asked to say what their birth-family religion was, how they were raised [What religion were you raised as?], or how they self-identify today [Do you feel that you are a member of any religious community? what religion do you consider yourself as belonging to?] Somewhere in the protocol, and in the archival notes it should be made clear exactly what the questions were, and how they were administered, so future researchers know what has been coded, and how to replicate the situation if they choose.

Unfortunately, even the initial study organizers may forget how questions were posed, although we know that speakers’ claimed identities are influenced by the questions posed. Thus a researcher is often permitted ONE ‘factor group’ slot, but the speaker may have as many as six relevant ‘ethnic’ identities, and his or her sense of (relative) affiliation with these groups may vary even within one interaction (Eckert 2012; Hall-Lew/Yaeger-Dror 2014).

Another practical issue not discussed in most of these studies, but relevant to all the metadata discussion in this issue, is...when do we want to present our questionnaire? Given that raising a specific issue can influence speech and perception, providing a questionnaire in the same session as the conversation to be taped increases the likelihood that linguistic features relevant to the

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8 This is not only consistent with our understanding of the observer’s paradox, but with the CA notion first encapsulated by Sacks’ dictum ‘don’t tell people something they already know’, and first discussed at length in Schegloff (1968).
questions raised will be somewhat more likely to occur. For that reason, it may be worthwhile to provide a basic questionnaire on a separate occasion from the main interview itself, as is often the rule at LDC. Conversely, the protocol may routinize the elicitation of varying attitudes by juxtaposing speakers with both ingroup and outgroup interviewers, following in the footsteps of Rickford and MacNair-Knox (1994), or the work of social psychologists (e.g., Giles 1977). Protocol decisions as to whether to elicit specific intergroup attitudes or to neutralize them should be consciously and consistently made before the study begins, and the information should be recoverable both by the initial researcher, and by the archive system.

Conversely, just as other articles in this special issue have discussed the importance of the social situation (Eckert, Rickford, Tagliamonte refs), this factor is also important in the discussion of religious affiliation. Speakers are most likely to adapt the degree of linguistic affiliation to a specific group to the social situation within which the conversation takes place. If speakers from the same ingroup are the primary participants they are more likely to demonstrate their ingroup bonafides than the same speakers interacting with outgroup members or with an outgroup interviewer. They are more likely to demonstrate their ingroup bonafides in a setting where religion is relevant, than in a setting where it is irrelevant.

7. Other practical issues

It may well be that in many communities in the US there is little variation caused by religious community affiliation, while in others there is extreme variation which can be traced to religious ingroup identification. We can refer to this as the Hinton and Pollock (1990) effect: The ‘myth’ of African American uniformity (Wolfram 2007; Blake, this issue) was only recognized after research in the Midwest demonstrated that local African American speakers were rful: Had Hinton and Pollock not coded for race, we would not know that race is not as uniformly relevant to rhoticity as had been assumed by previous sociolinguistic analysts. However, there is no way to know the importance of a given variable unless the variable has been coded for consistently and accurately.

8. Possible theoretical ‘fallout’ from more careful coding of religious community identity

As discussed by Eckert (2008, 2012), we know that linguistic variation reflects - demonstrates [or ‘indexes’] - speakers’ sense of multiple communal identities, or the relative strength of the REGIONAL and RELIGIOUS (or other) identities for given speakers. We also know that even within a single interaction one identity can be foregrounded at the expense of others: Becker
(forthcoming) demonstrates the extent to which a NYC-bred, African American professional woman favors sociophonetic variables related to one or another of these identities at different points in a single interaction she had with a new resident in her neighborhood (Becker LgComm); Podesva shows how California gay professionals favor features which reflect their multiple identities in different social settings (Podesva 2011). Mukherjee notes in passing the fact that while Pakistan was ‘created’ with the understanding that the religious identity of Indian speakers was the most salient aspect of social identity, the 1971 fission of Pakistan provides evidence of the countervailing importance of regional/linguistic identity as critical aspects of speakers’ identity.

Eckert (2008, 2012) refers to this nuanced adaptation of features to even momentary situational variables as ‘bricolage’, and the interaction among multiple ethnic identities provides a rich environment for such manipulation of multiple identity markers (Hall-Lew & Yaeger-Dror 2014; Becker 2014). We can presume not only that speakers vary their production of regionally and other (religiously, socioeconomically, vocationally, or gender-related) indexical features, but that the researcher should attempt to adequately code for features which could be relevant to a speaker’s presentation of self, and insure that any information which is gathered should be adequately preserved in the metadata. Documenting of situational features is discussed at greater length in the articles by Eckert, Rickford and Tagliamonte in this volume.

And yet we should allow the data to dictate the extent to which linguistic choices are made from ‘addressee design’ or other ‘audience design’ factors, whether the adoption of specific features reflects a more targeted ‘referee design’ for the community, or whether they reflect strong ideological commitment to a specific linguistic mode of expression:

Yaeger-Dror (1993, 1994) showed that Israeli singers’ use of (r) reflected not their religion, which they shared with their entire audience, but with the regional heritage of their audience which favored the song style of the segment: this in itself might not be surprising, given earlier studies by Trudgill (1986) and Prince (1988), but reflects the fact that religion is only one of the many identities of relevance to a speaker. On the other hand, Ben Rafael and Sharot (2008, pc) find that it is the more religious members of the Sfârdi community who are most likely to retain alveolar /r/ in conversational situations: Like Alam and Stuart-Smith’s Pakistani girls, it does not appear to be an ideological choice, but one which is dictated by ‘referee design’.
Assouline’s article demonstrates the extent to which even within an isolated cohesive religious community, and even in religious lectures, dialect features demonstrate that the lecturers retain an alternate linguistic identity based on having originally belonged to different regional Hassidic communities, despite the fact that (as Giles showed in several publications) speakers are much less likely to emphasize a regional/linguistic identity if they cannot go back to the region where the language or dialect is spoken.

Further study of accurately coded communities, will hopefully permit us to distinguish not just the importance of one or another demographic variable to individuals’ sense of identity, but the purpose it serves within the community.

As we have seen, older studies often equated religious and regional identity. Although that may well have been a viable decision at that time, recent studies have shown that it is no longer possible. Conversely, many of the papers cited here demonstrate the extent to which speakers’ linguistic choices reflect not just their social network, ‘community of practice’ or ‘audience’, but also the relative strength of their ideological commitment to a specific ‘referee’ group, and are ‘chosen’ to reflect their ideological commitment to a specific set of religious (or nonreligious) ideals. These studies have shown that linguistic variation correlates with

- the country of emigration
- the L1 and dialect of the speaker (and speaker's forebears)
- the region of origin
- the religion of the speaker (and forebears)
- the degree of commitment towards the religion

These facts suggest it's wisest to begin with the assumption of independence among all these factors, to consider all of these factors, unless /until they are proven redundant. Certainly, the evidence is now strong enough to suggest that whatever the motivation for the differentiation of dialect relative to a ‘religion’ factor, whenever possible we should try to consider both a speaker’s religious community affiliation(s) and the speaker’s [relative] commitment to a specific religious (or other) ideology.

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