

Language style as audience design*

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ABSTRACT

The style dimension of language variation has not been adequately explained in sociolinguistic theory. Stylistic or intraspeaker variation derives from and mirrors interspeaker variation. Style is essentially speakers' response to their audience. In audience design, speakers accommodate primarily to their addressee. Third persons – auditors and overhearers – affect style to a lesser but regular degree. Audience design also accounts for bilingual or bidialectal code choices. Nonaudience factors like topic and setting derive their effect by association with addressee types. These style shifts are mainly responsive – caused by a situational change. Speakers can also use style as initiative, to redefine the existing situation. Initiative style is primarily referee design: divergence from the addressee and towards an absent reference group. Referee design is especially prevalent in mass communication. (Sociolinguistic variation, code-switching, bilingualism, accommodation theory, ethnography of communication, mass communication)

In the quantitative study of language variation over the past fifteen years, style is one dimension that has often been measured but seldom explained. Sociolinguists have commonly distinguished two initial categories of factors which correlate with linguistic variation (Figure 1). First are the linguistic factors – phonological, morphological, and syntactic constraints which promote or inhibit the application of a variable rule. Thus, following consonant promotes consonant cluster reduction – *wes' side* – and following vowel inhibits it – *west end*. Then there are the extralinguistic factors, also divided into two categories. Since Labov's (1966) pioneer study in New York City, these have been labelled the "social" and "stylistic" axes of linguistic variation. The social dimension denotes differences between the speech of different speakers, and the stylistic denotes differences within the speech of a single speaker. The social axis has been subjected to considerable examination, which convincingly shows that linguistic variation correlates with variation in a speaker's class, gender, social network, and so forth.

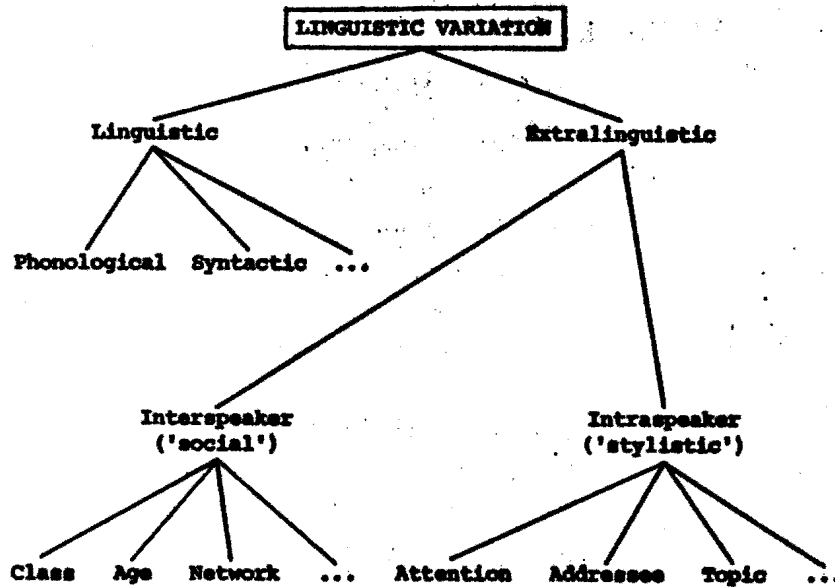


FIGURE 1: Some factors influencing language variation.

The other axis – the stylistic – has not been analysed so rigorously, however, although Labov (1972a:245) has maintained that “the most immediate problem to be solved in the attack on sociolinguistic structure is the quantification of the dimension of style.” Researchers have sometimes treated style as if it were an independent, quantifiable variable – like age or class – which affects and explains linguistic variation (e.g., Wolfram & Fasold 1974:73). To say that an individual speaker’s language varies according to style, however, is to say merely that a speaker’s language varies – period. Language does not co-vary with style, rather style is *itself* one axis of sociolinguistic variation. We must not confuse the linguistic code with extralinguistic factors which may affect the code. Just as the so-called social axis is correlated with certain extralinguistic factors, so the “style” axis should be correlated with genuinely independent variables.

The style dimension has been related to factors ranging from the narrow and mechanistic to the broad and comprehensive. On the one hand, Labov (e.g., 1972a) has proposed that style varies according to the amount of attention paid to speech – which Brown and Levinson (1979:304) characterize as an “impoverished” view of style. At the other end of the scale are sprawling taxonomies (e.g., Hymes 1974) embracing every variable one could conceivably desire to explain style shift.

A similar range from broad to narrow characterizes the linguistic levels which have been analysed as style variation. The variationist strand of sociolinguistics concentrates on quantitative analysis of small-scale linguistic variables (e.g., Labov 1972a), which we may call “microstyle.” On the large scale, a range of disciplines examines qualitative linguistic phenomena such as turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson 1974), politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson

1978), and address systems (Ervin-Tripp 1973). All these are facets of "macrostyle" – broad linguistic variation of the kind which Tannen labels "conversational style" (e.g., 1983). Now, there is no necessary link of microstyle (on the linguistic dimension) with micro-extralinguistic variables, or of macrostyle with macro-extralinguistic variables. It is notable, however, that variationists have dealt in narrow categories, and ethnographers, discourse analysts, and so forth, in broad ones, on both axes.

This paper is an essay in sociolinguistic theory. It addresses a diversity of evidence from two decades of research on language in use, with the ambition of drawing that evidence together into a unified explanation of intraspeaker linguistic variation. First, I clear the ground of certain hypotheses on style which I believe to be implausible (section 1). Second, I lay a foundation by assembling a number of quantitative facts of sociolinguistic structure which bear on the issue, and which to my knowledge have not been so treated before (section 2). Third, I outline a framework for explaining style variation – termed "audience design" – which accounts for these and other crucial data (section 3).

The remainder of the paper fills out this framework by reinterpreting a wide range of quantitative data, including my own research on media language. The linguistic data are drawn largely from variationist studies of microvariables, but the extralinguistic factors are "macro" – those commonly used in analysis of broad conversational style. Section 4 examines how speakers design their style to accommodate their addressees. Section 5 analyses how style is designed for the other audience members: auditors and overhearers. Section 6 examines nonpersonal factors such as topic and setting which affect style shift, and seeks to relate them to audience design.

Audience design falls on what I term the responsive dimension of style shift. Section 7 looks at the other dimension – initiative design, by which speakers use style to redefine the existing situation. Section 8 treats such initiative style shift in terms of a class of persons – the referees – with whom a speaker chooses to identify. Referee design is shown to be especially powerful in mass communication.¹

I. A NONSTARTER: ATTENTION PAID TO SPEECH

Labov has proposed the axiom that style shift is the product of one factor: "Styles can be ranged along a single dimension, measured by the amount of attention paid to speech" (Labov 1972a:208). The more attention a speaker pays, the more formal will be the style. This view has been adopted, usually without further comment, by most variation researchers who have sampled styles. It surfaces in the early studies which closely followed Labov's New York City work, and in more recent research (e.g., Tarone 1982). It is often assumed even in writing which is otherwise critical of prior variation research (e.g., Lavandera 1978). It is in fact the "received wisdom" (Wolfram: personal communication)²

TABLE 1. *Mahl's experiment on self-monitoring of speech. Percentage of (dh) variable realized as standard fricative variant [ð]*

	Facing interviewer	Not facing	Shift
No noise	82	78	-4
Noise	69	65	-4
Shift	-13	-13	

Source: Labov 1972a:98.

in the dominant, variationist strand of sociolinguistics. Even outside this tradition, it is cited as an explanation of style. Ervin-Tripp (1973:270) writes of the attention variable that "the notion that formality lies on a simple dimension seems well founded empirically in Labov's studies."

Empirical foundation for the attention variable is notably lacking, however. The main evidence cited is an experiment by the psychologist George Mahl. Mahl (1972) studied the effects on speakers of interfering with their aural monitoring – the feedback of one's own voice. White noise fed through earphones prevented subjects hearing themselves speak. When the masking noise was turned on and off for brief periods, one subject's "two styles of speech changed regularly, as though they were being switched on and off" (Mahl 1972:240). That is, when no aural monitoring was possible, the speaker's speech became markedly less formal.

Labov quantified the (th) and (dh) variables for this particular speaker.³ For the (dh) variable (Table 1), the number of standard variants decreases by an average 13 percent when the speaker cannot monitor himself because of the white noise (i.e., more *dem* and *dose* for *them* and *those*). When no attention could be paid to speech, the style indeed became less formal. The experiments also contained a further condition, in which the subject was faced towards or away from the interviewer. The loss of visual monitoring of the interviewer also produced a move towards the nonstandard forms. For (dh), this shift was 4 percent – less than the effect of the white noise (Table 1).

The data for the (th) variable, however, give a rather different picture. It is shown in Table 2 that the shift from the no-noise condition to the noise condition is inconsistent. In one case, it is in the predicted direction, with 10 percent fewer standard variants of (th). But in the other, the shift is 5 percent in the opposite direction. By contrast, the shift between the facing and not-facing conditions is both consistently in the expected direction and rather large: 24 percent and 9 percent. This effect is masked in Mahl's conflation of (th) data with (dh), and unnoted in Labov's treatment of (dh) only.

TABLE 2. *Percentage of (th) variable realized as standard fricative variant [θ]*

	Facing interviewer	Not facing	Shift
No noise	(96)	(72)	-24
Noise	(86)	(77)	-9
Shift	-10	+5	

Source: Estimated from Labov 1972a:98 and Mahl 1972:227.

Our reanalysis shows that in Mahl's experiment, loss of aural monitoring is on balance less important than the loss of visual attention to the person of the interviewer. This is a significant finding. If the amount of attention paid to speech were indeed the "actual behavioral feature" (Labov 1972b:112), we would expect that fact to be demonstrated by greater shifts between the noise/no-noise conditions, where attention is most directly manipulated. Instead, it is the subject's awareness of his *addressee* – the interviewer – which proves stronger than the "pure" attention factor itself.

Dressler (1974) has also conducted experiments manipulating attention. Subjects' attention to speech was reduced through habituation (repeated readings of a sentence) and distraction (a tongue twister elsewhere in the sentence). The effect on the linguistic variable analyzed – [β] for /b/ – was equivocal, with individual subjects behaving very diversely. Vaneček and Dressler (1975) report further experiments, with results showing a weak correlation of less attention with less formal speech.

Several researchers have questioned the use of attention as the sole correlative of style shift, either on general theoretical grounds (e.g., Gal 1979:8), or because it could not explain the variation present in their own data (Coupland 1980). There are also cases where attention increases rather than decreases as a speaker shifts to less formal speech. Rickford (1979:230) has observed this in shifts towards basilectal Creole, as has Wolfram (1981) in the use of local forms in Appalachian English.

In research on news language in New Zealand, I found (Bell 1977) considerable style differences among news recorded on different radio stations. It is implausible to suggest that these resulted from newscasters on different stations paying systematically different amounts of attention to their reading (which in the standard methodology would be treated as all one style anyway – reading style). This is particularly evident in the case of newscasters in the New Zealand public broadcasting system. Where two or more stations broadcast from the same studios, a newscaster may alternate from one station to another throughout the day. In these circumstances, newscasters produce consistently different styles

when reading news for the different stations (Bell 1982b). I return to an explanation of these style differences below.

Although Labov clearly intended it as a theoretical and not just a methodological construct (1972a:99), attention is better regarded as a factor in the linguistic interview,⁴ rather than the all-embracing dimension of style. Storytelling, reading, and so forth, are best seen as interview techniques, which attract attention to or divert it from speech and so produce styles analogous to how people talk in different everyday situations. The techniques used to elicit speech at successive points of the style continuum should not be mistaken for factors which actually account for the variation. "Word-list style" is merely a style produced when someone reads a word list. The label has no independent, general validity. In addition, while "casual speech" in the linguistic interview may well be an analogue of spontaneous everyday conversation, it is hard to imagine a naturally occurring situation analogous to reading minimal pairs. The only time a speaker is likely to use minimal-pair style is when reading minimal pairs – a rather uncommon speech event.

Nevertheless, there is undoubtedly some relationship between attention and style. Vaneček and Dressler (1975) found that subjects paid more attention, and spoke more formally, when their addressee was thought to be socially superior. Attention is a mechanism, through which other factors can affect style. Certain topics or addressees or settings tend to evoke graded degrees of attention which may result in parallel graded styles. But the behavioural results of a given level of attention can also be quite diverse. Speakers can turn deliberate attention to producing any style (Coupland 1981). Attention is at most a mechanism of response intervening between a situation and a style. This explains both why it seemed a plausible correlative of style shift, and why it could never be a satisfactory explanation of style. The mechanism should not be mistaken for the motive power – but it is closely related.⁵

Even if attention did prove to be consistently correlated with style, it would remain unsatisfactory as an explanation. We would still have to go behind the mechanistic attention variable to see what factors in the live situation are actually causing these differing amounts of attention. Setting attention aside as at most a mediating variable, we must attempt to relate style shift to the situational factors which cause it.

2. STYLE IN SOCIOLINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

Any adequate model of style shift needs to account for certain facts of sociolinguistic structure. Consistent qualitative and quantitative relationships hold between different dimensions of language variation in a speech community. The interrelation of interspeaker variation, intraspeaker variation,⁶ and linguistic evaluation is crucial evidence on the derivation and nature of style shift. Any

framework we develop to describe style shift must give a satisfying account of these relationships.

Sociolinguists have long noted the relation between the interspeaker and intraspeaker dimensions. Romaine (1980:228), for example, writes of "the classic sociolinguistic finding that socially diagnostic variables will exhibit parallel behavior on a stylistic continuum: that is to say, if a feature is found to be more common in the lower classes than in the upper classes, it will also be more common in the less formal than the most formal styles, with each social group occupying a similar position in each continuum." The same linguistic variables operate simultaneously on both the social and stylistic dimensions, so that on an isolated variable it may be difficult to distinguish "a casual salesman from a careful pipefitter" (Labov 1972a:240).

The key question is: What is the nature of the interrelation between the two dimensions? What we have here is more than an interrelation. It is a *derivation*, which can be expressed as an axiom of sociolinguistic structure. I shall call this the Style Axiom.

Variation on the style dimension within the speech of a single speaker derives from and echoes the variation which exists between speakers on the "social" dimension.

This cause-and-effect relationship holds on three levels. First, it operates synchronically for an individual speaker who, in specific situations, shifts style to sound like another speaker. Second, it operates diachronically for individual speakers who, over time, shift their general speech patterns to sound like other speakers (e.g., after moving to a different dialect region). Third, it operates diachronically for an entire group of speakers which, over time, shifts its speech to sound like another group. Note that we are not necessarily talking about the stratification of speakers and their language. The social stratification of Western societies is only one form of interspeaker variation. Language differences between speakers according to age, locality, or other factors may equally well furnish the resource for intraspeaker variation (Sankoff 1980).

The origin of all intraspeaker shifts in interspeaker differences is diagrammed in Figure 2 (cf. the formulation in Ferguson & Gumperz 1960:9). As the initial cell of the figure indicates, the significance of interspeaker differences originates in the social evaluation of speakers who use a given linguistic feature. A number of qualitative and quantitative facts of sociolinguistic structure drop into place when we view them in the light of the style axiom.

2.1 *Markers and indicators*

If style variation derives from social variation, social variation comes first. So we can expect that, qualitatively, some linguistic variables will have both social and style variation, some only social variation, but none style variation only —

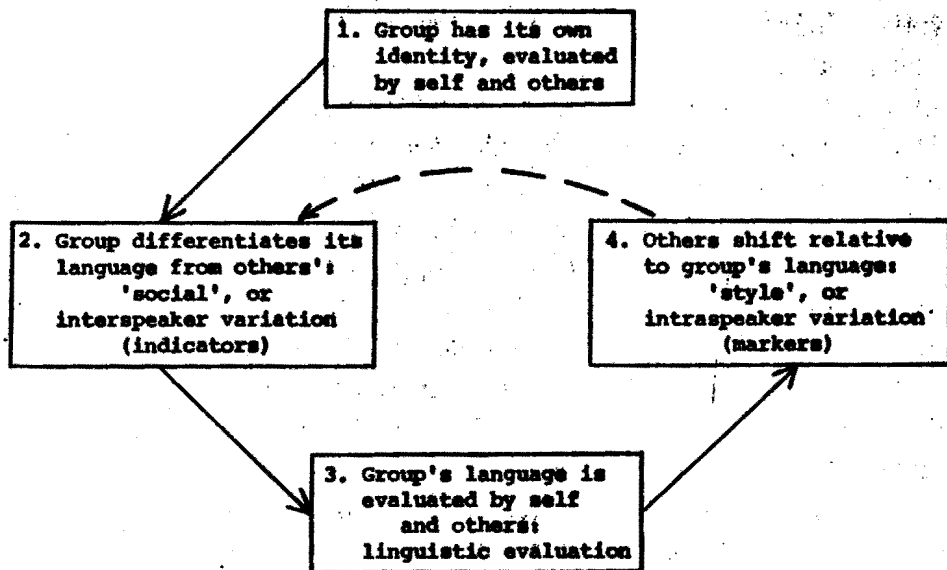


FIGURE 2: The derivation of intraspeaker from interspeaker variation.

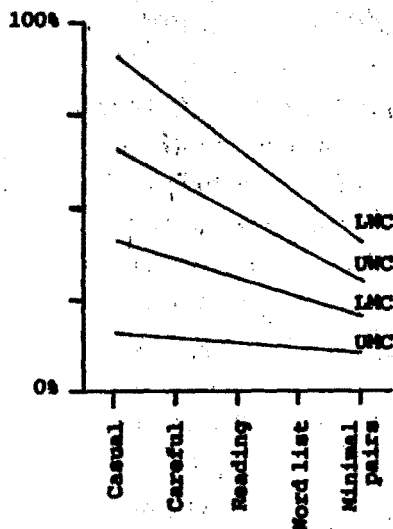
because style presupposes the social (Figure 2). This is precisely what occurs. Most linguistic variables are what Labov has called "markers" (1972a:179) – with variation on both dimensions. But a few are "indicators" – with social differentiation only. The merger in some American dialects of the vowels in *hock* and *hawk* (Labov 1972a:314) and the raising of /æ/ in Illinois (Callary 1975) are differentiated between speakers but do not show style shift within an individual's speech. Such a pattern turns the familiar sloping structure of a class stratification graph for a marker (Figure 3a) into a series of more or less flat parallel lines for an indicator (Figure 3b). The classes are differentiated, but there is no style shift.

While most sociolinguistic variables are markers, studies covering an entire speech community (e.g., Wolfram 1969; Trudgill 1974) have usually found a small proportion of variables to be indicators only. Diachronically, indicators are variables which have not acquired style differentiation, becoming arrested at stage 2 of their development (Figure 2). No satisfying explanation has yet been advanced for the existence of indicators (cf. Chambers & Trudgill 1980:84), nor is it clear whether a variable can persist over time without developing style differentiation.

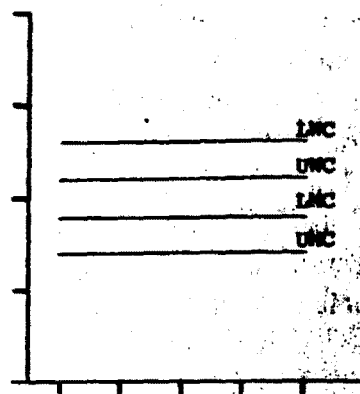
2.2 *The ratio of stylistic to social variation*

Where style shift does occur, it is notable that, quantitatively, the degree of style variation never exceeds the degree of social variation. That is, the range of style shift is less than the range of social differentiation available. If for a variable, the distance between the speech of the top and bottom classes is 75 percent in casual speech (as in Figure 3a), the maximum style shift will be 75 percent. Generally it is much less – 50 percent by the lower working class (LWC) in Figure 3a. The pattern is remarkable in its consistency, appearing in study after study since

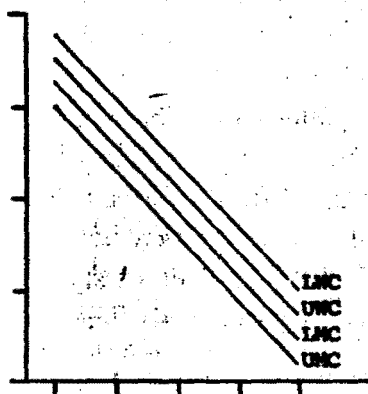
LANGUAGE STYLE AS AUDIENCE DESIGN



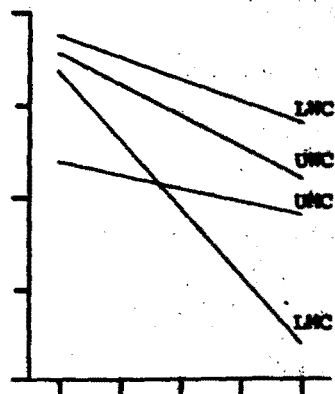
3a. Class x style stratification of a marker variable.



3b. Stratification of an indicator variable.



3c. Stratification of the deviant hyperstyle variable: little social but large style differentiation.



3d. Variable with Lower Middle Class hyper-correction (cf. Labov 1972a: 245).

FIGURE 3: The quantitative relation of style to social variation.

Labov (1966) – with two classes of exception, which we come to below.⁷ This is by no means an automatic or trivial phenomenon. There is no a priori reason why the literature should abound with graphs on the pattern of Figures 3a and 3b, while none like Figure 3c occurs, with 20 percent social differentiation and 70 percent style shift.

The explanation is that style variation indeed derives from and mirrors the “social” variation. As is the habit of mirrors, the reflection is less distinct than the original: Style differentiation is less sharp than the social. The quantitative

relationship is readily explicable and even predictable from the sociolinguistic mechanisms operating.

It also becomes clear that indicators are simply the lower limiting case of this general pattern. They are variables with no style shift, while the upper limit of shift for a variable is the range of social differentiation. Indicators in fact rarely have absolute zero shift. Most show 10–20 percent style shift (e.g., Trudgill 1974:98), and beyond that, the slope of shift is noticeable enough to class the variable as a marker. The existence of indicators becomes less problematic when we recognize that all degrees of style shift, from nil to 100 percent, occur in sociolinguistic variables.

We can thus refine our notion of what a speech community is. We may regard a speech community as one where speakers acknowledge the quantitative limits of style shift as set by the extent of interspeaker differences within the community. They do not share merely the qualitative norms and direction of style shift (Labov 1966). Nor do they share just a common set of evaluative reactions to variables (Labov 1972a:120). Members of a speech community have both evaluation and limits to style shift in common, as one would expect since evaluation and style shift always co-occur (section 2.5 below).

The exceptional ratios

There are two classes of exception to the pattern that intraspeaker does not exceed interspeaker differentiation. The first is the case of statistical hypercorrection by the second highest status group (Figure 3d). For three of Labov's New York City variables, the lower middle class (LMC) shifted beyond the upper middle class (UMC) in the most formal styles. The degree of style shift by the LMC (e.g., 75 percent for (r) [Labov 1972a:114]) exceeds the maximum difference between the classes (for (r), 50 percent in word-list style). Similarly, in Winford's Trinidad study (1978), the upper working class (UWC) shifts beyond the middle classes for the (th) variable. Winford's (dh) variable also has a crossover, but its style/social ratio may be deviant anyway.

Such crossovers represent a real deviation from expected sociolinguistic structure on *both* social and style axes. A group of speakers breaks out of its normal class stratification through extreme style shift, which results directly in style shift exceeding social differentiation. For Trinidad (th), if the UWC had maintained its usual rank between the LWC and the middle classes, style shift for this variable would not have exceeded social differentiation (Winford 1978). The existence of the deviation on the social as well as the style axis is caused and enabled by the crossover. This deviation therefore confirms rather than counters the general pattern.

In the other category are the true exceptions – the “hyperstyle” variables for which we get precisely the pattern I have said will not occur (Figure 3c). I know of just two studies with variables where style shift exceeds social differentiation.⁸ In Woods's (1979) research on English in Ottawa, eight of the twenty-

seven variables show considerable style shift and less social class difference. The voicing of medial /t/, for example, has an interspeaker range of 25 percent, while its intraspeaker shift is 40 percent (Woods 1979:96).

Interestingly, the extent of style shift results directly from other unusual findings of this study. The upper class tends to style-shift more than the lower class – which contrasts with the general finding that lower classes shift a lot, and upper classes little (as in Figure 3a above). Then, there is as little differentiation between social classes in “free speech” as in minimal pairs. The classes do not converge (as in Figure 3a) when the style becomes more formal, a pattern reminiscent of the social spread for a hypercorrecting variable (Figure 3d). For some variables, they even diverge considerably. The direction of style shift is sometimes inconsistent (e.g., with reading style less formal than free speech). The slope of shift is usually erratic, and the steep shifts occur between different styles for different linguistic variables. It seems, then, that here the exceptional degree of style shift compared to little social differentiation (a) results directly from the generally unusual behaviour of these linguistic variables, and (b) reflects a wider irregularity in the data on the style dimension. Exceptional quantitative relationships of social and style differentiation seem to co-occur with other exceptions to normal sociolinguistic structure.

The real deviations from the Figure 3a pattern, which I have claimed to be normal, are found in two studies of Tehran Persian. In Modaresi-Tehrani (1978), the norm is hyperstyle variables even more extreme than the abstracted Figure 3c above. For one variable, a maximum spread of 17 percent between social groups is dwarfed by a style shift of 94 percent (Figure 4). In Jahangiri’s (1980) research (cf. Jahangiri & Hudson 1982), five of the phonological variables show a similar pattern to Modaresi’s, while six have normal style/social ratios.

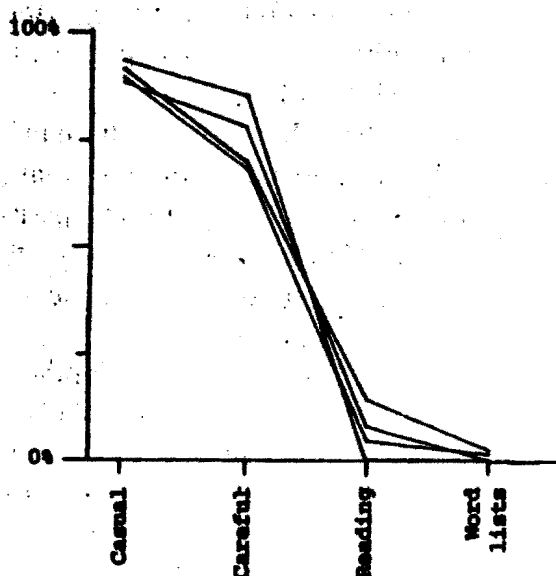


FIGURE 4: A hyper-style variable: class \times style stratification for raising of /æʃ/ to nonstandard [eʃ] in Tehran Persian (from Modaresi 1978:147).

The strength and consistency of the pattern is inescapable, especially when it occurs in two independent studies, conducted at the same period in the same speech community, and analysing some of the same variables, with closely parallel results. Three features of the research hint at what may be operating here. First, for many of the hyperstyle variables, most of the style shift occurs between the free speech and reading styles. The nonstandard variant occurs at very high frequencies for all classes in free speech and falls converging to virtual nonoccurrence in reading, word lists, and minimal pairs. There is an 85 percent fall from careful speech to reading for /æʃ/ raising (Figure 4). In this society, as in Belfast (Milroy & Milroy 1977), reading is a separate dimension of language behaviour from free speech. The result is a radical switch rather than a gradient style shift.

Second, Iran remains a very traditional society in which strong deference is paid to other persons. Jahangiri (1980) examines how this is expressed in clusters of verb variants and in the complex of twenty-four personal pronoun forms with high, neutral, and low alternatives. The combination of pronoun and verb alternates "creates an enormous number of possibilities. This wide range of alternatives is delicately woven with the sociocultural structure, and plays an essential part in everyday communication" (Jahangiri 1980:236). Ritual courtesy operates in all social situations (Beeman 1977), and relative status must be reassessed at every change of occasion. Extreme style shift is a likely result of such social mechanisms. Since deference is an audience-directed behaviour, in the framework I develop below, extreme deference could easily produce extreme audience-directed style shift. There is little variationist research on non-Western speech communities, and different interpersonal behaviour in other cultures may well produce a different quantitative relation between social and stylistic dimensions. While a too direct effect of culture on language behaviour is untenable, we could expect similar hyperstyle shift in some other societies which have similar ritual courtesy (e.g., Javanese, Japanese).

Last, we have some evidence on how the unusual pattern in Tehran Persian has been produced. At issue is whether hyperstyle variables have lost interspeaker variation, or whether they never had it. Jahangiri's comparison of his two age groups (1980:266; cf. Jahangiri & Hudson 1982:59) shows that, on all but one linguistic variable, the younger group is compressing the social spread of the older group. An unusual change is thus in progress, by which speakers of different classes are converging to speak more like each other while maintaining or even increasing their degree of style shift. These variables are indeed losing their interspeaker variation, not developing intraspeaker variation independent of the interspeaker dimension. Why this should be occurring is as difficult a question as any in the explanation of linguistic change, but a direct social cause such as increased egalitarianism seems implausible. (The speech samples predate the Iranian revolution.)

2.4 *Reciprocal deviations*

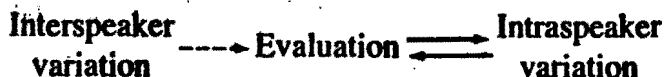
Deviation in social stratification of a variable co-occurs with deviation in style shift. This was first noted by Labov (1966:228) for the (oh) variable. The lower class neither fell in its usual place beyond the lower working class nor showed a pattern of style shift. As Labov points out, there is no necessary reason for the two types of deviation to co-occur. The lower class could maintain its usual class stratification but not style-shift, or it could style-shift but not in its usual class rank.

Labov hypothesizes that deviation on one dimension is necessarily associated with deviation on the other and concludes that both types of stratification result from a common cause. If we hold the style axiom that style variation derives from social, it is quite natural that both dimensions should deviate together. Certainly, we will expect any intraspeaker deviation to co-occur with and result from an interspeaker deviation, although the converse need not hold.

2.5 *Style and speech evaluation*

The relationship of style with social variation is further illuminated by the third term of the process diagrammed in Figure 2: speech evaluation. Qualitatively, a linguistic variable which shows style shift is always the subject of evaluation by members of the speech community. In studies where unconscious evaluative reactions to individual linguistic variables have been elicited, markers are evaluated, indicators are not (Labov 1972a:314). Style shift and evaluation of a variable always co-occur and presuppose that the variable is socially differentiated. This is not surprising, since historically, style differentiation of a variable is derived from social differentiation by way of social evaluation (Figure 2).

However, social differentiation need not lead to evaluation and style shift. Indicators are not subject to evaluation. A variable may be differentiated between speakers without being evaluated, but as soon as speakers begin (unconsciously) to evaluate it, they apparently also begin to style-shift. Evaluation and style shift are reciprocal.



They are therefore subject to reciprocal deviations. The New York lower class deviated from both style and social stratification for the (oh) variable. It was also the only class to show low evaluative response to this variable (Labov 1972a: 130). The lower middle class hypercorrected (oh) and the (r) variable in its own speech and was also most sensitive to both variables in subjective reaction tests.

2.6 *Learning and losing styles*

The style axiom implies that there must be variation between speakers in a community for a variable to be subject to style shift in the speech of one speaker.

If a variable has no interspeaker variation, it will have no intraspeaker variation. We can see this principle at work in (at least) three types of situations. In language acquisition, children learn the linguistic range they hear from speakers in their environment. Children first acquire the vernacular through contact with family and peers. As their range of interlocutors broadens to the wider speech community, they learn the wider style range available there.

Second, the acquisition process is reversed in language death. As the range of interlocutors is reduced to intimates only, speakers lose the styles appropriate to interaction with strangers and become monostylistic (Dressler & Wodak-Leodolter 1977). Style ranges, politeness strategies, and grammatical systems diminish and decay (Dorian 1981) as the language ceases to be used with persons who would reciprocate such forms. Thus in both language learning and loss, the degree of intraspeaker variation is a response to and result of the range of interspeaker variation in the immediate community.

The third situation illuminates monolingual style shift by analogy with bilingual behaviour. It has long been realized that the sociolinguistic processes which make a monolingual speaker shift styles are similar to those which make a bilingual switch languages (e.g., Gumperz 1967). The bilingual is dependent on the availability of the two languages in the speech community at large, and in an interlocutor's passive repertoire, for language switch to be available in the individual speaker's repertoire. Analogously, the monolingual depends on a linguistic variable being used differentially among speakers in the community to make it socially evaluated and available for the individual speaker to style-shift. The bilingual situation simply sharpens the process and makes it more visible.

3. STYLE AS AUDIENCE DESIGN

The style axiom proposed in section 2 draws together a range of qualitative and quantitative facts of sociolinguistic structure. These are our evidence that intraspeaker variation derives from and echoes interspeaker variation. Any model for style shift must account satisfactorily for that relationship. The evidence further indicates what the characteristics of such a framework are. Intraspeaker variation is a *response* to interspeaker variation, chiefly as manifested in one's interlocutors. The fact that style shift falls short of social differentiation (section 2.2) reflects the fact that speakers cannot match the speech differences of all their interlocutors – but they can approach them. The hyperstyle variables which are true exceptions to the style/social ratio (section 2.3) seem to result from extreme deference to one's interlocutor. In learning or losing styles (section 2.6), the crucial factor proves to be access to a range of interlocutors.

Only one kind of model can satisfactorily account for style shift. It is in fact latent in many variation studies and explicit in other strands of sociolinguistics such as the ethnography of communication. Mechanistic variables like attention

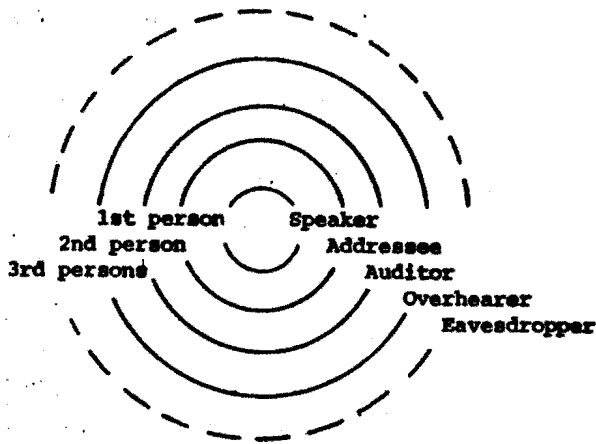


FIGURE 5: Persons and roles in the speech situation.

and tempo are inadequate. Intraspeaker variation must be explained in common terms with the interspeaker variation from which it derives.

Sociolinguists are accustomed to correlating the "social" dimension of language variation with measurable social characteristics (class, age, etc.) of a person – the speaker. If the secondary, stylistic dimension is derived from the primary, social dimension, we should also correlate the style dimension with a person's attributes. But in this case, they will be the attributes, not of the speaker, but of the hearers. The notion is similar to Goffman's (1981) of the relative statuses of hearers in the "participation framework" of an utterance.

The proposed framework – *Audience Design* – is elegantly simple (Figure 5). It assumes that persons respond mainly to other persons, that speakers take most account of hearers in designing their talk. The *speaker* is first person,⁹ primary participant at the moment of speech, qualitatively apart from other interlocutors. The first person's characteristics account for speech differences between speakers. However, speakers design their style for their audience. Differences within the speech of a single speaker are accountable as the influence of the second person and some third persons, who together compose the audience to a speaker's utterances.¹⁰

We may distinguish and rank audience roles according to whether or not the persons are known, ratified, or addressed by the speaker (Table 3). The main character in the audience is the second person, the *addressee*, who is known, ratified, and addressed. There may also be others, third persons, present but not directly addressed. Known and ratified interlocutors in the group, I term *auditors*. Third parties whom the speaker knows to be there, but who are not ratified participants, are *overhearers*. Other parties whose presence is unknown are *eavesdroppers*, whether intentionally or by chance.

These four audience roles are implicationally ordered according to whether or not they are addressed, ratified, and known. We can picture audience members

TABLE 3. *Hierarchy of attributes and audience roles*

	Known	Ratified	Addressed
Addressee	+	+	+
Auditor	+	+	-
Overhearer	+	-	-
Eavesdropper	-	-	-

as standing on concentric circles (Figure 5), each one more distant from the speaker. Often in an interaction, the physical distance of audience members from the speaker coincides with their role distance, with addressee physically closest and eavesdropper farthest away. Certainly, audience roles are assigned by the speaker, and their degree of salience for the speaker's style design is generally relative to role distance.

Given the hierarchy of roles and of their salience for the speaker, we may expect that the effect of each audience member on a speaker's style design is graded according to role distance. I hypothesize that this has two related consequences for sociolinguistic variation – one qualitative, the other quantitative. Qualitatively, there is an implicational scale of whether a variable will show variation according to audience roles. We have already seen that interspeaker variation may or may not produce intraspeaker variation, but that intraspeaker variation presupposes interspeaker. I propose a more exacting hypothesis: If a linguistic variable shows style variation according to any audience role, that presupposes variation according to all roles closer to the speaker.

Speaker \supseteq Addressee \supseteq Auditor \supseteq Overhearer

So, interspeaker variation may or may not produce interaddressee variation, which in turn may or may not produce interauditor variation, which again may or may not produce inter-overhearer variation. But inter-overhearer variation always presupposes variation by auditor, addressee, and speaker; and so forth. Eavesdroppers, being unknown, by definition cannot affect a speaker's style.

Still more rigorous is the quantitative hypothesis: The effect on linguistic variation of each role is less than the effect of the role next closest to the speaker.

Speaker > Addressee > Auditor > Overhearer

I have already shown in section 2 how all intraspeaker variation is less than interspeaker variation. That is, the combined weight of all audience roles is lighter than the weighting of the speaker role in accounting for variation. This proposal is now refined: The speaker accounts for most variation, the addressee accounts for less than the speaker, the auditor less again, and the overhearer least of all. The amount of variation decreases as we move out from first person, to

second person, to the remoter third persons. The evidence on these qualitative and quantitative hypotheses is assembled in sections 4 and 5.

A number of taxonomies exist in sociology, the ethnography of communication, and sociolinguistics which classify situational influences on language style (e.g., Hymes 1974; Brown & Fraser 1979). This work typically treats the participants in a communication as the main factors, as we are doing here. In addition, such taxonomies, and empirical work on style, regularly identify two other main influences apart from persons: topic and setting. Fishman's concept of "domain" (Fishman et al. 1971:583) in effect attempts to draw addressee, topic, and setting together under one umbrella variable. I will argue for evidence that the nonpersonal variables have less effect than the audience variables I have been outlining. Nevertheless, their relation to a view of style as basically audience-designed is neither simple nor trivial, and we examine it in section 6.

Audience design is wider than style shift, although most of the linguistic data presented here are of quantitative shifts. Audience design informs all levels of a speaker's linguistic choices – the switch from one complete language to another in bilingual situations, the form of speech acts, pronoun choice, the use of honorifics, and quantitative style shift. The audience is, at one level, simply the people who hear the speaker's utterances. Yet their role is by no means passive. As in a theatre, the audience is the responsive, critical forum before whom the utterances are performed. Under an older meaning, speakers "have an audience with" their hearers. They are in a real sense subject to their audience, dependent on its goodwill, responsive to audience response. It is that responsiveness which informs a speaker's style design.

All the audience and nonaudience factors outlined above are classed here as the *responsive* dimension of style design. Here a speaker shifts style in response to the extralinguistic situation. Style can also be used as a dynamic force to redefine an existing situation. I term this the *initiative* axis, and deal with it in section 7. Most initiative style shifts occur as a response not to the immediate audience but to certain third persons not physically present. These are reference groups, who are absent but influential on the speaker's attitudes. They hold an umpiring role in the speaker's consciousness. I label them *referees*, and examine their role and its linguistic effects in section 8. The relationships among the roles and dimensions introduced here to characterize style design are diagrammed in Figure 6.

4. ADDRESSEE DESIGN

4.1 *The Accommodation Model*

A variety of qualitative and quantitative evidence justifies attributing style variation primarily to the effect of the addressee. Foremost is the work of Howard

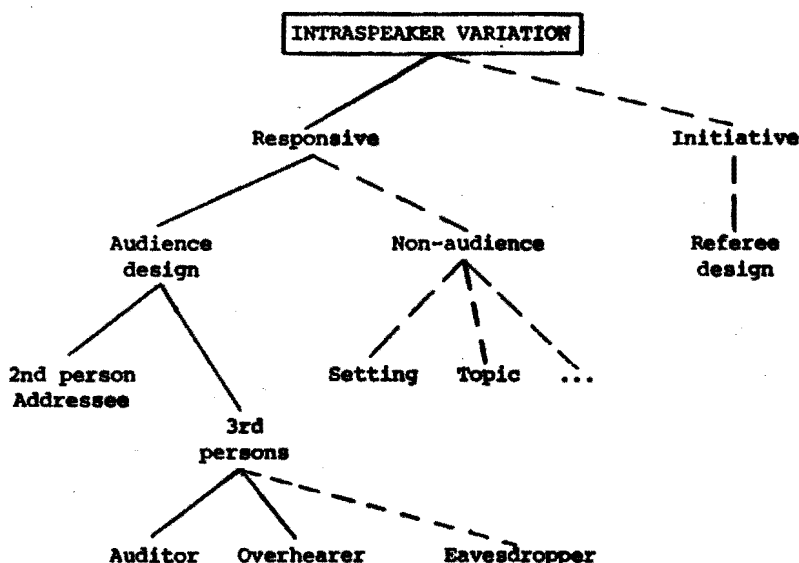


FIGURE 6: Style as audience design.

Giles and his associates on “accommodation.” Grossly described, the accommodation model hypothesizes that speakers accommodate their speech style to their addressee in order to win approval (Giles & Powesland 1975; Giles & Smith 1979). The common form of accommodation is *convergence*, by which a speaker’s style shifts to become more like that of the addressee. Many experiments (e.g., Giles & Smith 1979) have demonstrated how speakers converge on a number of levels such as speech rate, accent, content, and pausing. Alternatively, instead of converging, speakers may maintain their style of speech or even diverge from their addressee. Social psychological theory suggests a range of reasons why a speaker chooses *maintenance* or *divergence* rather than convergence (Giles 1980).

The social psychological aspect of accommodation theory has become increasingly complex as it has tried to encompass facts which do not sit easily with simple convergence or divergence. The theory originally suggested that the greater the desire for approval, the greater would be the convergence. Some experiments (e.g., Street 1982) have shown just that. Giles and Smith (1979) found, however, that speakers can converge too much, causing addressees to react unfavourably to what they may feel is patronizing or ingratiating behaviour. Conversely, addressees need not always disapprove of divergence.¹¹

In spite of the proliferation of riders to the theory (especially in the comprehensive refinements by Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire 1982), the basic insight and experimental findings remain sound: that speakers accommodate their style to their audience. If we interpret “audience” as at least the three roles of addressee, auditor, and overhearer, and “accommodation” as any style shift which occurs in response to these persons, then accommodation theory is a powerful explanatory model of speech style. It proceeds beyond descriptive taxonomy and the

nondirectional correlation dominant in much sociolinguistics to an explanation of what causes style shift.

To the linguist, accommodation theory's chief deficiency is its linguistic naivety. Its language parameters are either only quasilinguistic (speech rate, utterance length) or deliberately unsophisticated ratings of "accent" (but cf. Giles 1984). A close linguistic analysis of accommodated speech, and in particular a quantification of degrees of shift, should prove a rich testing ground for these theories. Several recent sociolinguistic studies have aimed to quantify how accommodation affects specific linguistic variables. Still other research exists whose findings bear on the issue of audience-designed style shift, but whose authors did not interpret them in this light. We now turn to examine this evidence.¹²

4.2 *Accommodation to a range of addressees*

We can gauge the strength of the addressee's effect on a speaker's style in a number of studies which compared informants' speech in a formal interview with their speech in a peer group. Bickerton (1980) recorded his informant "Sailor" both with a close friend in a dyad and in an interview with an outside investigator (himself). For three variables on the Hawaiian creole-standard English continuum (*wan* as article, negation with *no*, and *bin/wen* as past marker), Sailor shifted a massive 59–65 percent towards standard English in the interview situation (Bickerton 1980:44).

In Douglas-Cowie's (1978) research in a Northern Irish village, informants were recorded first with a fellow-villager and then with an English outsider. For all six linguistic variables, the informants each shifted towards more standard variants with the English stranger – or maintained categorical levels of the variable (Douglas-Cowie 1978:41–43).

Thelander (1982) analysed twelve dialect-to-standard variables of Swedish. His informants always shifted to more standard values of the variable in an interview than in a peer group ("A-situation" – Thelander 1982:71). The shift reached 51 percent for the WERE variable and averaged 28 percent from interview to peers across all the variables. Researching the Swahili dialect continuum in Mombasa, Kenya, Russell (1982:133) found that women shifted an average 35 percent towards the standard when talking to a standard-Swahili outsider rather than to a chosen peer. Men shifted 23 percent.

The results of these studies, covering four different languages, testify to the consistent effect of interviewer versus peer as addressee. But speakers' flexibility in addressee-designed shift is far more than just a two-style capability. Trudgill (1981) covers a range of quantitative data which bear on accommodation theory. In particular, he analyses his own speech as interviewer against the speech of informants from his Norwich study (1974). For (t) glottalization (Figure 7), the interviewer is clearly tracking the informants' level in his own production. The informants are scattered from 8 to 100 percent, while the interviewer ranges

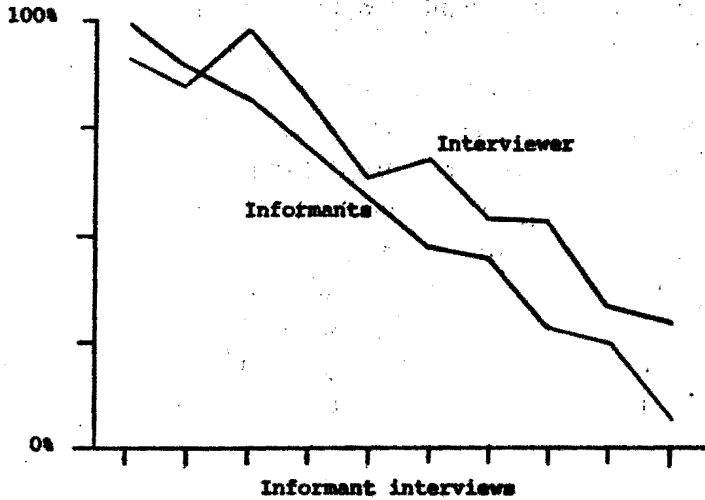


FIGURE 7: One speaker's style shifts in response to ten addressees/informants: the (t) variable in Norwich (from Trudgill 1981:225).

across 30 to 98 percent, accommodating to the informants' speech. With just one deviation, Trudgill's own speech to his ten informants is stratified according to the informants' social class.¹³

Coupland (1981 – also 1980, 1984) is the most comprehensive quantitative research to date on the linguistic nature of accommodation. Coupland recorded an assistant in a travel agency in conversation with a wide social range of clients. The study quantifies the assistant's level for a linguistic variable when speaking to particular groups of clients against those clients' own level.

Coupland groups the clients according to their occupational status. With few exceptions, the assistant's speech to members of each occupational class shifts parallel to the class members' own speech differences. The assistant's pronunciation is, in sum, "almost as good a marker of the occupational status of her interlocutor as that interlocutor's own speech" (Coupland 1981:191). This is striking evidence of a speaker's ability to design her style to fit a community-wide range of addressees.¹⁴

4.3 Quantifying the addressee effect

We have seen that the degree of style shift in response to different addressees can be very large: some 60–70 percent in Bickerton (1980) and Trudgill (1981). It may be that a shift of about two-thirds of the possible (i.e., 67 percent) is the normal maximum of addressee-designed shift. We can also calculate the degree of a speaker's shift relative to the addressee – that is, how far speakers converge from their own base level towards their addressees' level. We can compute from Coupland's data (although Coupland does not himself do this) the quality and quantity of the travel assistant's accommodation. I take as base value the assistant's level for a linguistic variable when speaking to clients of her own

LANGUAGE STYLE AS AUDIENCE DESIGN

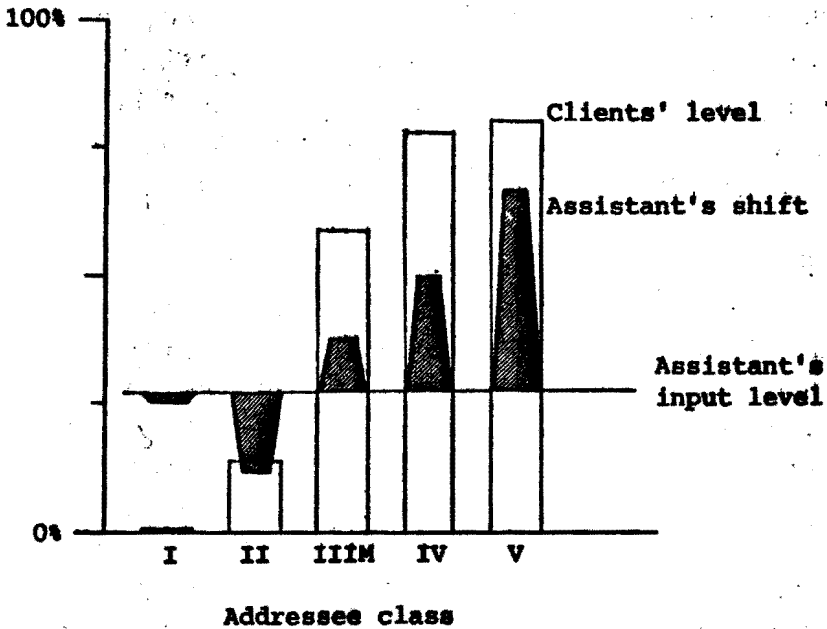


FIGURE 8: Travel assistant's convergence on intervocalic (t) voicing variable to five occupational classes of clients. Input level taken as assistant's speech to own class, IIIN (derived from Coupland 1984:Figure 4).

occupational class. Her speech fits well with class IIIN, to which she would be assigned (Coupland 1981:181). For four linguistic variables, in speech to the five occupation classes other than her own; she converges to the interlocutors in twelve cases, diverges in four, and in the remaining four actually shifts beyond the interlocutor (derived from Coupland 1984: Figures 1-4). The shift for one linguistic variable is graphed in Figure 8. Thus, in the large majority of cases, the assistant converges or "hyperconverges" to the interlocutor's speech.

The assistant's degree of shift differs depending on whether the client's class is higher or lower than her own. To the two higher classes (I and II), her shifts are slight and inconsistent, half of them divergent. To the three lower classes, she converges consistently and often massively on all four variables. She shifts on average some 55 percent of the distance from her own "input" level to the "target" level of the client's speech (cf. Figure 8). The travel assistant thus goes – quite literally – more than halfway to meet her clients. As a salesperson whose job it is to win business, she is strongly motivated to converge to her addressees.

Trudgill's degree of shift for (t) in his Norwich interviews was similar. It also occurred in response to a similar sociopsychological situation. The interviewer, like the travel assistant, is attempting to put addressees at their ease and win their cooperation. We can hypothesize that, in cases where pressures for a speaker to seek approval are rather strong, the optimal level of convergence (cf. Giles & Smith 1979) is a little more than halfway.

4.4 Differential accommodation

Different linguistic variables are differentially affected by accommodation. This is no surprise, since variables show different degrees of shift across the analogical styles elicited in sociolinguistic interviews. We can expect that a few variables – the indicators – will not accommodate, but most will show some degree of shift towards the addressee.

Trudgill (1981) also analysed the variable (a:) from his Norwich data. He found that while his ten informants were scattered across the full 100-percent range, in his own speech (a:) stayed virtually the same. It turns out that Norwich (a:) is an indicator only. That is, informants do not themselves style-shift within the interview in response to reading aloud, word lists, and so forth. It is completely consistent with the framework developed here that a speaker will therefore not shift on this variable when talking to addressees of different social classes.¹⁵

Different speakers in one speech community may use different linguistic variables to mark their response to the same addressee. Five of Douglas-Cowie's speakers (A–E) were generally more standard in speech than the others. They shifted markedly – up to 49 percent – for four of the variables: (ng), (ɪ), (aɪ), and (aʊ) (Douglas-Cowie 1978:41–42). For the other two variables, (ɔ:) and (aye), they scarcely used the local variant, so had little distance to shift when addressing the English outsider. The other five speakers (F–J) used near-categorical levels of the nonstandard form for the first four variables, regardless of addressee. But these speakers shifted the last two variables considerably. The distribution of accommodative variables was thus complementary between the two groups of speakers, whom Douglas-Cowie distinguishes by an index of social ambition.

Variables may also be in complementary distribution in the speech of a single speaker according to different addressees. In Bickerton's study, the three variables (*wan*, *no*, and *bin/wen*) shifted some 60 percent between addressing a peer versus an outsider. But three other variables (zero plural, zero copula, and *om* as object pronoun) shifted only 8–19 percent between the dyad and interview situations (Bickerton 1980:43). Bickerton concludes that the two sets of variables carry different social meanings. The first marks ingroup versus outgroup identity. The second set shifts little between those two situations, but markedly between all-male and mixed-gender groups.

Some of these data indicate what is the general quantitative range of addressee-designed shift. The travel assistant in Coupland's research does on occasion hyperconverge to a point beyond her addressee. But in general, her range of shift across all clients falls between the values in the speech of the highest and lowest classes. On intervocalic (t) voicing, for example, the clients scatter from 0 percent (professionals) to 80 percent (unskilled workers). The assistant ranges from 26 percent when speaking to professionals (only 12 percent to Class II – see my Figure 8 above), up to 67 percent when addressing unskilled workers. Again,

Trudgill's shift for (t) in his interviews is 68 percent, compared with the 92 percent scatter of his informants, and he remains within the limits of his most extreme informants (Figure 7).

As the main contributing factor to style shift, addressee-designed shift fits the style axiom stated in section 2: Intraspeaker variation derives from and mirrors interspeaker differences. Style shift by Trudgill as interviewer and Coupland's travel assistant is occasioned by differences in the speech of the addressees they encounter. But their echo of the addressees' speech is muffled. They reflect the differences, but the image loses clarity. They approach but do not match their addressees' speech.

Sociolinguistic variables will normally show variation according to addressee. Only one or two out of every ten variables is an indicator. Most are markers with style shift. Most style shift is accountable as addressee design, and we can assume then that all markers – that is, eight to nine of every ten variables – will show addressee-designed shift.¹⁶

The very strong pattern of co-occurrent interspeaker and intraspeaker variation suggests a strong hypothesis: A sociolinguistic variable which is differentiated by certain speaker characteristics (e.g., by class or gender or age) tends to be differentiated in speech to addressees with those same characteristics. That is, if an old person uses a given linguistic variable differently than a young person, then individuals will use that variable differently when speaking to an old person than to a young person (cf. Helfrich 1979) – and, *mutatis mutandis*, for gender, race, and so on. Insofar as women speak differently than men, they will be spoken to differently than men.

There is some evidence for this proposal: Hindle (1979:171) analysed the speech of a woman recorded in a variety of situations throughout the day. He found that, where a vowel change was being led by women, the speaker used more advanced variants when talking to women. Where men were leading the change, she used the more advanced variants with them.

4.5 *What do speakers respond to?*

The findings brought together above are impressive support for the view that speakers design a style for their addressees. But what is it in the addressee (or other audience members) that the speaker is responding to? Three positions – increasingly specific – seem possible.

1. Speakers assess the personal characteristics of their addressees, and design their style to suit.

2. Speakers assess the general style level of their addressees' speech, and shift relative to it.

3. Speakers assess their addressees' levels for specific linguistic variables, and shift relative to those levels.

It is clear that speakers are at least capable of (1), a general reaction to all

addressee's characteristics. Speakers are in fact able to respond to personal characteristics alone, when speech differs from a speaker's expectations of a given addressee. Beebe (1981) conducted tightly controlled experiments in which all factors (speaker, setting, topics, etc.) remained constant except the identity of the addressee. The alternate addressees were both native speakers of standard Thai and were similar on all social attributes – but one was ethnic Chinese and the other ethnic Thai. The subjects in the experiment consistently shifted towards more Chinese-influenced vowel variants with the Chinese addressee, even though this represented divergence from the addressee's own speech. Such accommodation responds to what the speaker mistakenly assumes will be the addressee's speech on the basis of the addressee's nonspeech attributes. Thakerar et al. (1982) term this "subjective linguistic convergence," which shifts in a different direction than successful, objective convergence.

Speakers are likely also to be capable of (2), shift towards an addressee's general speech style. Numerous experiments in the accommodation framework have shown that interlocutors' speech becomes more similar on several quasilinguistic levels (Giles & Powesland 1975). Quantifying linguistic variables would probably produce a similar finding. In any case, (2) is normally part of the input to (1): An addressee's speech contributes to a speaker's general assessment of the person.

Demonstrating level (3) is more problematic, especially since the general speech impression of level (2) largely derives from the combined assessment of many individual variables. It should, however, be possible to devise experiments in which addressee speech holds constant all but a few linguistic variables (cf. the subjective reaction tests of Labov [1966]). One could then test whether the speaker-subject converges only for those variables. Sociolinguistics has long since established that speakers can produce, and listeners perceive, very fine quantitative differences. It does not seem far-fetched to link the two, and propose that a speaker's production of a level for a variable can occur in response to perception of an addressee's level for that variable (but cf. Coupland [1984] on matching of specific features). The regular quantitative relations we have observed between inter- and intraspeaker variation lend support to such a view.

It is most likely, however, that speakers in fact respond at all three levels, and teasing out the exact contribution of each is beyond our scope here. That the personal attributes of audience members are influential is unquestionable. Research on linguistic variation, however, including most of that cited here, has usually characterized persons only in terms of "objective" social attributes such as class or age. Yet a person is far more than a bundle of social categories. The personality, motives, attitudes, and emotions of speaker or addressee must all be expected to influence language variation (Brown & Fraser 1979).

I cannot detail here the part which psychological and other factors play in addressee design. I will touch briefly only on the important dimension of *relationship* between first and second persons, between speaker and addressee. The

studies by Douglas-Cowie (1978), Bickerton (1980), Russell (1982) and Thelander (1982) have all indicated the influence of insider versus outsider addressee on a speaker's style. When interlocutors are strangers (as is usual in a sociolinguistic interview), relationship is low. Status is what counts. But as relationship strengthens, status becomes less important. There is a reciprocal distribution, then, of relationship and status, so that if the strength of one variable is greater, the other is less. We can see this operating in an individual situation in Douglas-Cowie's analysis. She separated speech recorded in the first and second hours of the interview with the English outsider (Experiment Two). All the subjects shifted to rather less standard variants in the second hour as they became more familiar with the interviewer (Douglas-Cowie 1978:43,44).

Long-term relationship moves style more radically away from the level pure status variables might predict. The travel assistant's style when discussing work-related topics with her fellow employees (Coupland 1980:7) is far less standard than when addressing the client group whose objectively measured social status is the same as the employees' (Coupland 1984: Figures 1-4). Rather, her style to co-workers is generally similar to what she uses to address the lowest social group of clients. The effect on her speech of an interlocutor in close relationship is thus similar to the effect of a low-status addressee. The effect of relationship, however, is not necessarily uniform. Whereas the assistant levelled out at a maximum of 35 percent (h)-dropping with all three lower classes of addressee (Coupland 1984: Figure 1), she shifts to 60 percent with her workmates on work topics (Coupland 1980:7).

The social mechanisms operating in relationship versus status become clearer in the discrete choice forced by second person pronouns (Brown & Gilman 1960). The same terms exchanged between intimates are used to address social inferiors, and the terms exchanged between nonintimates are used to social superiors. The labels status and relationship are equivalent to Brown and Gilman's "power" and "solidarity." The social categories required to explain the choice of second person pronoun, or address terms (Friedrich 1972; Ervin-Tripp 1973), are of exactly the kind needed for addressee-designed style shift. The code difference is sharper than in style shift and the decisions more overt, but the determinants are the same.

A rounded theory of audience design would therefore need to span the speaker-addressee relationship and allow for its intimate connection and reciprocal distribution with the status dimension.¹⁷ It should also take account of all a person's attributes, psychological and social, permanent and temporary. At an even broader level, it should specify what it is in the addressee's person or speech that a speaker is responding to. In this study, I deal mainly in the social attributes of persons, partly because most quantitative linguistic research uses such categories, but also because they are demonstrably significant. A wider view of the persons in a speech situation is nevertheless desirable, not just for the addressee but equally for auditor and other audience roles.

4.6 *Can the addressee take over?*

Although we can assume any interaction may contain pressures to accommodate, two kinds of public situations strengthen the effect of these factors on speech. The first is public speaking. The larger a speaker's audience, the greater the pressures to be understood and to win approval. There is a gradient from private to public situation of increasing influence by addressees on a speaker, with pressure to seek approval growing roughly with the size of the audience.

The second kind of setting is the public-contact institution exemplified in Coupland's study. Service institutions such as shops, restaurants, businesses, modes of transport, and hotels are supposed to win the approval of their clients. We can expect the service people employed by these institutions to show marked speech accommodation to their addressees.

Such institutional accommodation shows in two ways. First, where the institution attracts a social range of clients, we find the kind of fine, flexible addressee design which the travel assistant manifested in Coupland's study. The assistant's speech is so responsive to clients that it is very hard to decide where her own "natural" speech style might fall:

But this presumably occurs only when an encounter lasts long enough for the service person to begin responding to the individual client. In the second type of institutional accommodation, the contact is brief or the clientele uniform. Service people will then settle on a style felt suitable for the normal client-type of the institution. The result is that the speech differences among individual waiters, stewards, shop assistants, and so on tend to be levelled out, producing an often quite audible "house style" in the speech of service persons in a particular institution. What this means in detail is that such speakers converge towards values of a linguistic variable which can only be accounted for in terms of the ideal client to whom they are addressing themselves. They converge to share such a similar style with their co-workers that their individual level is as hard to pin down as in the first case where they scatter in response to a diversity of clients. So again, the addressee seems to take over.

Labov's (1966) New York City department store study is a good example of this phenomenon, although Labov did not himself treat it in these terms. He elicited the postvocalic (r) variable in three different department stores. Speakers show some differences on (r) according to their age or race, but double that amount of variation occurs between speakers grouped by the stores in which they work (Labov 1972a:51). Labov makes it clear (1972a:48) that the salespeople are not stratified by their own social characteristics. They borrow their prestige from their customers. The indicators Labov used to rank the stores (advertising, pricing, physical plant, etc.) are essentially reflectors of the relative status of the stores' clienteles. The linguistic stratification of (r) across the three stores thus correlates with the social stratification of their average customers.

Such linguistic behaviour in very brief institutional encounters implies that the

opening gambits of longer encounters will similarly be styled to the ideal rather than the actual client. As the interaction progresses beyond the initial exchanges, the service person will start to converge towards the actual addressee. We can suppose, then, that Coupland's travel assistant may have used a rather similar style to all her clients in the first two to three exchanges. Only after she had time to respond to the individual client, might she begin shifting from the house style towards the client's own speech.¹⁸

Labov's (1966) study shows how brief institutional encounters evoke style designed for an ideal rather than the real addressee. In all three New York City stores, the actual addressee was identical (Labov himself), but the expected addressee differed. What was therefore intended to be linguistic convergence was in some cases in fact divergence, when the addressee did not fit the salesperson's ideal. In the terms of the recent reformulation of the accommodation model by Thakerar et al. (1982), this is subjective linguistic convergence, which is not realized objectively. Below, I examine the issue of institutional shift further, in particular, proposing how shift towards an ideal addressee-client can be regarded as an instance of referee design.

The pressures of speaking to a large audience and as the representative of an institution are combined and heightened in mass communication. The result is to strengthen the influence of the addressee to the point that, for some linguistic variables, individual attributes of the speaker have minimal effect. In Bell (1977), I document this effect on five linguistic variables. The most striking case arises from the structure of the New Zealand public broadcasting system, where a pool of newscasters reads news on two or more different radio stations which share the same suite of studios. An individual newscaster may therefore read out the same news on different stations to different audiences.

In Figure 9, it is shown how four individual newscasters shifted systematically from more standard values of the (t)-voicing variable on station YA (higher-status audience) to less standard values on the lower-status ZB. This situation holds constant all the other, nonpersonal variables thought likely to influence style shift: topic, setting, degree of attention, and so forth. Only the two au-

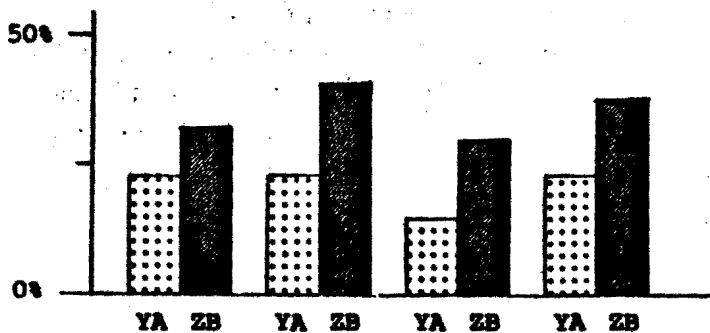


FIGURE 9: Percentage of intervocalic /t/ voicing by four newscasters on two New Zealand radio stations, YA and ZB (from Bell 1982b:162).

diences – as characterized by a sample survey (Bell 1982b) – are different. It is also notable that individual newscasters tend to converge on a style, showing unusually little scatter around a station's mean frequency of a particular variable. This gives content to the notion of an institution's house style, by which individual speaker differences are submerged in the corporate style.

However, although the correlation of news style with addressee characteristics is evidence of mass communicators' accommodation, this is not a case of simple convergence. The YA newscasters are undoubtedly shifting *away* from their addressees' actual speech towards an external reference model – Received Pronunciation (RP) (Bell 1982c). Yet because the YA audience also regard RP as a model of competent broadcast speech, the newscasters' divergence is both intended and interpreted as positive accommodation. It is linguistic divergence motivated by psychological convergence (Thakerar et al. 1982).

I have identified in this section four types of public speech situation where the addressee seems to take over: brief or initial service encounters, longer service encounters, public speaking, and mass communication. The common factor in all these is the strong pressure to seek the addressees' approval. Only in the second and third cases, however, is it a pure addressee effect which outweighs speakers' own individual differences. The first and last cases involve a notional rather than a real addressee, and we have seen that the style shifts which result are unusual in being divergent. These cases show some features of addressee design, but others – which are better interpreted as *referee* design – shift to an ideal or absent reference group. I return to this issue in section 8.

5. AUDITOR AND OVERHEARER

5.1 *Quantifying the auditor effect*

The third persons ratified as participants in a conversation are auditors, and those known to be present but unrated are the overhearers. I mean the term "auditor" to draw on the normal associations of the word: one who audits, for example, a class without being an "addressed" student, one who audits utterances in a sense similar to the accounting practice.

Bickerton (1980) recorded his informant Sailor not only in interview and dyad situations, but also in a variety of groups. In particular, his data include Sailor's speech first in a peer group and second in the same peer group plus the investigator. In Table 4 it is shown how much Sailor differed on the three in-group/outgroup variables when the investigator was present. The effect of the auditor-investigator was to shift Sailor an average 29 percent towards standard English variants.¹⁹

The interview and dyad conditions, as indicated in section 4.2, measure the effect of the same outside investigator as addressee rather than auditor (Table 4). The addressee-designed shift averages 62 percent – about twice as great as the

TABLE 4. *Percentage of shift by "Sailor" between two sets of conditions for three Hawaiian creole-standard English variables*

	<i>bin/wen</i> past marker	<i>wan</i> indefinite article	Negation with <i>no</i>
Auditor effect (shift Peer Group to Peer Group plus Investigator)	27	20	39
Addressee effect (shift Dyad with friend to Interview with Investigator)	59	65	60

Source: Derived from Bickerton 1980: Tables 1 & 3.

auditor-designed shift. In other combinations which Bickerton analyses, his data accurately reflect the contradictory effects of adding disparate interlocutors to the group. The mix of male, peer group culture with outsiders and/or spouses produces situations in which the signals are crossed (1980:47). The pressures of addressee and auditor, and of different auditors, conflict. So, some of the linguistic variables reflect a male identity, shifting when a wife joins the group, while others change in response to an outsider.²⁰

Thelander (1982) also sampled an auditor condition. In his "A-situation," peers were addressing each other; in the "B-situation," they were joined by a stranger as auditor. The auditor's presence shifted all twelve linguistic variables towards the standard (Thelander 1982:71). Auditor-designed shift averaged 12 percent, compared to the addressee effect of 28 percent.

Douglas-Cowie (1978) also by chance tested the auditor effect. In her Experiment One, speakers had been recorded talking alone to a peer. In Experiment Two, two of these speakers (C and E) were recorded together in conversation with the English outsider. Douglas-Cowie separates (a) speech which C and E addressed to each other in the outsider's presence from (b) speech they addressed to the outsider (1978:47). Therefore, the shift from Experiment One to Two (a) quantifies the effect of the outsider as auditor, while the shift from One to Two (b) quantifies his effect as addressee.²¹

In Table 5, the relevant data are presented, extracted from Douglas-Cowie's figures. For the almost stereotyped (ng) variable, the auditor has an appreciable influence on the styles of both speakers. Taken together with Thelander's and Bickerton's data, it confirms that the auditor can affect how speakers design their style. Yet as with addressee design, accommodation to the auditor is not uniform for all linguistic variables. (aɪ) and (aʊ) in Table 5 are quite unresponsive to the auditor. This should not surprise us. We have already seen that a linguistic variable may be differentiated between speakers but not addressees. The data in Table 5 make it clear that variables may shift according to addressees but not auditors.

TABLE 5. *Percentage of shift on three Northern Irish-to-standard English variables by two speakers between interaction with a peer (Experiment One) and speech in an interview (Experiment Two) with (a) English outsider as auditor and (b) English outsider as addressee*

	(ng)	(at)	(au)
Speaker C			
(a) Auditor effect	18	1	2
(b) Addressee effect	22	15	18
Speaker E			
(a) Auditor effect	37	0	6
(b) Addressee effect	61	26	32

Note: All variables normalized to a base of 100%.

Source: Derived from Douglas-Cowie 1978: Tables 1, 3, 4 & 12.

At each remove from the speaker, the sharpness of linguistic differentiation is reduced. At each increase in role distance, certain variables lose their variation completely. The data surveyed here are too slight for firm conclusions, but they are suggestive. The variables which are strongly affected (about 60 percent) by the addressee in Tables 4 and 5 are also influenced by the auditor. Quantitatively, however, that effect is weakened to about half. The variables whose addressee-designed shift falls below a certain level – perhaps 20–30 percent, although compare (ng) for Speaker C – register little auditor effect. The parallel with Labov's markers versus indicators is striking.

Audience design accounts elegantly for these facts. It expects that the same patterns of sociolinguistic structure already described for the addressee will hold for the auditor but in a weaker form. How a person speaks *before* a given auditor reflects how that person speaks *to* the same individual as addressee. The auditor's effect is to shift a speaker's style in the same direction but not to the same degree as if the auditor were actually addressee. Speakers treat auditors as second-class addressees.

Just as interaddressee variation derives from interspeaker variation, so interauditor derives from interaddressee variation. For a variable to differ between auditors presupposes it differs between addressees and speakers. As the sharpness of interspeaker stratification is blunted in interaddressee variation, so it is weakened again when reflected in interauditor variation. In normal situations, we can expect interauditor differences not to exceed interaddressee ones, just as interaddressee differences are regularly less than interspeaker differences. However, because the lines of stratification are blurring as we move further from the speaker, we will be less surprised by exceptions where the auditor's effect is

greater than the addressee's. It is not hard to recall situations where a third person auditor is more salient to the speaker than the ostensible second person addressee.

We can hypothesize that normally (a) variables with a rather weak addressee effect – say 20–30 percent – will qualitatively lose variation altogether at the next remove, the auditor; and (b) variables with stronger addressee effect – say 50+ percent – show about half that variation as auditor effect. Quantitatively, we can postulate that there may be a geometric ordering of audience effects. That is, if the addressee effect is 0.5, then auditor effect is 0.25, and overhearer effect 0.125. This is pure supposition and would require more evidence on the auditor and, crucially, the quantitative data we lack on the overhearer effect.

5.2 *Qualitative evidence of auditor design*

The effect of the auditor on a speaker is clearer at less subtle levels of linguistic structure than microvariables. Most overt among these are the "politeness strategies" by which speakers defer to their audience. Brown and Levinson (1978:186) found that their analysis of honorifics and other politeness phenomena required the axis of "bystander." Beeman (1977) and Jahangiri (1980) indicate how audience roles operate on selections in Persian. The importance of speaker, addressee, and referent in pronoun selection is quite obvious. But the auditor/bystander can have nearly as strong an effect as the addressee. Having one's boss as auditor when addressing a close friend would always produce a "High" second person pronoun in Persian (Jahangiri 1980:240).

At a much higher level of language, Clark and Carlson (1982) propose a revision of speech act theory which relies on the need to distinguish auditors from addressees. Their basic category of "participants" covers both addressees and auditors (called "side-participants"). What is new here for the pragmatics literature is their recognition of the distinctive place of auditors in speech act design. Speakers assign roles of addressee, auditor, participants, and overhearers among audience members and design their utterances accordingly. In all except two-person interaction, how speech acts function depends crucially on the third person audience roles. Analysing a wide range of speech acts and situations, Clark and Carlson convincingly argue that audience design is "a fundamental property of utterances" (1982:342).

Where the choices span two different languages, the influence of various audience roles becomes quite evident. Many studies show that language switching is overwhelmingly influenced by who the addressee is (Fishman et al. 1971:251). In Gal's study (1979) of German–Hungarian bilingualism in Oberwart, Austria, the identity of the interlocutor was sufficient to predict a speaker's language choice. In fact, the choice of language could be used to signal who was the addressee in a group of people (Gal 1979:121) – that is, to assign the roles of addressee and auditors among audience members.

The influence of auditor on a bilingual's language choice is illustrated in two studies. Dorian (1981:79) observed the almost universal constraint in East Sutherland, Scotland that "any number of Gaelic-English bilinguals will defer linguistically to even a single English monolingual who joins them." Similarly, Gal (1979:124) noted that in Oberwart the presence of a monolingual (German) auditor always produced a switch from Hungarian to German. In both situations, deference to the auditor has repercussions for the use of the language in the community. With monolingualism increasing among household members, accommodating to a single monolingual auditor reduces geometrically the occasions for using the alternative language.

In these bilingual situations, then, the auditor's effect on language choice was as categorical as the addressee's. The cause is clear. The sharper the linguistic differences between codes, the larger the issue of intelligibility looms, the stronger are the pressures to accommodate to the audience, and hence the greater the influence of peripheral members on the speaker. Use of a language which is unintelligible to any interlocutor defines that person out of the audience. It is the ultimate in dissociative behaviour, designating the uncomprehending hearer an unrati ed eavesdropper, a nonmember, even a nonperson.

A speaker in a bilingual situation is of course bound to take account of the audience's linguistic repertoire. But having two discrete languages available rather than a continuum of styles simply throws into sharper focus the factors which operate on monolingual style shift. The social processes are continuous across all kinds of language situations. What we may loosely term the formal/informal continuum is simply expressed in different code sets in different societies: by language choice in bilingual societies, by dialect switching in diglossic situations, and by style shift in monolingual societies.

5.3 *Overhearer design*

Overhearers are persons known to be present but not ratified as participants in an interaction. As we move further out to the perimeter of the audience, the quantitative effects of interlocutors become slight or indistinguishable. But while style shift may no longer register, overhearer design can still be manifested in qualitative language choices such as politeness-marked pronoun selection, speech act design, and bilingual language switch. In section 5.2, I noted the influence of the "bystander" on the choice of honorifics within a language's politeness-marked systems. The bystander could well be an overhearer rather than an auditor, especially in Jahangiri's (1980) work, since this categorization does not distinguish the two roles.

In the same communities where we have observed the categorical effect of both addressee and auditor on language choice, there is a weakening for the overhearer. Gal (1979) and Dorian (1981) record from their communities two identical incidents with opposite results.²² In Oberwart, a group of bilinguals at an inn switched from Hungarian to German when overhearers at a nearby table

requested it (Gal 1979:166). In East Sutherland, a group of bilinguals in a bar *refused* a similar request to switch from Gaelic to English (Dorian 1981:80).

Clark and Carlson (1982) recognize the influence of overhearers on speech act design. Overhearers are important for the interpretation they may put on a speaker's utterances. Speakers may wish to ensure that overhearers rightly understand what is being said or, alternatively, that the overhearers misinterpret the utterance. We can distinguish two types of overhearer: acquainted overhearers (those a speaker knows personally, for whom the speaker may specifically design an utterance) and unacquainted overhearers (for example, co-travellers in a bus, fellow patients in a waiting room, other diners in a restaurant).

Overhearer design clearly influences a speaker's style, although it is evident at macrolevels of language rather than in the quantitative shift of microvariables. The complex and often conflicting web of audience roles is nowhere more evident than in mass communication (Bell 1977:127). A mass media audience consists of addressees (the target audience), auditors (who are not targeted but are known to be receivers), and overhearers (who are effectively the entire remaining population, since a mass medium is defined by its general availability). Mass communication inverts the normal hierarchy of audience roles (Figure 5). In programmes with more than one participant (e.g., interviews), the mass auditors are likely to be more important to a communicator than the immediate addressees. Rather than invalidating the addressee-auditor-overhearer hierarchy, however, it is precisely this reordering that is the site of mass communicators' difficulties in designing their utterances. Particularly in a medium as accessible as broadcasting, the speaker/announcer must cater to an unknowable, heterogeneous audience, which includes two especially demanding auditor groups: station management and politicians or other public figures (cf. Goffman [1981] on radio talk).

One example will illustrate the difficulties of designing utterances for a mass audience. During the 1976 U.S. presidential campaign, Jimmy Carter gave an interview to Robert Scheer of *Playboy* magazine. As an addendum while he was leaving after the interview, Carter departed from his deliberate interview style to make remarks on lustfulness, using terms such as *screw* and *shack up with*. These remarks upset many of Carter's supporters and won the interview a certain notoriety.

Solomon (1978) analyses the interview in the light of its repercussions. She concludes that the change in Carter's style was acceptable in the immediate context of the interview with Scheer, but violated his relationship to the wider audience. Our recognition of different audience roles locates the site of the conflict. Carter's immediate addressee was the interviewer, Scheer. Beyond that lay the usual readership of the magazine – effectively, auditors of the interview (cf. Clark & Carlson's [1982] public side-participants). Carter designed his utterances adequately for these closer audience members. But beyond these people were the overhearers: for a mass circulation magazine, especially in

election year, virtually the entire nation. Many overhearers considered Carter's remarks unfitting for a presidential candidate. That is, he failed in his overhearer design.

Still more deeply offended were a group we might justifiably label "eavesdroppers": behaviourally conservative, religious supporters of Carter who would usually not even see *Playboy*. Many were probably offended on the evidence of second- or third-hand hearsay. Some doubtless felt Carter should not have talked to *Playboy* in the first place. Carter might reasonably have designated these people eavesdroppers, defining them out of his audience. But the accessibility of media makes such eavesdropping legitimate. Consider that it is not the eavesdroppers who are embarrassed at their disclosure, but Carter. Their participation is ratified but unanticipated.²³ They are, therefore, unexpected overhearers, but the communicator was responsible to design his utterances for them, too.

Carter was doubtless also subjected to what Davison (1983:3) calls the "3rd-person effect": "People will tend to overestimate the influence that mass communications have on the attitudes and behavior of others." People might deny being upset themselves by Carter's remarks, but feel that other people out there had been offended. Davison's supposition is surely right that skilled public communicators use this presumption to influence the actions not of their addressees but of such auditors and overhearers as decision makers and the public.

6. NONAUDIENCE STYLE DESIGN

I have concentrated thus far only on the effect of the audience on a speaker's style, to the exclusion of nonpersonal factors. This emphasis has been deliberate, since the evidence convinces me that we must hold audience design as primary. There can be no doubt, however, that other, nonpersonal factors do influence style shift. I will argue here that the direction and strength of style shift caused by these factors originate in their derivation from audience-designed shift.

6.1 *Setting and topic design*

The taxonomies of situational influences on style in, for example, Hymes (1974) and Brown and Fraser (1979) are a range where researchers can browse assured that all the likely variables are found there. Hymes's pioneer survey assembles sixteen components of speech situations. Under the general heading of "scene," Brown and Fraser assemble the category of setting and its components, locale and time (and bystanders); and under "purpose," activity type (goals, roles) and subject matter (task, topic). While the taxonomists differ in detail and terminology, there is remarkable unanimity on the two main nonaudience factors in the speech situation: *topic* and *setting*.

Much of the writing on situational factors is discursive rather than data oriented, but there is a little hard evidence of the effect of topic and setting on style shift. In their research on the bidialectal community of Hemnesberget, Norway,

TABLE 6. *Percentage of shift in travel assistant's speech according to change of topic (work to nonwork) and change of addressee (highest to lowest class)*

	(h) dropping	(r) flap vs. continuant	Consonant cluster reduction	Intervocalic (t) voicing
Topic effect	25	4	25	31
Addressee effect	32	28	37	55

Source: Derived from Coupland 1981:154, 188.

Blom and Gumperz (1972:429) found that a change in topic could trigger a switch from local to standard dialect. In work on the accommodation model, Giles and Powesland (1975:127) report manipulating a change in topic to produce an accent shift.

Both Coupland and Douglas-Cowie quantified shift according to topic as well as addressee. In the travel assistant's conversations with her co-workers, Coupland (1981:154) separated speech on work-related topics (Context II) from other topics (Context I). The assistant shifted her style significantly between these different topics with the same addressees (Table 6). Douglas-Cowie (1978:45,46) compared several informants' general speech with their styles in short stretches of the interview discussing their education or occupation. The change in topic produced style shifts in some linguistic variables of up to 34 percent for some speakers.

Similarly clear evidence on the effect of setting is not so readily available, probably because systematic changes in setting are (a) harder to organize than for topic, and (b) likely to co-occur with other changes. Hindle (1979) analysed one person's speech in the three settings of home, office, and a game of bridge. The different settings were often associated with different values of the vowel variables, but did not order on the obvious formal-informal hierarchy. The Home and Game settings were regularly at opposite ends, with the supposedly most formal Office setting in between. While Hindle warns that the variation cannot be accounted for on a simple dimension, he concludes that "The shifts in CM's speech can be largely explained as evidence that she adjusts her speech to be more like the people she is talking to" (1979:171).

6.2 *Quantitative and qualitative relations*

My hypothesis is that style shift according to nonpersonal factors derives from audience design. If this is correct, we can expect that certain relations will hold for the linguistic variables, as they did in the interspeaker and interaddressee comparison. First, variation according to topic – or setting or any other nonaudience factor in the situation – presupposes variation according to addressee. As Traugott and Romaine (1983:23) have also noted, style "will probably never correlate only with genre or channel or topic and not with participants." Com-

paring the appropriate data on topic versus addressee shift within Coupland's and Douglas-Cowie's studies shows that this is indeed the case.

Second, the relation of nonpersonal to interpersonal style shift has a quantitative as well as a qualitative aspect. We may expect, then, that the degree of topic-designed shift will not exceed audience-designed shift. The evidence is also that style shift for different audiences is more finely graded than shift for different topics.

Data for the four variables which Coupland quantifies for both topic and addressee effect are presented in Table 6. The amount of shift caused by a change in topic is always less than the assistant's shift across the six occupational classes of addressees. For grouped data such as Coupland's, the topic effect seems likely to regularly fall short of the addressee effect, but the ratio does not hold for each individual. Most of Douglas-Cowie's speakers shift more for addressee change rather than topic. However on the (ng), (ar), and (aæ) variables, her speaker H consistently shifts little for the addressee (2-9 percent) and much more (19-34 percent) for topic (Douglas-Cowie 1978:41, 42, 45). Such individual differences are, of course, common in variation research, where regularities show up in the group rather than single speakers.

Third, the influence of topic on bilingual language choice is instructive here. A number of studies have explicitly examined the relative effect of addressee, topic, setting, and so forth, on language choice. Sankoff (1980:37) concluded that the interlocutor was of primary importance. Dorian's research on English-Gaelic bilingualism remarks on how weak the topic effect was, with speakers discussing any subject in either language (1981:80). Gal (1979:124) demonstrates that no factors other than the participants influenced the choice of German or Hungarian in Oberwart. Fishman et al.'s research on Puerto Rican bilingualism in New York (1971:251) likewise established that language choice could be attributed almost entirely to interlocutors, and minimally to topic or setting.

It seems that the sharper the differences in linguistic code, the less nonaudience variables influence style shift. A monolingual may shift according to topic or setting, though less than for addressee. But a bilingual does not have the luxury of such tolerance, and switches only according to interlocutors. (We can expect, however, that bilinguals may style-shift within one or both of their languages in response to topic change.) The peripheral audience members influence bilingual language choice far more than they do monolingual style shift. Conversely, nonpersonal factors such as topic and setting which influence style shift fade to insignificance in language choice.²⁴ The relation (quantitative and qualitative) of nonpersonal to interpersonal shift is just what we would expect if the former derives from the latter.

6.3 *The derivation of nonpersonal from interpersonal style design*

The key to understanding the mechanism of nonaudience-designed shift lies in one question: What accounts for the *direction* of shift produced by certain topics,

settings, and so forth? It is well known that given topics or settings provoke speakers to style-shift in a certain direction. Thus, on the topics of education and occupation, Douglas-Cowie's speakers shifted to more standard values of the linguistic variables, while on nonwork topics, Coupland's travel assistant shifted to less standard speech. This phenomenon is so common that we forget it requires an explanation. There is, after all, no a priori reason why certain topics should consistently elicit certain styles.

The only adequate explanation of the direction of nonpersonal style shift lies in its association with, and derivation from, audience-designed shift. That is, speakers associate classes of topics or settings with classes of persons. They therefore shift style when talking on those topics or in those settings as if they were talking to addressees whom they associate with the topic or setting. Topics such as occupation or education, and settings such as office or school, cause shifts to a style suitable to address an employer or teacher. Similarly, intimate topics or a home setting elicit speech appropriate for intimate addressees – family or friends. The basis of all style shift according to nonpersonal factors lies then in audience-designed shift. If we reject this explanation, the problem of finding a plausible account for the direction of nonaudience shift remains.

It is this derivative nature that accounts for proposals to group extralinguistic variables in clusters. Fishman's domain concept is the most comprehensive proposal. Domains are socially identifiable scenes, of which Fishman (1972) suggests five to cover most interactions – family, friendship, religion, education, employment. Domains are readily characterized in my framework as the province of certain addressees, associated with typical topics and settings. Such clusters of situational factors are to be seen as centred on the addressee rather than a co-occurrence of equally important variables. It may be that the effect of topic or setting is parallel to that of third person audience members – that talking to a spouse about one's occupation is like talking to a spouse with a fellow employee as auditor. Incongruencies of addressee with setting or topic will thus operate very like incongruencies among addressee, auditor, and overhearer. Their conflicting demands may be more than a speaker can satisfy.

The multiple ambiguity of linguistic style markers, which Brown and Fraser (1979:54) see as so puzzling, is in fact the quite predictable effect of the derivation of all style shift from audience design. The essential linkage among factors which cause style shift is reflected in the impossibility of assigning a single social meaning to any isolated occurrence of a sociolinguistic variable. Again, the universality of a formal–informal continuum subsuming diverse factors derives from this common origin (Brown & Fraser 1979:45). The unity and generality of the formal–informal dimension for both participants and analysts flow easily from an audience-centred framework.

The subservience of variables such as topic to audience is nowhere clearer than in the techniques used in sociolinguistic interviews. The hidden agenda of a sociolinguistic interview is to get casual speech. If the researcher is lucky, a

subject may at some point talk to a family member rather than to the interviewer – and the change of addressee will produce a style shift to casual speech. To purposefully elicit such speech, however, the interviewer manipulates topics (e.g., Labov's famous danger-of-death question) to override the constraining presence of the interviewer-addressee. These strategies use the secondary variable of topic to simulate the conditions which produce speech to an intimate addressee. The topics chosen – for example, childhood games, personal risk (Labov 1972a:91) – are ones we would normally discuss with intimates, and the expectation is correct that they will approximate the effect of an intimate addressee. It is notable no one suggests that a change of addressee simulates the effect of a change in topic, rather than vice versa.

I do not wish to imply here that speakers are conscious of an associated addressee when style-shifting for a particular topic. The association is more abstract than that. We must continue to treat topic and setting as variables which have independent effects on style, while remembering that at base they are derivative. Breitborde notes, also stressing the centrality of the interpersonal dimension (1983:33), "At a more abstract level topic and locale may themselves be manifestations or concomitants of a person's social status." Setting and topic design derive their direction and force from audience design. As an analytical strategy, we will expect to associate topics, settings, and all nonpersonal factors with addressee types, and predict their effect on style will parallel that of such addressees.

7. INITIATIVE STYLE DESIGN

7.1 *Style as response and initiative*

Both audience and nonaudience style design is "responsive" shift – occurring in response to a change in the extralinguistic situation. So far, I have neglected the other dimension of style, the "initiative," which itself initiates a change in the situation. Sociolinguists have drawn attention to this distinction at least since Blom and Gumperz (1972) coined the terms "situational" and "metaphorical" switching.

In situational switching, there is a regular association between language and social situation. In their ground-breaking study of Hemnesberget, Norway, Blom and Gumperz observed that the entry of outsiders to a local group triggered switches from dialect to standard speech. A move from business to personal subjects caused a switch from standard to dialect. These situational switches reflect accepted norms of what is appropriate speech for certain audiences or topics. Metaphorical switches trade on such regular associations, injecting the flavour of one setting into another, alien context. So in an otherwise standard language conversation, local forms were introduced to provide anecdotal colour. Conversely, standard forms surfaced as a claim to intellectual authority during a conversation in dialect.²⁵

An especially forceful instance of initiative or metaphorical shift is the binary choice between "formal" V and "intimate" T second person pronouns. Some switches may be responsive to a change in circumstances – for example, by marriage (Friedrich 1972). Others serve to redefine a distant relationship as close, or conversely, to estrange an intimate. Friedrich has documented how constant switching between Russian *ty* and *vy* marks complex shifts of relationships among characters in nineteenth-century novels. The second person pronoun choice is a resource which draws strength from its unmarked usages.

Any theory of style must encompass initiative shift. Both Hindle (1979) and Coupland (1981) found that not all style shift in their data could be attributed to extralinguistic factors. Some of the shifts made by their two speakers served to redefine the nature of the interaction rather than to respond to a different situation. The shifts marked a change in the speaker's attitude to what she was saying and to her addressee. Hindle uses Hymes's term "key" to sort these kinds of shifts into a number of categories such as "businesslike," "complaint," and "excited."

Sociolinguists have been criticized for a tendency to treat style as a passive reaction by speakers to factors in the situation. Giles (e.g., 1980) disputes the view – which he associates with Labov's work – that a speaker is a "sociolinguistic automaton," whose speech behaviour is programmed by sociological factors with no allowance for psychological influences such as moods and loyalties. Language is to be seen not merely as a dependent variable, manipulated by nonlinguistic factors. It may be an independent variable which itself influences the situation (Thakerar et al. 1982).

Now, there is a good deal of truth in this critique of the variationist strand of sociolinguistics. Styles have been regarded as entities which could be produced by techniques for manipulating contexts. While this approach originated in methodological considerations, it has had the unfortunate effect of discouraging research on style as an object of study. Only since the late 1970s has there been large-scale quantitative work (e.g., Bell 1977; Hindle 1979; Coupland 1981) which takes style as its focus, although style bulked large in Labov's earlier work and has always been studied in the ethnographic tradition.

While the lack of focus on style has been regrettable, there is an understandable reason why sociolinguists have operated on a rather passive view of style. Their interest has been to identify linguistic variation and factors which might cause it. Study of what a change in styles does to the situation has been of more interest to sociologists, ethnographers, and social psychologists, whose primary focus is people rather than language.

7.2 *Norm and initiative*

The neglect of initiative style shift does, however, have a more principled basis. It is clear that the use of style to redefine situations draws its force from the regular association of certain styles with certain situations. Without the basis that

results from a given situation type, the style could not be that type of situation. The style derives its social value, and can only on that account serve to infuse another value (Brown & Fraser 1979:47).

Then, the marked case, which draws its force from the use of style, as Scotton (1982) demonstrates well. For this, as Traugott and Romaine's (1983) that style should be "strategic" (initiative) is destined to be unproductive. To the factors which determine style ignores the fact that initiative phenomenon, and is likely to be less enlightening as treated style as a passive thing.

Style as the norm in certain situations does not treat speakers. The active-passive distinction is a false one here. Rather, in the framework I have developed, speakers are *responsive* to the situation. It is common that people attempt to deal amicably with each other, and that linguistically by style convergence, this should not be seen as a sign of manipulation. It is one person's response to another. Speakers generally spend more time responding to others than taking

initiative. Initiative distinction is a continuum rather than a dichotomy. Initiative is an element of speaker initiative; initiative invariably is in response to the audience. There are situations where speakers are highly responsive. Correct performance of certain religious liturgies may require a prescribed pronunciation (Blom & Gumperz 1972:424). In such situations, the media has obvious if less codified limits. In such language situations, the social cost of shifting outside the norm is considerable. It may lead to disgrace or dismissal (cf. Goffman 1981:243). In other situations, the range of styles is much wider, but rarely is it so wide as to suggest the possibility of a speaker violating the norm, either for strategic effect.

For some speakers style is largely responsive, for others it is largely initiative. Marcell (1979) studied style shift by Hawaiian children. She found that her sample subjects differed in this way: "While Danny accommodates to the style of his addressee, shifting rapidly if he shifts addressee, Danny shifts her speech by adopting for brief stretches aspects of the style of her addressee for purposes of extending friendship, dramatic verisimilitude, and so on (1979:215). Such tendencies to responsive or initiative style are associated with different personality types.

and audience design

Style shift can be encompassed within an extended framework of audience design. It is argued that all style shift is at base a speaker's response to the situation. The speaker who takes the initiative and redefines the situation

through speech is still responding to the audience. Initiative shift is essentially a redefinition, by the speaker, of the relationship between speaker and addressee.

The baseline from which initiative shifts operate is the style normally designed for a particular kind of addressee. The style usually addressed to intimates can be used to simulate or create intimacy with a stranger. Similarly, the language usually addressed to strangers can serve to distance an intimate – for example, in a family argument. The baseline for expressing a businesslike attitude (or "key") is defined by how one normally talks to a business addressee.

A speaker's response to an addressee is normally convergent, expressed in monolingual shift towards the addressee, in a bilingual's choice of the addressee's language, and so forth. I take convergence to be the norm, and treat divergence as the exception. Divergence is in this view always an initiative shift, a reaction against the addressee. Convergence is usually responsive, but it can represent speaker initiative. Initiative convergence is always a "hyperaddressee" shift. It represents the heightened salience of the addressee, and can be manifested in hyperconvergence beyond an addressee's own style (cf. "crossover divergence" in Giles 1980).

Initiative shift is thus of two kinds: convergent or divergent (cf. Giles & Powesland 1975). Coupland (1980) observed how the travel assistant converged towards the speech of one client to mark a change in her attitude from off-hand to helpful. The shift redefines their relationship, bringing the assistant closer to the client. With a different class of addressee, the same persuasive ends may be gained through divergence. In their Hemnesberget study, Blom and Gumperz (1972) noted several occasions on which speakers switched briefly to the standard during a local-dialect conversation in order to clinch an argument. In Austria, Gal (1979:116) recorded similarly motivated switches to the high language, as did Scotton (1982) in Kenya.

There is little further hard evidence on initiative shift, but these examples suggest one pattern of how speakers use language as a resource. A speaker can persuade intimate addressees by shifting to the style or language one would normally address to strangers. With strangers the reverse tactic achieves the same effect: Speakers can persuade a stranger by shifting to the style normally reserved for intimates. Such shifts appear to be powerful just because they treat addressees as if they were someone else.

Initiative style shifts are not predictable, but they are interpretable (cf. Sankoff 1980:45). Our interpretation rests on the comparative predictability of style in other situations. The audience interprets initiative shifts in terms of what person such a style would normally be addressed to. The researcher can use the same metric to analyse the social meaning of such shifts – having first exhausted the possibilities of the shift being responsive to, rather than initiative of, a change in the situation. The attempt to find a predictive factor must precede a fall-back onto interpretation.

Initiative shifts may have their own regularity, as the parallel switches to the

standard in Hemnesberget and Oberwart show. These shifts are powerful but not surprising. Given the circumstances, they are clearly one option open to a speaker, and may to just that extent be predictable. An initiative shift which becomes too common loses the power of its marked status. It becomes predictable, a norm, even a cliché. Large-scale strategic use can presumably establish a new norm. It then becomes institutionalized, responsive rather than initiative. We may hazard that it is through just such a process that certain topics become associated with certain styles.

Since it deals with the exceptional, initiative style shift is much harder to research than responsive shift. Yet the regularities observed above suggest some interesting research questions. Does convergence win friends and divergence win arguments? Are there quantitative limits to initiative shift? Because language is doing all the work, does this lead to extreme style shifts such as hyperconvergence? How long can and should an initiative shift be sustained in face-to-face interaction? What happens when a persuasive shift fails to win the addressee? Do the interlocutors return to their former roles and styles? Do they diverge further than before?

Initiative style shift is a natural complement to audience design (Figure 10 below). While a speaker's relationship to an addressee can be redefined through speech itself, nonpersonal factors like topic and setting cannot. I argue that in a sense initiative shift is also audience designed – but away from the audience. Moreover, it is addressee designed, at least in face-to-face interaction. The weight which initiative shift has to carry does not permit speakers to dissipate it on auditors and overhearers.

8. REFEREE DESIGN

I have argued that the essence of initiative style shift is to address persons as if they were someone else. Such redefinition of the addressee by the speaker may, as we have seen, involve (hyper)convergence to the addressee. But it is most obvious when a speaker diverges from the addressee and towards a third party, whom I call the "referee." **Referees are third persons not physically present at an interaction, but possessing such salience for a speaker that they influence speech even in their absence.** Referee design is complementary to audience design, and like it in treating persons as the focus of style shift.

The effect of referee design is **to make a speaker style-shift as if actually talking to the referee rather than to the addressee.** As with auditors or overhearers, we expect the shift to be in the same direction, but not necessarily of the same degree, as if the referee were addressee. So all third persons, whether absent referees or present auditors and overhearers, influence a speaker's style design in a way which echoes the effect they would have as second person addressees. The process has been formulated as a general sociolinguistic hypothesis by **Le Page (e.g., McEntegart & Le Page 1982:105): "Each individual**

creates for himself patterns of linguistic behaviour so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified."²⁷

We may examine referee design from several angles. The speaker may be a member of the referee group (ingroup) or not a member (outgroup). The referee shift may be short- or long-term. It may occur in isolated situations, or more widely across a group and its interactions with other groups. The language code may be monolingual, diglossic, or bilingual, and accordingly be affected in different ways by referee design. The shift may succeed or fail in approaching the referee's code, or in producing the desired effect on the audience.

8.1 Ingroup referee design

The division into ingroup and outgroup referees is fundamental (Figure 10). Ingroup referee design sees a speaker talking to members of an outgroup, and reacting with a shift towards the style of the speaker's own (absent) ingroup. Such a speaker takes the initiative to deliberately reject identification with the immediate addressee, and identifies instead with an external referee.²⁸ Ingroup referee design seems to require a general sociopolitical situation in which in- and outgroups and their linguistic codes are in conflict, and a set of social psychological circumstances which bring that conflict to the surface in a specific situation.

A wealth of research in the accommodation framework documents the social psychological workings of ingroup referee design (e.g., Giles 1977; Giles & Saint-Jacques 1979). If in Montreal, a bilingual uses French to an English monolingual (Giles 1980:113), or if a Welsh bilingual speaks Welsh to an English monolingual (Giles 1977:330), that is ingroup referee design.

The same divergent pattern occurs in monolingual situations, although it is less obvious and forceful than choice of an entire language which is unintelligible to the addressee. Experiments in the accommodation framework again have shown Welsh speakers of English adopting a broader Welsh accent in reaction to an RP speaker who disparaged the Welsh language (Bourhis & Giles 1977). A quantitative study which found divergent style shift as evidence of ingroup

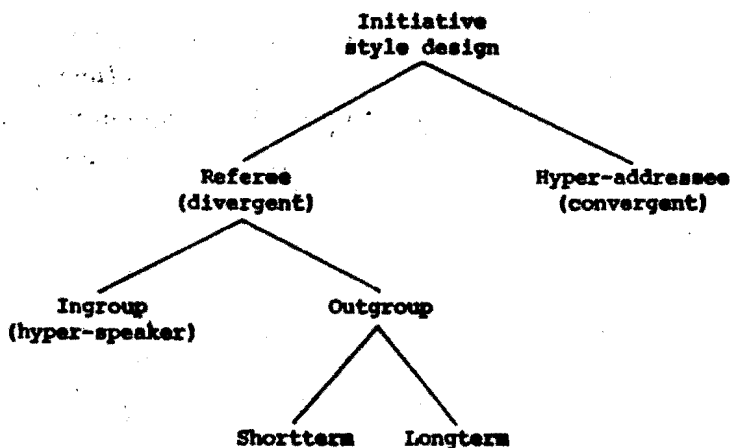


FIGURE 10: The categories of initiative style design.

referee design is Cheshire's (1982) work on the speech of adolescents in Reading, England. Certain linguistic variables proved to be markers of adherence to the peer-group, vernacular subculture. Most of the boys recorded used more standard forms with a teacher than with their peers. One boy who hated school, however, made no shift to the standard for one key variable. Another who had just returned to school after months of truancy adopted far more nonstandard forms with the teacher than otherwise. These two boys designed their style with a referee in mind. Their shift to the speech of the referee ingroup marked their dissociation from school and the teacher-addressee.

Ingroup referee shift is essentially short-lived. It represents a confrontation between interlocutors, and as such will usually have an immediate effect. Its purpose is generally not to persuade addressees to change their speech, but to challenge their use of that style or language in the first place. A successful challenge will usually spell the end to the interaction. Conversations tend not to last when one interlocutor switches to a divergent style, still less to a language that the other cannot understand. If the speaker falls back to the original language or style, the challenge has failed.

Only in constrained circumstances can divergent shift to an ingroup referee persist. In Cheshire's (1982) example, the boy presumably is not in a position to take his divergence to its desired conclusion and quit the immediate situation – although it might contribute to his skipping school again. Any extended initiative shift by one party which is not reciprocated by the other denotes and worsens a strained situation. It is a common theatrical device for her/him to adopt an intimate style (hyperconvergence) while he/she maintains distant formality. What was meant to be a quick coup becomes a long, embarrassing siege if the initiator does not admit defeat. Initiative convergence which is reciprocated by the addressee establishes a new relationship, a new norm. If it is not accepted, the speaker falls back in confusion to (or even behind) the former position and the interaction breaks off.

8.2 *Outgroup referee design*

Outgroup design is similar to ingroup in its sociopsychological processes, but rather different in its sociological structure and linguistic effects. Here, speakers lay claim to a speech and identity which are not their own but which hold prestige for them on some dimension. They diverge from the speech of their ingroup – and thus in some sense from their own “natural” speech – towards an outgroup with whom they wish to identify.

Shift towards a reference outgroup can be either short- or long-term. Short-term, a speaker makes a momentary style shift or language switch for an immediate purpose – for example, to win an argument by switching to the prestigious outgroup code. With ingroup design, speaker and addressee disagree on who the language referee should be. In outgroup design, both agree on the prestige of the

outgroup language for the purpose, and that fact makes its use powerful. But such a switch is essentially short-term: Continued use of that language would violate the norm of conversation between intimates, or in the extreme redefine the relationship as no longer intimate.

While all other initiative shifts are by nature short-lived, **outgroup referee design can be long-term, even institutionalized. Diglossia is the classic case.** In Ferguson's (1959) definition, the prestige form in diglossia is not native to any group in the speech community. Rather, it is the dialect of an external referee, distanced either by space or time. Of Ferguson's four defining cases, two locate the referee in another geographical area (France for Haitian Creole, Germany for Swiss German). In the other two cases, speakers are separated historically from their referee models: Classical Arabic and Greek are identified with an ideal state of the language used by speakers at a distant former time.

Long-term outgroup design may occur for all combinations of language varieties. **It is clearest when a community uses an entire external language for certain functions.** Printing menus in French is a minor instance of outgroup design. The code difference is blunter for creoles which fall on a post-creole continuum with the standard language as spoken by the former colonizers. Less sharply still, a community may treat the accent of a distant referee group as the prestige variety. This is the case for New Zealand English (Bell 1982c), where British RP is regarded as prestigious.

The common factor in all such situations is a general orientation – often the fruit of a colonial past – which regards the referee society as superior and its culture as desirable. This attitude has frozen the momentary phenomenon of initiative shift into a norm in which the whole speech community acknowledges the status of the referee language. Because both speakers and addressees share the same reference point, the shift to referee speech can be widespread and prolonged.

In what sense can we continue to treat long-term outgroup design as initiative rather than responsive shift? It is certainly a norm, predictable not just interpretable. It responds to changes in the situation – although significantly, diglossic shift responds to topic and setting rather than addressee. It can be used itself in initiative shift as a resource to redefine a situation.

Yet the strange phenomenon of one speech community allowing another to define its norms should alert us to expect unusual language behaviour. Long-term outgroup design is similar to short-term design in all ways except those resulting directly from the time length of the shift. It involves divergence from the addressee; convergence to an absent referee, symbolic of identification with an outgroup; agreement by both speaker and addressee on the status of the outgroup and its language; inconsistent adoption of the forms of outgroup speech (cf. Blom & Gumperz 1972:429); and absence of feedback from outgroup speakers.²⁹

8.3 *Quantifying the referee effect*

Common to all referee design is the absence of direct feedback, because referees are by definition not members of a speaker's audience. For ingroup shift, the lack of feedback is not important. The speaker is a member of the ingroup and knows its language as well as any other member. For outgroup design, however, absence of feedback has crucial consequences for a speaker's performance. The speaker has no access to the outgroup, and therefore lacks adequate models of outgroup speech. The result even in diglossia is that speakers never acquire full fluency in the High language, although they may use it regularly (Ferguson 1959). These problems are gathered by Le Page under four constraints on a speaker's referee design.

He is able to do this [adopt referee speech] only to the extent that (a) he can identify the groups (b) he has sufficient access to them and the capacity to analyse their systems (c) his motivation is positive or negative . . . (d) he is still able to modify his behaviour (McEntegart & Le Page 1982:105).

These are formidable obstacles to referee design. Before speakers' ability to modify their speech even becomes an issue, they have to overcome ignorance both of a target speech community to which they may have no access, and of a target variety which they may never have heard spoken natively. The exact conditions which obstruct successful referee design, however, also restrict the goal and mitigate the cost of failure. The more distant the referee outgroup, the less you as a speaker know their code. But happily, your audience knows the outgroup code as imperfectly as you do, and is thus unlikely to question your performance.

Where the outgroup code is widely used in a speech community, shift to the code will need to be fluent and grammatical – although even in bidialectal and diglossic communities, the shift is rarely perfect or complete. When the outgroup and its dialect are distant, attempted shift is partial and imperfect. It focusses on a few salient features in which the referee's dialect differs from the speaker's. This is, however, usually all that the situation demands. The aim of referee design is for your speech to put the audience in mind of a particular reference group. A few token shifts should successfully convince the immediate audience – although members of the referee group might remain quite unaware you were trying to imitate them (Trudgill 1983:145). When the usually absent referees surface in the immediate audience, however, there can be trouble. Platt and Weber (1984) describe how attempts by Singaporean hotel workers to adopt courteous English misfired because, to native English hearers, their intonation contradicted their words.

There is little hard evidence on short-term outgroup referee design in face-to-face interaction. By nature, such shifts remain infrequent and brief, unless other factors enter the situation. Their linguistic effect is undoubtedly similar to long-

term accommodation by a speaker who moves to a different dialect region. Even here, although the motivation is stronger and access to the code much better, the shift is still imperfect after many years' residence in another dialect region (Shockey 1984).

Because linguistic features in outgroup referee design come from another speech community and carry the weight of a speaker's claim to another identity, they may well defy any quantitative limits. Referee design usually takes a feature which is (semi)categorical in the target outgroup's dialect and tries to adopt it. Because that shift is rarely complete, the speaker turns a categorical rule of the target dialect into a variable one. Since the rule is salient for ingroup members as a marker of the outgroup dialect, those few tokens may suffice.

Short-term outgroup design may start to show long-term, quantifiable effect. Chambers (1981) documents a change in Canadian English towards a referee model. Younger speakers are beginning to front the onsets of the "Canadian raising" diphthong /aw/, which is most obviously interpreted as a shift towards the American norm. For such an explanation to be plausible requires some independent evidence that the innovators show a wider orientation towards the United States. Chambers measured his informants' attitudes to Americana, and found in particular that the young innovators claimed high exposure to American media. The link between referee design and mass media is no accident.

8.4 *Mass communication: Audience or ingroup referee design?*

In section 4.6, I identified two types of public speech situations where speakers respond to an ideal rather than an actual addressee: service encounters and mass communication. Both these situations have features of referee design. The essential characteristic of brief service encounters is lack of feedback. They give a service person no information or time to adjust to the actual addressee. "Relations of the speakers were so casual and anonymous that they may hardly have been said to have met," writes Labov (1972a:50) of his New York department store interviews. This produces a style which is potentially divergent from the speech of the actual client, but convergent to that of an ideal client – that is, a referee. But the divergence will generally be short-lived – either because the client departs in disgust, or because the service person responds to the actual addressee and begins to converge. Such brief service encounters, then, bear all the hallmarks of ingroup referee design rather than audience design.³⁰

If referee design is expressive of a speaker's identification with a certain group, it is no surprise to find that it affects the language of mass communication. A good case can be made for regarding all mass media language as referee designed. Media language shares a number of important features with ingroup referee design. Because the mass communicator is cut off from the audience, there is no effective, equal-terms feedback. As with referee design, then, the media audience is, for the communicator, unspecific: an image, an ideal, a

perceived class of persons. But as members of the same group as their audience, communicators have no problem using the ingroup's code.

All media language is initiative style design. It creates the relationship between communicator and audience, rather than responding to an existing relationship. This holds supremely for radio, where announcers rely solely on their speech to project whatever relationship they have with the audience. Their style draws its effect from the norms of who such a style is addressed to in face-to-face interaction. They use style as an expressive instrument, a declaration of identity, saying to the audience 'you and I are ingroup'.

Selting's (1983) analysis of an audience participation radio programme adeptly shows these processes at work. Against social expectation, the programme's moderator uses colloquial German, thus redefining a media situation as informal. From this base, she converges down into strong dialect to address a local lad, and up towards High German to argue with an invited expert. When she asks questions in her role as audience representative, she shifts back towards dialect. The style shifts are invariably accomplished at crucial points of an interaction, such as disagreement or hesitation by an interlocutor.

While media language shares features with ingroup referee design, it has other aspects which are radically different. By definition, referees are absent from a face-to-face interaction, so they do not hear what is said. The media audience is likewise separated from the communicator, yet it *does* receive the communication. It is "audience" in the sense I have defined it. The audience for media consists – as it does face-to-face – of addressees, auditors, overhearers, and eavesdroppers (cf. section 5.3). It is undesirable to duplicate our audience roles by describing these as four graded referee roles (auditor-referees, etc.).³¹ We recognize that the peculiar nature of mass communication gives the media audience referee-like characteristics, but maintain that the common ground with face-to-face audience is greater.

Ingroup referee design is always short-term, and arises in a conflict between speaker and addressee. Media speech is undoubtedly ingroup designed, but it is long-term, and represents solidarity of communicator and audience. Media style has to carry the continued weight of declaring an ingroup identity. It must therefore be sustained, not temporary. It becomes institutionalized and hence largely predictable.

The responsive aspect of media style design is apparent when we compare how communicators address different audiences. In Bell (1982b), I presented data on a number of variables analysed in the news language of New Zealand radio stations. The graph in Figure 11 represents consonant cluster reduction on seven stations. The fine but consistent grading ($N = 3317$) of the stations coincides exactly with the relative status of their audiences. The higher the audience status, the lower the degree of cluster reduction. Further, it proved impossible to establish any correlation between individual newscasters' characteristics and their linguistic performance. In most cases, one can predict for which station a news-

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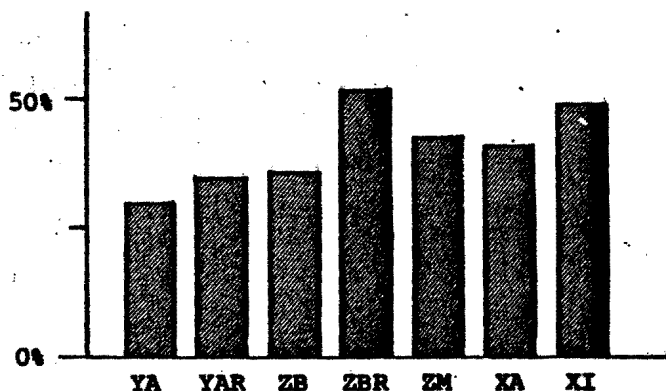


FIGURE II: Consonant cluster reduction on seven New Zealand radio stations (from Bell 1982b:161).

caster is broadcasting just from the style used. The communicators have submerged their own individual speech styles in their response to audience differences – as we may presume Coupland's travel assistant and her colleagues did.

We can consider the “expressive” function of language as oriented to the speaker and the “directive” function oriented to the addressee. Mass communication is paradoxically high on both functions at once. This results from a paradox at the heart of all mass communication: the simultaneous omnipotence and helplessness of the audience.

The responsive dimension of communicators' language reflects the power of the audience to switch off and reject a station. Communicators need to persuade their audiences, because media live by the size and composition of their audience. They are in this sense slaves to the audience – overtly so when a music star is required to replay at concert after concert popular songs that the audience *will* hear but the musician wants to leave behind.

On the other hand, the initiative dimension of communicators' language reflects the audience's helplessness. Audience power becomes effective only if exercised en masse, which the individual media consumer is unable to influence. Communicators hold the initiative to express themselves, and the audience has no adequate channel for feedback.

The paradox is resolved when we see that communicators persuade by using language as an expression of shared identity with the audience. The persuasion operates through its ability to go under the guise of expression. Ideally, the audience will regard a mass medium as its voice. The best communicators (and leaders) thus make the people's voice their own, and their voice the people's.

8.5 *Outgroup referees in mass communication*

Although most media language is best treated as subject to regular audience design, there remain certain instances which are clearly outgroup referee design. One of the most obvious is where speakers of one dialect imitate another dialect

which has prestige in some area of media culture. Trudgill (1983) analyses the ways in which British pop singers have tried to adopt an American accent in their recordings. Using rather high values of such salient American features as postvocalic /r/ or the flapping of intervocalic /t/ reflects the prestige of the United States in popular music.

The Americanization of British rock lyrics bears all the linguistic hallmarks of outgroup referee design. The model is external to Britain and is therefore imperfectly grasped. In spite of the highly focussed and motivated mass communication situation, mistakes and hypercorrections plague British singers' attempts to sound American. But as we have seen, referee design need not be accurate to be successful. While they might not convince an American, these token shifts are nevertheless sufficient to evoke the model for the home audience. And if the singers are lucky, the imitation will be bad enough for Americans not to even realize someone was trying to sound like them. This imperfect execution of referee design, rather than being lamentable, may be a highly successful strategy, catering simultaneously to both sides of the Atlantic.

Trudgill's use of Le Page's hypothesis and its riders (e.g., McEntegart & Le Page 1982) makes it clear that identification of and access to the model group are crucial to accurate referee design. The further away one is from a referee, the vaguer one is – and can afford to be – about who the referees really are and how they talk. For Scandinavian and German rock bands, "English" as a language is a sufficiently specific target. For non-American, English-speaking singers, "American English" is close enough – even though the mainstream accents they aim at are not those of the real referee group. Americans themselves have to narrow the target further – to the southern and black singers who are at the source of many music styles (Trudgill 1983).

Referee design in the media can affect all levels of linguistic codes – languages, dialects, or a few features. In New Zealand, national broadcasters tend to use a near-RP accent, for which the referee model is the BBC World Service (Bell 1982c). This particular shift is interestingly more accurate than are the British pop singers. New Zealand culture bears a very general orientation towards Britain, and New Zealanders have a lot of exposure to RP. It may well be that a speech community with comparatively less internal social or linguistic stratification regularly looks beyond itself for stylistic resources (cf. Sankoff 1980). Language attitude research (Huygens 1979) indicates that RP is held to be part of the New Zealand speech continuum – in a way that American English is certainly not in Britain. Greater access to the model by communicators and their audience both receives and requires a far better approximation of referee speech.

Outgroup referee design is divergent from the audience's own speech, but it is a divergence on which communicator and audience agree. New Zealand audience and communicators both identify "British" as their model of how news should be read, just as British singers and audiences hold "Americans" as their common referee. Such shifts in media language are therefore long-term (al-

though occurring only in certain of an individual's speech functions), and are sustained enough to become institutionalized as a virtual norm. It is almost predictable that rock music should attempt to sound American, and prestige broadcasting in New Zealand use RP. This makes a shift back to local dialect – which Trudgill (1983) shows occurring in British punk music – a peculiarly inverted initiative design. It moves from the external referee to reclaim identity with the addressee, in this case the British working class.

This last case exemplifies a shift from referee back to audience design. In Bell (1982a), I document a change to referee design in the British popular press. The rule of determiner deletion in name appositions – by which expressions such as *the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher* become *Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher* – is almost unique to news media language. Application of this rule is semicategorical in American news English, but virtually nonoccurring in prestige British media such as television news or *The Times*. The popular British press, however, has gradually shifted to the American norm of high deletion. The *Daily Mirror* moved from categorical nondelation of determiners in 1920 to 15 percent in 1940, 64 percent in 1960, and 94 percent in 1980.

The same rule demonstrates that it is possible for media language to reorientate from one external referee to another (Bell 1982c). In Figure 12, it is shown how, in the six years 1974–80, New Zealand radio stations moved from low to mid or high levels of determiner deletion. This represents a change of referees: away from a British model of low deletion and towards an American, high-deleting model. (New Zealand editors openly characterize determiner deletion as an American practice.) The shift, which reflects a wider reorientation of New Zea-

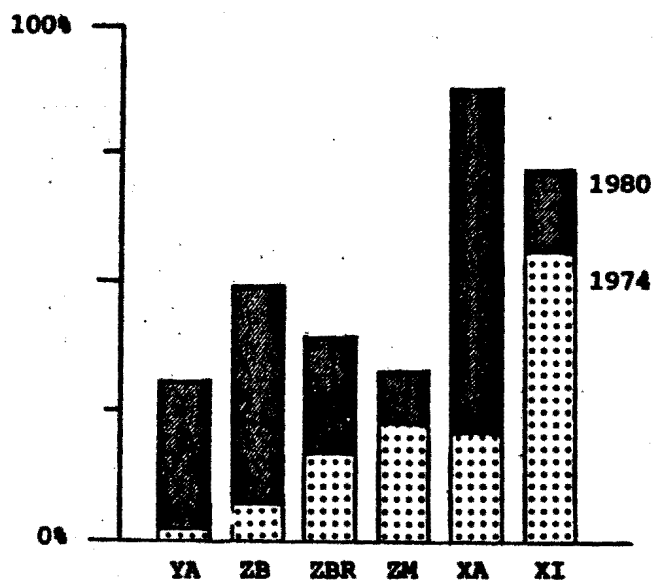


FIGURE 12: From one referee to another: shift from low towards high determiner deletion on six New Zealand radio stations, 1974–1980 (from Bell 1982c: 252).

land culture towards the United States, is being led by rock music stations (e.g., XA in Figure 12) whose programming is avowedly based on American models.

The accumulated evidence is strong that Le Page's hypothesis holds for style design in media language: "The individual positions himself in relation to his models" (1980:14). This can be a deliberate process in the preparation of some media content. In Bell (1984), I show how news copy editors manipulate the frequency of application of variable rules towards target probabilities designed for their news audience. Since the prestige media in New Zealand lean towards the British model of low determiner deletion, they have to reinsert most of the determiners deleted in copy which they receive from overseas news agencies.

Outgroup referee design introduces the alien variant or rule to ingroup language. Rules such as /t/ flapping and determiner deletion are salient features of American English, and can function as tokens of identification with America in media content where the United States has prestige. The pressure to identify with an outgroup referee can be strong enough to make singers totally suppress the variants they still naturally use in speech. The referee is thus able to outweigh all audience effects, and even the speaker's own dialect, on a limited number of variables.

9. CONCLUSION

Drawing together the responsive and initiative axes of style, and the audience, nonaudience, and referee categories which are their main divisions, we can sketch an extended framework of audience plus referee design as in Figure 13.

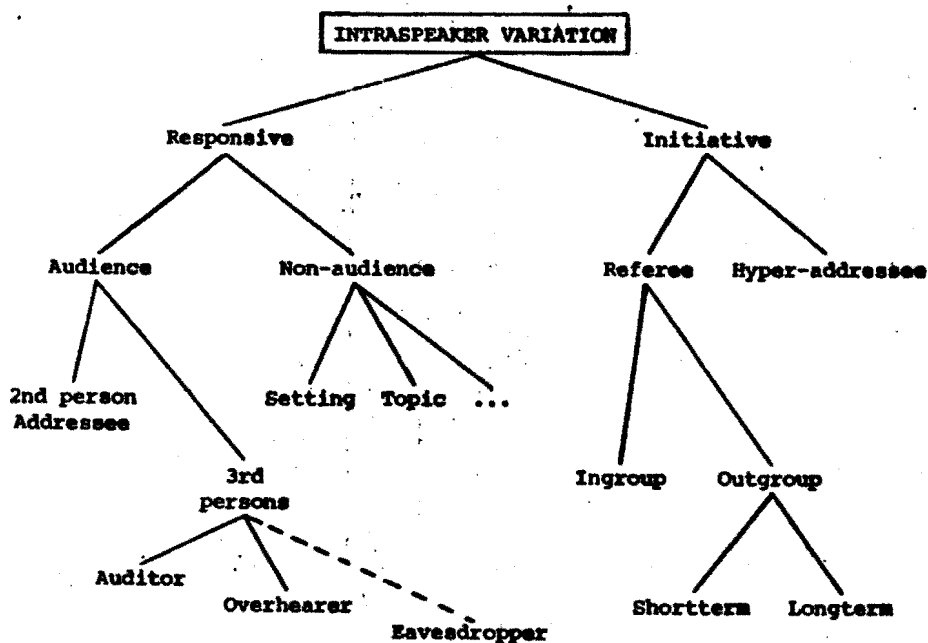


FIGURE 13: Style as response and initiative: Audience Design and Referee Design.

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Such a model reconciles the responsive and initiative dimensions. It treats the one as designed primarily towards the present audience, and the other as diverging from that audience and towards the speech of absent referees. Regarding style as essentially audience design makes sense of a wealth of data which would otherwise be unrelated to any sociolinguistic theory. It also opens up areas of enquiry where we have scarcely begun to gather evidence, such as:

The ratio of social to stylistic variation. Is the quantitative relationship as regular as claimed in the style axiom? Are there other speech communities where, like Tehran Persian, style massively outweighs social differentiation? What is the nature of such communities?

Quantification of accommodation to the addressee in all kinds of speech situations. How far can and do speakers usually accommodate? How far do they converge to their addressee? Do speakers attempt to match addressees' levels of individual linguistic variables? How do the styles elicited in a sociolinguistic interview compare quantitatively with style shift in response to varied addressees?

Controlled but nonartificial studies of the relative effects of different audience members. Is there a geometric ordering of the effects of addressee, auditor, and overhearer corresponding to their role distance from the speaker? What degree of variation in addressee design is needed for a variable to shift in auditor design? Why do some variables show only interspeaker variation, others interaddressee as well, and others also interauditor?

Initiative style design. What degree of shift is necessary in initiative design? Does it exceed or fall short of shift in the norm situation from which it derives its effect?

Detailed linguistic and sociopsychological research on all dimensions of referee design. Does all linguistic divergence result from referee design? What are the limits of shifts towards a referee's speech? Are hearers convinced by a speaker's imperfect shifts towards an outgroup code? What happens when the referee becomes a face-to-face addressee?

Mass communication and institutional settings. Should mass communication be described as audience or referee design? How does a service person shift from accommodating to an ideal referee-client towards the actual addressee-client?

Answers to such questions will doubtless modify the audience design framework proposed here. But the basic tenet should be confirmed – that at all levels of language variability, people are responding primarily to other people. Speakers are designing their style for their audience.

NOTES

* Parts of this paper were presented at the University of Pennsylvania, 1981; Sociolinguistics Symposium, University of Sheffield, 1982; and to a responsive and stimulating audience at the Washington Linguistics Club, 1982. After a preliminary draft (1974), I entitled early versions of this paper "Style – the neglected dimension." Recent work (e.g., Hindle 1979; Coupland 1981) has

happily reduced that neglect and invalidated the title. I owe special thanks to Ralph Fasold, William Labov, and Peter Trudgill for their specific comments and continued encouragement. Nikolas Coupland, Howard Giles, Dell Hymes, Gillian Sankoff, Deborah Tannen, Walt Wolfram, and Malcah Yaeger made helpful suggestions. None of these bears negative responsibility for what appears here. Thanks to the Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C., for its welcome in 1981-82. I am grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for financial support in 1982 and for the hospitality of the Department of Linguistic Science, University of Reading, England, during my year as Leverhulme Visiting Fellow.

1. The focus of my original study was an attempt to explain style differences in the language of mass communication (Bell 1977), and is reflected here in many examples and perspectives. Although the unusual nature of mass communication makes the social processes different in degree, the factors which affect media language style remain similar in kind to those which operate in one-to-one interaction. Mass communication in fact sharpens certain phenomena which are present but not obvious in everyday conversation.
2. But note that more recent work by, for example, Trudgill (1981) and Coupland (1981) has looked at stylistic variation in detail, ignoring or explicitly rejecting the variable of attention. We return to this research below.
3. Figures in Table 1 for (dh) are from Labov (1972a: Figure 3.2), summing the results of all three interviews with the subject. For (th) in Table 2, I have not succeeded in obtaining the original data. Mahl (1972: Table 2) presents figures for (th) and (dh) combined. Labov graphs (dh) only. Their presentations do, however, allow us to calculate estimations of what the data for (th) by itself would be. While the absolute figures in my Table 2 are therefore estimates only, different estimates vary all the figures together in a consistent direction, and by a maximum 6 percent. The direction and degree of shift between conditions is thus fairly indicated in Table 2, unaffected by any discrepancy between these estimates and the actual figures.
4. Labov (personal communication) has suggested this (cf. Chambers & Trudgill 1980:70). Romaine (1980) and others have pointed out that we cannot a priori assume ad lib speech and reading are on the same dimension. At least in some communities, they appear to be two different types of speech behaviour. Some speakers' reading skills may also mean that reading a continuous passage aloud requires more attention than word lists (Milroy & Milroy 1977).
5. In this respect, attention is like another factor which has been proposed as *the* variable which correlates with style shift: tempo (e.g., Bailey 1973:127). There is doubtless some correlation of fast tempo with informal style, and slow tempo with formal style. But, as Hasegawa (1979) has shown, there is no consistent relationship between tempo and style. In any case, insofar as socially meaningful styles result from tempo differences, tempo is itself the result of social factors which would still remain to be identified.
6. The labels "interspeaker" and "intraspeaker" are preferable to "social" and "stylistic," since the style dimension may also be correlated with the social attributes of persons (addressees). However, I continue occasional use of the latter terms because of their general currency. Another point of terminology: It is clearly better to describe the ends of the style continuum as "formal" and "informal," rather than using terms such as "careful" and "casual" which have their basis in attention.
7. I have examined all accessible published and unpublished research 1966-82, analysing some 150 sociolinguistic variables in a wide variety of communities (cf. Bell 1977:52). When the social spread of a sample approaches that of the speech community from which it is drawn, and a wide range of styles is elicited, the maximum style shift by any social group does not exceed the difference between the two most divergent social groups in any one style. Usually the bottom social class style-shifts most, and the bottom and topmost classes in casual style differ most. One could equally well use individual rather than group data, since the greater range of some individuals' shift is matched by greater divergence between individuals. Note that even a shift to the highly artificial word-list and minimal-pair styles stays within these limits (with one exception: (t) in Trudgill 1974).
8. Romaine (1982:266) cites Fishman, Cooper, Ma, et al. (1971) as a study with what she calls "Type 2 indicators" - my hyperstyle variables. Certainly this research shows that the Spanish variables in the New York Puerto Rican group studied have a wide style range but little interspeaker differentiation. However, this merely reflects the avowedly narrow social range of the sample - which is overwhelmingly lower class (Fishman et al. 1971:479) - when contrasted with a full style range from casual speech to word lists. Studies which show style but not social variation are

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invariably based on a socially narrow sample. Much recent variation research samples, for specific purposes, a far narrower style or social range than the initial community-wide studies of Labov (1966), Trudgill (1974), and so on.

9. The speaker's part can be broken down into several roles, for instance, Hymes's sender and addressor (1974:56). Goffman's division is finer (1981:144): the principal or originating source of a communication; the author or strategist who assembles the message; and the animator, the sounding box emitting the utterances. Goffman characterizes these as the "production format" of an utterance, describing a speaker's footing towards what she or he is saying. Changes in a speaker's footing, or alignment to one's own utterance, may explain some style shifts which occur without change in audience. Hymes's notion of "key" – a speaker's attitude to self and utterance – is similar. The need to make at least these three divisions of the first person is most obvious in mass communication (Bell 1977:93). An originating station is principal; scriptwriters and editors are (subgroups of) authors; actors, announcers, and so on, are animators. Analysis of first-person roles and linguistic variation does not concern us in this paper.

10. In dividing up audience roles, I originally distinguished only addressees and others (labelled "overhearers" in Bell 1982b). Goffman (1981:131) draws distinctions of footing among addressed and unaddressed recipients and overhearers (including eavesdroppers). The label "audience design" draws on Clark and Carlson (1982) and on Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's "recipient design" (1974). The term "design" is not here intended to imply that speakers are conscious of the linguistic particulars of style shift, or even of the fact that they are shifting at all.

11. In concentrating on approval seeking as a reason for style shift, accommodation theory has often overlooked a more transparent motivation: a speaker's desire to be understood (but cf. Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire 1982). Where widely different accents come into contact, one or both parties will be under strong pressure to converge for the sake of mere intelligibility (Shockey 1984).

12. The data relevant to my purposes here are not necessarily the main findings of the studies cited. I have reinterpreted their data in the light of audience design. In some cases, I have calculated further sets of figures from the authors' presented data. I owe thanks to Nik Coupland and Nader Jahangiri for permission to use their unpublished dissertations.

13. It is interesting to compare Trudgill's shift towards different addressees for the (t) variable with his informants' shift across elicited styles. His line of shift – reproduced in Figure 7 – matches closely the working classes' shift from casual to word-list styles (Trudgill 1974:96). This offers a unique comparison between the styles elicited by sociolinguistic interview techniques and those evoked by a range of addressees. The near fit seems a validation of the techniques. Artificial styles like word lists may have analogues in everyday conversation, that is, when addressing a high-status interlocutor.

14. The issue of long-term accommodation is beyond the scope of this paper, but its relation to short-term accommodation in individual situations is enlightening. Payne (1980) and Trudgill (1981) examine the extent to which children who move to a different dialect area succeed in adopting the new dialect. It transpires that children can acquire most of the new dialect forms within months, but may never master complex phonological conditioning unless exposed to it from the start. Adults have only a limited ability to accommodate long-term (e.g., Shockey 1984). The accommodative skills of child and adult are complementary. Children are capable of near-complete long-term accommodation up to about eight to ten years, but are unable to perform short-term shifts in response to immediate changing situations. As children gain the adult ability to make short-term shifts, they are losing their capacity for wholesale accommodation. The complementary distribution of the two skills is no accident.

15. In fact, Trudgill does shift about 15 percent from lowest- to highest-status addressee (1981:227). Even this matches a small style shift by the informants – some 25 percent in the same direction from casual to word-list styles (Trudgill 1974:98).

16. If the basis of style shift is addressee design, then the question of shift by upper class speakers becomes an issue. Everyone else is shifting towards them, but who can they be said to be shifting towards in formal speech? One answer could be that their shift is analogous, responding to the tendency in the rest of the speech community. In practice, however, there is only a handful of individuals who have no one above them in a given society. And it is striking how often these people, and others less elite, do find other speakers to shift towards, and opt for the code of an outgroup to express their status in their own society. This is common in diglossia and in colonial and excolonial situations, where the external imperial language is used by a nation's elite. It has its historical

parallels in Europe in the widespread use of French in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially as the language of the Russian upper class.

17. Note that the variable of a speaker's social network (Milroy 1980) is one of relationship. Its power lies in effectively bridging the gap between first and second persons. Network analysis incorporates information about the speaker's usual addressees into the description of a speaker's attributes. Such analysis formalizes the observation that people tend to talk like those they talk to.

18. If the actual client is beyond the institution's normal social range, service persons' ability to converge may be overstretched or they may even diverge as a mark of disapproval – as anyone who has been intimidated by a superior waiter can testify. "House style" probably sets limits to the amount a service person will accommodate to a deviant client. Coupland's travel assistant used a maximum 35 percent (h)-dropping to clients, although she shifted to 85 percent in other situations (1980:7). She presumably feels that substantial use of this stigmatized variable is inappropriate even to the lowest-status clients, who themselves (h)-drop up to 89 percent (Coupland 1984: Figure 1).

19. Bickerton does not, in the Peer Group plus Investigator (IP) condition, separate speech which Sailor addressed to group members from speech addressed to the auditor-investigator. The auditor figures therefore doubtless include some speech in which the investigator was addressee, not auditor. We can assume that (a) the investigator kept a low profile and was not often addressee; (b) Sailor did, however, address a small proportion of speech directly to the investigator; and therefore (c) the top row of Table 4 slightly overstates the auditor effect, since the figures also include some addressee-designed speech. This caution applies more strongly to Thelander's data below. In Thelander's "B-situation," the stranger appears to have been a quite active participant. The supposed auditor effect is thus contaminated and weighted by addressee influence, which explains why the "auditor" effect exceeds the addressee for two variables, THEY and SC (Thelander 1982:71).

20. There is good evidence that family and friend situations do not necessarily produce similar "informal" speech. The attempt to juggle an appropriate style of speech before a disparate audience composed of both family and peers is an all too familiar source of strain. Bickerton's data reflect this conflict. Hindle's work (1979) shows how for his subject, the family and peer group settings usually produce very different vowel values, while the supposedly formal office setting lies between the two familiar settings. As well as distinguishing the status and relationship dimensions of interpersonal speech, we need to differentiate "given" (family) relationships from "chosen" (peers).

21. In Experiment Two (b), the other local person of course is auditor. Her presence should inhibit the extent of the speaker's shift towards the outside addressee. This accounts for Speaker C showing an addressee effect (22 percent) for (ng), which only just exceeds the auditor effect of 18 percent (Table 5).

22. I am indebted to Ralph Fasold for these examples.

23. Note that in mass communication, audience attributes are different from the known/ratified/addressed scale for face-to-face interaction (Table 3). In mass communication, all receivers are ratified, but none is known. Audience roles therefore have to be distinguished in terms of the communicators' expectations: the target audience who is addressed, the auditors who are catered to, the overhearers who are not expected to be present in the audience, and the eavesdroppers who are expected to be absent from the audience.

24. One interesting case where topic change was associated with language switch is in Ervin-Tripp's study (1973:254) of Japanese-American bilinguals. The informants discussed, in both Japanese and English, topics associated with their former life in Japan or present life in America. The topics were exclusively identified with one or the other speech community and its language, and informants had difficulty discussing the "Japanese" topics in English.

25. Situational and metaphorical switching are generally interpreted to equal "responsive" and "initiative" respectively in my terms (e.g., Brown & Fraser 1979; Hindle 1979). However, Blom and Gumperz's own distinction is confusing (cf. Breitborde 1983). They describe situational switch as the norm and metaphorical as trading on that norm (1972:425), and most of their analysis follows that division. But their examples of situational switching include the move from formal lecture to open discussion, where the dialect switch is largely the cause of the change in situation and not its effect. And in an example of metaphorical switching, dialect shifts within a conversation resulted from changes of topic from official to family affairs.

26. This view of style as response fits well with frameworks of interpersonal behaviour such as Lakoff's (1973) rules of politeness. It also accords entirely with the approach of such observers of

humanity and communication as the literary critic and lay theologian, C. S. Lewis: "Our highest activity must be response, not initiative" (quoted in Lindvall 1980:360).

27. Le Page means his "law" to have a very wide validity for linguistic structure. While the case is overstated, his emphasis on the self-expressive function of language is helpful, treating every utterance as "an act of identity towards an audience" (1980:13). This view takes referees as the basic term; and addressees, auditors, and overhearers can simply be seen as referees who happen to be physically present. All style shift would then be referee design, with the speaker allocating the role of the referee to an audience member, usually the addressee. However, such a proposal can handle the lesser influences of auditor and overhearer only by positing a hierarchy of referee roles with weakening effects. This simply duplicates the roles already required to describe the audience. It is more economical to take the addressee as basic, and derive all other, third person effects from it. I treat the effect of referees, auditors, and overhearers as a reflection of the influence they would have if they were actually being addressed.

28. Just as initiative convergence represents hyperaddressee design, so ingroup referee design could be described as "hyperspeaker" shift. Since these speakers are themselves members of the reference ingroup, they may be seen as trying to be even more determinedly themselves in the face of the outgroup challenge.

29. The same reasoning applies to rhetorical styles, which also make long-term shifts towards models not present in the speech community. Such styles are regularly referee designed. They involve shifts towards an outgroup language, distanced either geographically (Sankoff 1980:10) or historically, harking back to a precedent in a probably mythical ideal state of the language (Wolfram 1981). The parallels with diglossia are striking.

30. Dell Hymes (personal communication) notes that some service people, far from accommodating to the real or ideal client, diverge towards their own absent reference group. They are likewise designing their speech for an ingroup referee, just as do converging service people. But divergers define their ingroup as separate from the clients', while convergers identify with the client ingroup.

31. Note that in mass communication it is impossible to locate specific addressees. There is no one of whom we can say 'the communicator addressed that person'. The communicator doubtless has a particular kind of receiver in mind. Audience surveys can estimate who the actual receivers are. But because mass communication is a fractured interaction, we can identify actual addressees only post hoc by reference back to who communicators intended to address. The addressee in mass communication is therefore an ideal image in precisely the referee sense.

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