Sociolinguistic Variation

Data, Theory, and Analysis

Selected Papers from NWAV 23 at Stanford

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There were also twenty-two poster papers, presented in one extended afternoon session on Saturday October 22. Two of these – the papers by Heisler and by DuBois – appear in this volume. Finally, there were three plenary evening sessions. One featured a talk by Marcyliena Morgan on "Gender, Speaker Agency and Context in Sociolinguistic Analysis." Another included a panel discussion of the topic "What can Sociolinguistics Offer the Schools?" with presentations by Arnetha Ball, Kenji Hakuta, Geneva Smitherman, Guadalupe Valdes, and Walt Wolfram. And the third included a panel on the topic, "Analyzing Variation above the level of Phonology," with presentations by William Labov, Gillian Sankoff and Donald Winford (whose paper is included in this volume). At the conclusion of the "Analyzing Variation" panel, Bill Labov was honored for his contributions to sociolinguistics and variation theory, and the manuscript of the festschrift in his honor (see Guy, Baugh, Feagin and Schiffrin, forthcoming) was presented to him by Gregory Guy, who also articulated our collective gratitude and admiration.

The publication of this volume of thirty-three selected papers from NWAV-23 is in keeping with a tradition which was established by the earliest NWAV meetings (see Bailey and Shuy 1973, Shuy and Bailey 1974; Fasold and Shuy 1975; Fasold and Shuy 1977; Shuy and Shnukal 1980). This tradition was continued only sporadically thereafter (see Sankoff and Cedergren 1981, Sankoff 1986, Denning et al 1987, Ferrara et al 1988, Fasold and Schiffrin 1989, Eckert 1991), in part because NWAV organizers did not have the fine facilities of Georgetown University Press as accessible to them, and in part because of the establishment, in 1989, of a journal devoted specifically to variationist concerns: Language Variation and Change [LVC]. However, many of us feel that while LVC should continue to serve as an outlet for revised versions of papers presented at annual meetings, this does not obviate the need for volumes of selected papers from the annual meetings, themselves edited and revised. The value of the edited proceedings is that they allow more papers to reach an audience beyond the conference setting, and in a context which is more representative of the issues which dominate each annual meeting.

It is interesting, for instance, to compare the subsections of this volume with those in the principal volume from NWAV-1 (Bailey and Shuy 1973), held twenty-four years ago. (Of course, a more detailed comparison would have to consider also Shuy and Bailey 1974, which included some of the papers from NWAV-1 as well as papers from the eighth Southeast Conference in Linguistics, held simultaneously with NWAV-1.) As Table 1 shows, a major focus of the earlier meeting and volume was variable rules and grammatical squishes, topics which receive little attention these days (see Fasold 1991). Other topics which now seem relatively dated (although to say this is not to deny their

analytical relevance) are implicational scales, panlectal grammars and the earlier-later predictions of Baileyan wave theory, covered in some of the papers in the third subsection of the earlier volume. What is particularly interesting about the current volume is its inclusion of topics like discourse, register and style, and code-switching, which were scarcely represented – if at all – at the earliest meetings, but are important foci of current sociolinguistic research (see for instance, Biber and Finegan 1994, Myers-Scotton 1993, Schiffrin 1994). Of course, the concerns with phonological variation and change represent continuity with earlier concerns, and the section on morphosyntactic variation represents the coming into bloom of studies above the level of phonology, something which was first addressed as a theoretical issue in Sankoff's paper in the earlier volume (Sankoff 1973). Note, however, that semantic/lexical variation receives no direct attention in the current volume, while it was addressed in at least one notable paper (Labov 1973) in the earlier volume.

Table 1: A comparison of the volumes from NWAV-1 and NWAV23

Subsections of volume from NWAV-1 (Bailey & Shuy 1973; 24 papers total)	Subsections of volume from NWAV-23 (Arnold et al 1996; 33 papers total)
Variable Rules (5 papers)	Phonological Variation (4 papers)
Squishes (3 papers)	Morphosyntactic Variation (7 papers)
Problems in Variation (5 papers)	Register and Style (5 papers)
Other Studies in Variation (5 papers)	Discourse (7 papers)
Creoles (5 papers)	Code-Switching (4 papers)
Variation in semantic reference (1 paper)	Language Change (6 papers)

All in all, it is good to have this volume and what it represents about the theory, data and analysis of variationist sociolinguistics in the 1990s. (Note, for instance, the papers which draw on Optimality Theory in section II.) For the scrupulous selection, editing, reading and rereading which they did in producing this volume, it is a pleasure to thank first of all the volume's editors: Jennifer Arnold, Renee Blake, Brad Davidson, Julie Solomon and Scott Schwenter. These students also worked hard on the development of the conference program and the organization of the conference, and Penny Eckert and myself, who served as co-directors of

NWAV-23, wish to thank them as well as the following colleagues and students who served on the NWAV-23 committee: John Baugh, Yuri Kuwahara, Norma Mendoza-Denton, and Tom Wasow. These students were assisted by other students, staff and faculty members from Stanford as well as the Institute for Research on Learning who made invaluable contributions to the conference, including: Arto Anttila, Lyn Cherny, Maria Escamilla, Vivienne Fong, Rudi Gaudio, Dawn Hannah, Kathy Hayden, Kathy Hernandez, Rob Malouf, Ann Mathison, Yukiko Morimoto, Michelle Murray, Karen Powell, Jennifer Rothblatt, Peter Sells, Stuart Tannock, Elizabeth Traugott, Gina Wein, Kyle Wohlmut and Qing Zhang. If we have accidentally overlooked anyone, we offer our sincere apologies.

Thanks are also in order to the following scholars who directed workshops at the meeting: Frank Anshen ("Statistical Analysis with Mystat"), Norma Mendoza-Denton and Tom Veatch ("Mainframe Varbrul"), Carol Myers-Scotton ("Code-Switching"), and Elizabeth Traugott and Scott Schwenter ("Grammaticalization"). We are also grateful to the following international panel of variationists who helped to referee abstracts submitted for the meeting: Jon E. Amastae, Sherry Ash, Robert Bayley, Mary Bucholtz, Henrietta Cedergren, Ralph Fasold, Gregory Guy, Barbara Horvath, William Labov, Bonnie McElhinny, Anthony J. Naro, Shana Poplack, Dennis Preston, David Sankoff, Gillian Sankoff, Otto Santa Ana, Deborah Schiffrin, Carmen Silva-Corvalan, Thomas Toon, Keith Walters, and Walt Wolfram.

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