

How many sociolinguists  
are actually linguists?  
It varies!

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# Overview

- Chapter 1: Historical introduction
- Chapter 2: Types of variation
- Chapter 3: Three approaches to variation
- Chapter 4: Explaining variation
- Chapter 5: Coda: Theory, oh theory, and the dream of an ecumenical mundane linguistics

Chapter 1

# **THE HISTORY OF LINGUISTICS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES**

# Long lines

- From historicism in the past to a fragmented present
- Fragmentation breeds theoretical tolerance
- Too much so!
- The attempt here is to open an interparadigmatic discussion of VARIATION
- This necessitates a historical backdrop

# The structuralist legacy

- Structuralism in the Nordic countries, the battle with the language historians (the neogrammarian paradigm): [...]until 1965 most Nordic linguists worked within the framework of Neogrammarian historical-comparative linguistics.” (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000: 306)
- Hjelmslev and glossematics in Denmark
- Malmberg in Sweden (the surprisingly late arrival of structuralism in Sweden) (Karlsson 2010: 39)
- Vogt and Sommerfelt in Norway (the special nature of Norwegian linguistics)
- Only in Denmark a possible hegemony for structuralism

# From structuralism to what?

- The path from structuralism and onwards
- Two possibilities:
- Autonomy (and primarily American structuralism) as the cue: on to **TG**
- Anti-autonomy as the cue: on to **sociolinguistics** or **functionalism**

# TG in the Nordic countries

- Hovdhaugen in Norway 1969
- Telemann in Sweden 1969 (diss.)
- Per Anker Jensen in Denmark 1979
- Thráinsson in Iceland 1979
- Kalevi Wiik and Auli Hakulinen in Finland
- Which country is the exception? Denmark?  
Finland? Norway? Iceland?

# TG as the common background

- For very many linguists TG was the background but not the end point of their paradigmatic journey
- Telemann and Hakulinen are obvious cases in point

# The anti-autonomous tier

- Anti-autonomy focused on variation:
- **Sociolinguistics**
- Anti-autonomy focused on structure, or rather categories and paradigms, as derived from function, i.e. semantics as the primary reason for structure:
- **Functionalism**

# The result

(I already KNOW that this is grossly simplified so don't tell me!)

- **Formalists**
- **Functionalists**
- **Sociolinguists**
- **But what about all the others! Allow me to simplify, please.**

# Data and paradigms

<b>Paradigm</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Data type</b>	<b>Linguistic focus</b>
<b>Recent theoretical linguistics</b>	Explanatory adequacy: UG and the various possible structures of a language L	introspective data supplemented with judgmental data; primarily written	Syntax and Semantics
<b>Functionalism</b>	To explain language structure as a function of functional needs	No special data format; the data vary with the researcher	Grammar: Morphology and syntax on a semantic base
<b>Sociolinguistics</b>	Explaining Language variation and change	Observational and behavioral data; mostly spoken	Phonetic, morphological, syntactic and (rarely) semantic variation

# A common problem?

- Variation is a theme in all paradigms although not in the same way
- My contention is that variation is problematic for theoretical linguistics and functionalism (albeit for different reasons) and central, but perhaps under-theorized, in sociolinguistics

Chapter 2

# **TYPES OF VARIATION**

# Phonetic variation

- This is central sociolinguistic stuff!
- Some central issues:
- How to define the relationship between the structural analysis and the sociolinguistic: Do they build on one another or are they based on completely different logics?
- The limits of phonetic variation
- The codification of phonetic variation: auditory vs. acoustic phonetics

# Exemplification

Let me exemplify with the short (a) in Danish!

# The history of (a) in Danish

**1817:** J.H. Bredsdorff, a man of many talents, proposes a phonetic alphabet which clearly indicates one value of (a), whether long or short, probably phonetically [ɑ]

**1850:** Rydquist identifies a *long* Copenhagen (a) which is more front and higher than the Swedish counterpart

Brink og Lund 1975 argue that the specific Copenhagen dialect evolves precisely during the 1850s

# The splits: long and short and the internal split of the short (a)

- Around 1850 **long** (a:) becomes higher and more front
- Around 1888 this variant [a], or even [æ], is found also in the short (a) before a (j) in words like 'mig' (*me*), 'dig' (*you*), 'sig' (*(your)self*)
- Around 1930 Otto Jespersen states the rule of **complementary distribution** for the **short** (a) variants:
  - AN [æ] is found before alveolar consonants and nil
  - AM [ɑ] is found before labials and velars

# The final split of the short (a)s

- 4 main variants of short (a) may be distinguished:
- AN (before alveolars and nil) is found in two variants: AN1 [ɛ] and AN2 [æ]. **There is agreement in the literature that the AN1 was, or is, a characteristic of the Working Class (WC), in particular the males**
- AM (before labials and velars) is also found in two variants: AM3 [a] and AM4 [ɑ]. **In the literature there is agreement that the AM4 was, or is, characteristic of the WC, in particular the males**

# The issues exemplified

- *Is this one sociolinguistic variable or two?*
- The structuralist says one short (a) but the sociolinguist says two variables.
- *Could we then define subsets of the two?*
- We have tried to, but no, not even the nasals are the key to variation
- *How can we study it?*
- We have done both auditory and acoustic analyses

# Some results

- AM is no longer a sociolinguistic variable in our data since the AM 4 (the original variant) no longer is used except idiosyncratically
- AN is still a stable situationally very sensitive variable but we actually do not know what it means and suspect that it may mean various things
- They are sociolinguistically so different that they do not make up a category

# Morphological variation

- The analysis of gender in Danish and Dutch
- Gender inside the Nominal phrase: determiners and adjectives
- Gender outside the nominal phrase: anaphoric pronouns pronouns with vague reference or higher order entities and placeholders
- Two types of over-generalization in Danish, dependent on who the informants 'are', i.e. informants with Danish as L1 or informants with something else as their L1: Is this sociolinguistically relevant? Is it Danish?

# Syntactic variation

- Complementizer present or not in at (that)-clauses
- The word order in dependent clauses (the V2 problem)
- Two types of passive (s-passive and periphrastic passive, Heltoft and Falster Jakobsen)
- Two types of Conditionals (with or without complementizer)
  
- Issue no.1: How far can we come without semantics here?
- Issue no. 2: What kinds of data?

# Exemplification

Conditionals:

1. Kommer han går jeg
2. Hvis han kommer, så går jeg

From the point of view of syntax, 1 goes with yes-no questions and other types of V1 whereas 2 groups with adverbial clauses

From the point of view of sociolinguistics 1 is extremely rare in spoken language but not so in written (to the extent of being a style marker) and 2 may have V2.

Why do we have this variation?

# The V2 phenomenon

- The analyses of spoken Danish show that we have much more V2 than was thought before but also importantly that in the majority of cases (around 75 %), it is impossible to tell (because there is no SA)
- In Gregersen and Pedersen 2000 we distinguish between weak signals and strong
- If V2 is indeed a signal of the embedded clause being the main point of utterance then what about the other 75 %?

# Macro-variation

- I have talked about internal variation inside the same system
- But what about variation *between* systems but *within* the same community
- What kind of delimitation of the community is the relevant one: CoP; nation state; communicative network; 'speech community'?
- Which conception of community?

Chapter 3

# **THREE APPROACHES TO VARIATION**

# A Chomskyan approach

- Biology as the framework
- Parameters as one kind of operationalization
- Parameters and usage:
- The naturalistic theory of language must speak not only to ways in which languages are the same (principles, UG) but also to ways in which languages can differ. A descriptively and explanatorily adequate naturalistic theory of language should have the resources available to it to describe any given I-language and, to do that, it must have the theoretical resources to describe any biophysically possible I-language.

Some differences between I-languages are, however, beyond the reach of naturalistic study, People can and do differ in how they pair 'sound' information with 'meaning' in their lexicons

# A more operational formalist approach

- Holmberg as a case in point:
- Holmberg suggests that the difference between Insular (ISc) and Mainland Scandinavian (MSc) as to:
- Rich subject-verb agreement, Oblique subjects, Stylistic fronting, Null expletives, Null generic subject pronoun, Transitive expletives and Heavy subject postposing - all features which ISc have and MSc lack, be explained as ONE parameter

# Parameters and internal variation

- The interpretation of parameters:
- Does MSc mean all dialects within the geographical area or just all that behave like this?
- Is this a hypothesis about individuals and what is the basis evidence in terms of language use, judgmental data or something else?
- Stylistic variation included?
- Does the theory predict change or variation?
- Why was Faroese taken out of ISc in the latest edition, leaving only Icelandic as ISc?

# A functionalist approach

- **Go for differences in meaning!**
- The s-passive (morphologically marked) and the periphrastic passive (Heltoft and Falster Jakobsen 1996):
- Her synges altid en salme (general/objective) *They always sing a psalm here*
- Der blev sunget en salme og grædt (specific subjective) *(a psalm was sung and there was weeping)*
- But what about phonetic variation? Depending on your nation of meaning this can either be treated much the same way or not at all.

# A sociolinguistic approach 1

The Labovian paradigm:

- Variation is ubiquitous
- Some of the variation has social meaning
- This meaning is connected to the social groups in the society which uses the language(s)
- Intra-individual variation: style
- Inter-individual variation: lects
- In both cases: quantitative patterns of variants belonging to a set of sociolinguistic variables

# Direction

- Variation may be directional either at present or in time; this means that the variation is going somewhere (AM 4 disappearing). The s-curve.
- Or it may be stable or non-directional at present or in time; this means that the variation is there to be used. Accomodation to a moving target.

# Between Schylla and Charybdis

or the devil and the deep blue sea

- The interpretation of variation:
- **SCHYLLA: voluntarism:** anybody can use any pattern of variants to express any *persona*
- **CHARYBDIS: determinism:** nobody can use any other pattern than they are positioned to do; we are at the mercy of our speaker variables
- Sailing between Schylla and Charybdis:  
**Identifying limits to repertoires** but wide ones

# Style and lect again

- In a fit of methodological masochism...
- The difference between first and second interview, the first one at work and the second at home:

Table 2: (æ) variable: results for KLT

	$\varepsilon$	in-between	æ	N	raising %	p (Fisher)
<b>Interview 1</b>	1	1	40	42	5	
<b>Interview 2</b>	13	1	25	38	36	0.0005***

Chapter 3

# **EXPLAINING VARIATION**

# Variation

- **Variation thrives on the asymmetry between production and reception.**
- Since our comprehension potential (or receptive competence) encompasses a lot more items than our productive potential (or competence), we are able to **decode** (or comprehend) features (or items) which we do not **use** (produce) ourselves

# Language attitudes

- Tore Kristiansen has shown how linguistic items invariably are connected with stereotypes of users
- Exemplar theory, or usage based theories in general, fit this conception perfectly in that they stipulate that the brain is a huge repository of **all items heard, connected with the speech event they were used in**

# Variation in and between languages

- What if microsociolinguistics had to give up the notion of a language and replace it with the notion of the human linguistic pool containing all possible linguistic items
- If that happened we would be in a better position to explain the use of linguistic items connected with different 'languages' on a par with the use of variants within one and the same language

# Variation in interaction

- Variation in interaction is for the audience and is always noted by the audience whether they are aware of this or not
- In this way a specific persona (or identity) is projected to the audience and noted by the auditors
- But this persona depends on our previous experience

# History

- Individuals are individuals simply as a consequence of their history, we are each of us unique in this sense
- History is sedimented in the individual as layers of experience, including linguistic experience
- Thus, our various histories determine which stereotypes we (are able to) produce and interpret

# Integrating Micro and Macro

- When an individual in an interaction within a specific domain uses a specific linguistic item s/he projects an identity which evokes stereotypical attitudes
- An example: The use of items stereotypically connected with English in a domain such as the university is typically connected to internationalisation and success but it does of course depend on *which (kind of) English*

# Conclusion

- One way to integrate MACROSOCIOLOGUISTICS and MICROSOCIOLOGUISTICS is to focus on variation and to abolish the notion of a difference between variation between languages and within languages. This is a programme with a lot of promise - but also a lot of dangers lurking ahead

Chapter 5

# **THEORY, OH THEORY!**

# Dreaming back to a time...

- All histories of linguistics celebrate the era when it was possible to read all that was published in the discipline (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000: 479)
- Why?
- Because we should strive for general explanations of the general phenomenon **language in all its guises and all its uses**

# Dialogues between paradigms

- A Kuhnian view of paradigms makes dialogue impossible
- But we are gathered here today...
- We seem to believe in the idea of dialogue
- How can we further it?
- By stating in a Popperian manner how a colleague, any colleague, could falsify our results!  
And by laying down ground rules for the relationship between empirical work and theoretical work - if we can agree on this!

# Imagine Imagine Imagine Imagine

- Let's do that!
- Let's start at the dinner!
- After all there is no place more suited for dialogue than a party!

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