

Varieties of Variation, and the Variation of Varieties: an Introductory Essay

¹ One need only mention *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, [1966] 2006); *The Study of Nonstandard English* (Washington, DC: National Council of Teachers of English, 1969); *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1972).

² See <<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=lvc>>.

³ See <<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayMoreInfo?jid=LSY&type=eb&sessionId=788318F0DBA6687C32483EEC570A07A4>>.

⁴ The interested reader might see, however, e.g., Richard Hudson, “Sociolinguistics and the Theory of Grammar”, *Linguistics*, 24 (1986), 1073-1078; Leonie Cornips and Karen P. Corrigan, eds., *Syntax and Variation: Reconciling the Biological and the Social* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005).

⁵ See, for example, the discussion in Penelope Eckert, “Three Waves of Variation Study: The Emergence of Meaning in the Study of Variation”, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41 (2012), 87-100 (accessed pre-publication from <<http://www.stanford.edu/~eckert/thirdwave.html>> 16 August 2012; see also the useful short summary there).

⁶ Penelope Eckert, “Variation and the Indexical Order”, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 12.4 (2008), 453.

There is hardly any need to justify a focus on variation and variability in (a) language, or indeed, English, today. “Variability is inherent in human behaviour” said Suzanne Romaine in her introduction to her 1992 introductory book on sociolinguistics. It was manifestly not a new insight. A half century has indeed passed fruitfully since the pioneering studies by William Labov in the 1960s,¹ and the journal *Language Variation and Change* which he founded in 1989 and is still the chief editor of with its three issues a year,² as well as other even earlier established specialist journals, such as *Language in Society*, founded in 1972, with its five issues a year,³ all testify to the wide sociolinguistics enterprise’s rootedness, rigour and vigour. No full-blown discussion or overview of ways in which language variation is approached, is nor could be, attempted here given the wide range of issues it has come to concern and the disciplines interested in and variously illuminating it (from sociolinguistics, ethnographical and linguistic anthropology to critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, stylistics and syntactic theory, to name but a few). My aim is merely to touch on some of the aspects which might seem most relevant to this issue. I shall simply attempt to point to, if not clarify, a few of these (while leaving untouched many albeit important and currently elsewhere salient ones, for example the status of variability or variable rules in grammatical theory).⁴

I have chosen rather to address, for example, the different categories or varieties of variation and the varieties of mixing of varieties, and especially the potential confusion that could arise from the as yet wide and diverse range of taxonomic terms still found in the various fields and approaches of sociolinguistics, after having first attempted to point to something of the variation in variation studies, if only to provide a hint of some of the bumps and (albeit shallow) potholes in the terrain.

Variations in variation studies/varieties of variationism

The field of variation studies has recently witnessed what might seem internal critiques to previous approaches or ‘waves’ of study.⁵ These include, for instance, that of traditional sociolinguistics or variationist sociolinguistics as being thwart with mistaken supposedly linguistics-centric ideas of staticity, rigidity, correlationism, and of fixed social categories and immobility. I shall purposely not engage with the debates, but shall assume that insights can usefully be had from all sides.

The view that earlier sociolinguistics should be criticised because of its “viewing the social as a fixed and external structure that is only reflected in linguistic variability”,⁶ as Eckert says – while not denying the usefulness of work done in the earlier traditions she herself was trained in under its founding father, William Labov – would not necessarily, in my opinion, make the findings of any single

research on the diffusion of single variables incompatible with the work and insights coming from research findings in linguistic anthropology, or other fields which more explicitly see language as situated social practice and believe that what should be explicitly foregrounded is the construction of social meaning through linguistic practice.

Quantitative generalizations of the sort made in survey studies are important, but exploring the meaning of variation requires that we examine what lies beneath those generalizations. The very fact that the same variables may stratify regularly with multiple categories – e.g. gender, ethnicity, and class – indicates that their meanings are not directly related to these categories but to something that is related to all of them. In other words, variables index demographic categories not directly but indirectly (Silverstein 1985), through their association with qualities and stances that enter into the construction of categories.⁷

⁷ Ibid., 455.

We can all agree that there might have been a danger in isolating social categories and not see them as often mixing. All we need do, however, is remember that language is at the service of social beings, and it is by looking at the different ways we speak – among them even latching on to single variables – that we can *get at* the social categories and how we see them, our ideological work.⁸

These single variables *will* also bunch together, as discourse styles. We should also want to look at them not only in isolation – but that is what we do when looking at a speech style or a specific speech style. Something catches our attention because it seems to be characteristic of a particular group. As Nikolas Coupland says, “the world is full of social styles. Part of our social competence is being able to understand these indexical links – how a style marks out or indexes a social difference – and to read their meanings.... Reading the meaning of a style is inherently a contrastive exercise”.⁹

Penelope Eckert’s approach to the study of social meaning in variation is to build upon linguistic-anthropological theories of indexicality, in particular Michael Silverstein’s notion of indexical order.¹⁰ She argues that:

the meanings of variables are not precise or fixed but rather constitute a field of potential meanings – an *indexical field*, or constellation of ideologically related meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable. The field is fluid, and each new activation has the potential to change the field by building on ideological connections. Thus variation constitutes an indexical system that embeds ideology in language and that is in turn part and parcel of the construction of ideology. This concept leaves us with a new (that is, an additional) enterprise of studying variation as an indexical system, taking meaning as a point of departure rather than the sound changes or structural issues....¹¹

It is indeed advisable to work with insights and findings accumulated from different approaches; top down or bottom up, the chicken or the egg. At any rate, surely no one in linguistics today would quibble with her view that “ultimately the variation (and the entire linguistic) enterprise must be integrated into a more comprehensive understanding of language as social practice”.¹²

⁸ As we shall also suggest, fragments of registers, single ‘marked’ variables, can indeed function singly as acts of identity or alterity, when embedded, in quoting or crossing or hosting or mimicking or mixing (as, perhaps, when a 3rd generation Italian in Bedford pronounces a phoneme in a particular way, for example).

⁹ Nikolas Coupland, *Style: Language Variation and Identity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Eckert refers us to Michael Silverstein, “Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life”, *Language and Communication*, 23 (2003), 193-229.

¹¹ Eckert, “Indexical Field”, 454.

¹² Ibid., 453.

With no stakes in any one school, except in that of common sense and guided intuition – as privileged multilingual, trans-culturalists with a vast repertoire of our own fragments from many registers, and of an age to remember how revolutionary and corrective insights from early sociolinguistics once were – we, the editors, favour eclecticism and taking what can be gleaned from (rigorous) research from any approach.

Critiques of synchrony are also slightly misplaced. Looking at moments in time of the way variables and their social meanings correlate does not exclude believing that things can change under whatever pressures or agency. It *is* just a ‘snapshot’, a convenient fiction in order to stop the flow for a second so as to be able to describe the ‘enregistered’ or indexical order at any one time. Change or mobility (in time or place) implies that there is something that changes from one state to another; a state does not entail being actually static, for all time. We do not feel that this was ever believed even by the strong correlationists described by Eckert in her account of the first waves of sociolinguistics, nor indeed by Nikolas Coupland. William Labov himself offers as far as I can find no counter-arguments, and presumably has no feeling he must.¹³ Is this the point? We cannot say everything all at once, right from the start, or is it because the world has changed so the descriptive paradigm must change, simply, that this new view is only an evolution the genes were there all the time?

¹³ His review of a fairly recent work of hers could hardly be more enthusiastic: see William Labov, review of Penelope Eckert, *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice, Language in Society*, 31 (2002), 277-284.

At any rate, constructionism and ‘indexing’ also assume (commonsensically) that there is something (socially constructed perhaps – but there anyway) to be pointed at and which others see as correlated to bits of identity; the constructionist ‘discourse’, while also speaking of ‘indexing’ seems – in apparent contradiction – to exclude it. It seems to exclude correlationism or correspondence, that something stands for or points to something else, or even that there is a system (a critique of Saussurean structuralism as well as of synchrony). Again, however, we see no real problem. If you construct something, together with others – social meaning is a joint construction – that something then exists, for it to be an index of something, until it shifts to become something else through further redefining by social practice.

Whether you look at the practice – call it ‘style’, contextualised use of a register, dialect or single item quoting – rather than only at *who* is doing it, but also at *what* it means, what *role* it is playing for what *purpose*, for which *identity*, how the speaker is *styling* him/herself or the context, then we all know how to interpret it, if we are competent speakers/hearers of a language (the specific bundle of varieties and variables that bunch together, in a structured way, however momentarily, to constitute that agglomerate entity given a specific language name). There can be no meaning without some sort of system of structured difference. In the introduction to his book, while also giving us a useful overview of different sociolinguistic perspectives, Coupland points to the complexity of language variation in urban settings and how the “linguistic and human density invites an analysis in terms of ‘structured difference’”.¹⁴ He continues:

¹⁴ Coupland, *Style*, 2.

Cities challenge the view that one discrete social style (e.g. a dialect) is associated with one place, which was the basic assumption in the analysis of rural dialects. It has become the norm to consider cities as sociolinguistic systems that organise linguistic variation in complex ways. But understanding the social structuring of styles, even in the sophisticated manner of urban sociolinguistics, is not enough in itself. We need to understand how people use or enact or perform social styles for a range of symbolic purposes. Social styles (including dialect styles) are a resource for people to make many different sorts of personal and interpersonal meaning.¹⁵

¹⁵ Ibid.

According to Coupland, variationist sociolinguistics – where the term ‘style’ was actually first used in sociolinguistics – should “move on from the documenting of social styles or dialects themselves”, from the sociolinguistics of dialects, i.e. of users in their places, to analyse rather the “creative, design-oriented processes through which social styles are activated in talk and, in that process, remade or reshaped. This means focusing on particular moments and contexts of speaking where people use social styles as resources for meaning-making. It means adding a more active and verbal dimension (‘styling social meaning’) to sociolinguistic accounts of dialect (‘describing social styles’)”.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid.

While the sociolinguistic enterprise, we could say, did tend to look more at what might be called ‘user’ categories, it is fair to say that the ‘use’ dimension was innovatively actually first focused on in the 1970s by the British functionalists who showed the way to looking at contextual and social meaning, and significantly at their construction. In his retrospective appreciation of Michael Halliday’s work, Alan Jones, says:

... our language on the one hand shapes the way we perceive the world we live in and, in particular, our social world; but, at the same time, through its rich potential for creating new meanings, it allows us to act upon and shape that world. Investigating language as a socially situated phenomenon, Halliday has revealed the invisible infrastructure of daily life, and of human relationships and identities. His functional linguistics, in detailing the nanomechanics of everyday talk and texts, has shown us how social actors both construct meaning and are embedded in constructed meaning. The meaning potential of language, made accessible in this way, is what gives us our ability to invent and innovate.¹⁷

¹⁷ Alan Jones, “An Appreciation of Halliday and his *Language as Social Semiotic*” (1978), in *International House Journal*, 28 (2010).

Registers and genres can indeed also be said to index users’ chosen (and constructed) role identities, as well as other aspects of the context of use. The Gumperzes’ interpretive interactional sociolinguistics had also opened our eyes to the social construction of meaning and the non-given-ness of the “parameters and boundaries within which we create our social identities” such as gender, ethnicity, class, and that “[t]he study of language as interactional discourse demonstrates that these parameters are not constants that can be taken for granted but are communicatively produced”.¹⁸ The social constructivist notions have been around for some time.

¹⁸ John J. Gumperz and Jenny Cook-Gumperz, “Introduction: Language and the Communication of Social Identity”, in John J. Gumperz, ed., *Language and Social Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

Apart from different perspectives, which are ultimately reconcilable or anyway combinable, other perhaps more serious problems do arise, the potholes appear, when reading different authors from different traditions and even different

continents, in the variety of metalinguistic terms used in the field, and the variety of meanings given to some of the terms (*register* and *style*, chief among them). One can see no value, however, in pitting approaches against each other; it is more useful to blend insights and look for compatibilities; to look for the underlying reality unearthed by different approaches, and behind the sometimes disconcerting variety of terms for types of variation.

Varieties of variation and variable terms

As if the uncertainties and the vagaries of instability, mobility and variability in our social lives and identities and language resources in this late-modern, globalised world of ours were not enough,¹⁹ the student (and scholar) and would-be analyst, also has to face the subtleties of the range of scholarly approaches but more seriously the extreme variability of terminology in the field. A little terminological and conceptual overview and caveat might thus help, if only to signal things a ‘terminological vice-squad’ ought to perhaps take care of, but also to try to further set the scene as an the introduction for the papers in our issue, and not least to try to help ourselves and our students with some signposting.

To start over again very simply, variation in a language (English in this case), i.e. *intra*-lingual variation, can be visualised along different sets of parameters or dimensions. The most basic, classically recognised type of variation, perhaps, is that across time, *diachronic* variation. As even non-linguists know, all languages change over time. What was perhaps less well generally appreciated, although it has been affirmed by sociolinguists for the last sixty years or so, as we have seen and will further see, is that variation also occurs on the *synchronic* dimension. At no one time, is any language homogeneous, “the normal condition of the speech community is a heterogeneous one. Moreover, heterogeneity is an integral part of the linguistic economy of the community, necessary to satisfy the linguistic demands of everyday life”.²⁰ At any single time, one can take a snapshot of a language, as it were, and see that “no language is as monolithic as our descriptive grammars sometimes suggest; wherever sufficient data are available, we find diversity within languages on all levels – phonological, grammatical, and lexical. Such diversity can be studied along three synchronic dimensions – geographical, social, and stylistic”.²¹ David Britain also reminds us that their “sociolinguistic variationist enterprise begins on the premise that dialect variation is far from free or haphazard, but is governed by what Weinreich, Labov and Herzog called ‘orderly heterogeneity’ – structured variation”.²² And just to close the circle, let us also just mention here that it has been long generally agreed that “[n]ot all variability and heterogeneity in language structure involves change; but all change involves variability and heterogeneity”.²³

It is on the macro-dimension of synchronic variation that disparate terminological and conceptual distinctions are rife, even after all these years, and which might thus bear a little attention. One of the simplest and easiest distinctions to visualise and therefore most immediately insight-bearing and best to mention or recall first,

¹⁹ So effectively described in Jan Blommaert, *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization. Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), and hinted at in Coupland cited earlier.

²⁰ Uriel Weinreich, William Labov and Marvin Herzog, “Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change”, in William Lehmann & Yakov Malkiel, eds., *Directions for Historical Linguistics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 17; cit. in Sali Tagliamonte *Analysing Sociolinguistic Variation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

²¹ William Bright and Attipat K. Ramanujan, “Sociolinguistic Variation and Linguistic Change”, *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists*, Cambridge, Mass. 1964; reprinted in John B. Pride and Janet Holmes, eds., *Sociolinguistics - Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 157.

²² David Britain, “Sociolinguistic Variation”, <<http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/1054#ref11>>, 15 August 2012.

²³ Weinreich et al., “Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change”, 188.

is probably the British functionalist M.A.K. Halliday's still very useful macro-distinction of variation according to 'user' or 'use'²⁴ – which we did indeed help ourselves with in our joint editors' introduction above – which very roughly corresponds to the pair of methodological terms, respectively, 'dialect' and 'register' (or, for the latter, also notably and increasingly, 'style', or 'diatype', to use Gregory's 1967, curiously under-used, term).²⁵

The first term of the pair, 'dialect', or '-lect', refers to a variety of language defined largely by, or supposedly indexing, its user's regional or socioeconomic origins or status or gender – as Ruquaiya Hasan reminds us more specifically “different users, or more precisely, users belonging to different social groups or user types have different norms”. The second, 'register' or 'diatype', is a variety of language issuing from the social situation or context of use, where “different uses, different contextual configurations which activate the use of language – give rise over time to different varieties”.²⁶

Penelope Eckert has, like others, recently argued indeed, as we saw, for “a focus on the social meaning of variation, based in a study of stylistic practice”,²⁷ (reminiscent of the Halliday/Hasan approach too); she continues, in her article's abstract:

It is common in the study of variation to interpret variables as reflections of speakers' membership in social categories. Others have argued more recently that variables are associated not with the categories themselves but with stances and characteristics that constitute these categories. The paper reviews some variation studies that show that variables do not have static meanings, but rather general meanings that become more specific in the context of styles.²⁸

The term 'style', which I have been trying to mark along the way, as we can see has now entered the picture again as a technical term; unfortunately, and confusingly, however, it seems to range historically, and in the field today, between indicating either or both of the types of variation. However, it also seems now to be most associated with the 'third-wave' social identity and meaning or 'styling' approach, as we saw earlier centrally in Nikolas Coupland's work: “[i]t means adding a more active and verbal dimension ('styling social meaning') to sociolinguistic accounts of dialect ('describing social styles')”.²⁹ Penelope Eckert uses 'style', as we have seen, in a similar way, and with similar critical focus and intent. Asif Agha, in his important works uses 'register', however, to talk about what looks very much like what Coupland and Eckert refer to as 'style' in not only mentioning social practices which seem to concern the 'use' dimension, such as contextual types, such as “law, medicine ... the observance of respect and etiquette...”, but also 'user' “social status”.³⁰

We cannot naturally go into this further in what can, as an introduction, have no higher ambition than to merely hint at issues, except perhaps to put up warning signs, to point to the potential for confusion, and at least to the danger of identifying terminological labels unequivocally with single meanings, ironically in this field.

At any rate, '(a) variety' is the general sociolinguistic term unequivocally used since the 1980s at least to refer to instances of either or both 'user' and 'use' types

²⁴ Coined by Michael A. K. Halliday, in his ground-breaking “The Users and Uses of Language”, in M.A.K. Halliday, Angus McIntosh, and Peter Strevens, eds., *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* (London: Longman, 1964), 75-110.

²⁵ Michael Gregory, “Aspects of Varieties Differentiation”, *Journal of Linguistics*, 3 (1967), 177-197. 'Diatype' is, significantly and systematically used, when describing the Hallidayan parameters of variation, by Ruquaiya Hasan in her “Analysing Discursive Variation”, in Lynne Young and Claire Harrison, eds., *Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Continuum, 2004), 20-34.

²⁶ Hasan, “Discursive Variation”, 19.

²⁷ Eckert, “Indexical Field”, 453.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Coupland, *Style*, 2.

³⁰ Asif Agha, “Registers of Language”, in Alessandro Duranti, ed., *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology* (New York: Blackwell, 2004), 216; see also “Voicing, Footing, Enregisterment”, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 15.1 (2005), 38-59.

of variation, not least for politically correct reasons of avoidance of the negative connotations accruing to ‘dialect’ outside sociolinguistics.

The nature, also, of the correspondence, or correlation, relationship between varieties and their users or uses, and the process of its development or production and interpretation by users was already in the forefront in the systemic functionalist school, and is a salient issue debated today. In the foreground are to be found the theoretical speculation, for example, of the type carried out by Coupland on ‘styling’, or by Agha concerning ‘en-register-ment’, and on ‘voicing’ and ‘footing’,³¹ or that specifically by linguist anthropologist Michael Silverstein culminating in his (more paradigmatic than syntagmatic) notion of ‘indexical order’ and developed in Eckert with the concept of ‘indexical field’. We cannot engage (adequately) nor need to here with the complexities involved in either of the Halliday/Hasan or Silverstein/Eckert approaches, except perhaps to suggest that they seem compatible.³² We can also usefully catch the notion from Silverstein that there are levels or ‘orders’ of correlation between, if one can put it that way, signifiers (or variables) and their social meanings (from first order ‘indicators’ through 2nd order ‘markers’ finally to 3rd order ‘stereotypes’ – to connect up also with Labov’s original ordering of dialectal variables: “[i]n Labov’s terms, *indicators* are dialectal variables that distinguish social or geographical categories but have attracted no notice and do not figure in variation across the formality continuum. *Markers* and *stereotypes* are variables that have attracted sufficient attention to emerge within those categories in stylistic variation”).³³ We can get a little further taste of *their* theoretical discourse style and terminology from Eckert’s account of how Silverstein’s treatment is different from the variationist view because of the:

ideological embedding of the process by which the link between form and meaning is made and remade. Participation in discourse involves a continual interpretation of forms in context, an in-the-moment assigning of indexical values to linguistic form. A form with an indexical value, what Silverstein calls an *n*th value usage, is always available for reinterpretation – for the acquisition of an *n*+1st value. Once established the new value is available for further construal, and so on.... Reconstruals are ‘always already immanent’ (2003: 194) precisely because they take place within a fluid and ever-changing ideological field. The emergence of an *n* + 1st indexical value is the result of an ideological move, a sidestepping within an ideological field. In order to understand the meaning of variation in practice, we need to begin with this ideological field, as the continual reconstrual of the indexical value of a variable creates, in the end, an *indexical field* An indexical field is a constellation of meanings that are ideologically linked. As such, it is inseparable from the ideological field and can be seen as an embodiment of ideology in linguistic form. I emphasize here that this field is not a static structure, but at every moment a representation of a continuous process of reinterpretation. The traditional view of a variable as having a fixed meaning is based in a static, non-dialectical, view of language. In this view, a variable is taken to ‘mean’ the same regardless of the context in which it is used, and while we know, for example, that variables may change their meanings over time, the mechanism for this process is not well understood.³⁴

In her description of the production process of style, we can also appreciate the question of the place of single variables being interesting not in themselves

³¹ Asif Agha, “Register”, 216–219; and “Voice, Footing, Enregisterment”, 38–59.

³² See Hasan’s account of the production of variation, in “Discursive Variation”, 36–46.

³³ Eckert, “Indexical Field”, 463.

³⁴ Ibid., 463–464.

but as component features of styles, separated out for notice, and significance, by ‘stylistic agents’:

By *stylistic practice*, I mean both the interpretation and the production of styles, for the two take place constantly and iteratively. Stylistic practice is a process of bricolage (Hebdige 1984), in which individual resources (in this case, variables) can be interpreted and combined with other resources to construct a more complex meaningful entity. This process begins when the stylistic agent perceives an individual or group style – perhaps the style will bring his or her attention to those who use it; perhaps the users will call attention to the style. But the noticing of the style and the noticing of the group or individual that uses it are mutually reinforcing, and the meaning of the style and its users are reciprocal. The style itself will be noticed in the form of features that the stylistic agent separates out for notice. Susan Gal and Judith Irvine (Irvine and Gal 2000; Irvine 2001) have provided an account of the semiotic processes by which categories of speakers and their linguistic varieties come to be perceived as distinct, as an ideological link is constructed between the linguistic and the social. These processes apply equally well to the construction of meaning for styles (Irvine 2001) and for individual variables. This process of selection is made against a background of previous experience of styles and features; a stylistic agent may be more attuned to particular kinds of differences as a function of past stylistic experience. ... Once the agent isolates and attributes significance to a feature, that feature becomes a resource that he or she can incorporate or not into his or her own style. The occurrence of that resource in a new style will change the meaning both of the resource and of the original style, hence changing the semiotic landscape.³⁵

³⁵ Ibid.

To continue, more simply now, and conveniently, with our looking at the ‘user’ dimension (from which we had not strayed very far, however, despite the change in terminology and focus on production or construction and indexing): the way we speak can thus be seen of course to vary, moreover, across speakers (i.e. there is inter-speaker variation), since it ‘indexes’ or conveys to our fellows to some degree (consciously and unconsciously) who we are (socially, culturally, ideologically, generationally, etc.), or choose to be, or wish to project to others as being, or ‘style ourselves’ as being, at any one time, where we come from and/or have lived most, our age or generation, our gender, our social or educational background, etc. This is because as speakers we know we can also usually be identified to some degree by others by our way (or ‘style’) of speaking, for example, English – from roughly to finely identifiable varieties or ‘dialects’, e.g. British as opposed to American or Irish or Indian English, Brighton modified RP as opposed to Rochdale modified RP, Cockney as opposed to Geordie, Philadelphia hip-hop or ‘Essex boy’ Estuary, or whatever, along intertwined geographical and social and generational and other ‘stylistic’ dimensions. The term ‘style’ comes to mind continuously, almost asking to be used, showing that it is still perhaps an indeterminate term, which like ‘variety’, or ‘way of speaking’ can indeed, cover for either or both types of variation – ‘user’, certainly, but also, since it is often used as a synonym of ‘register’ or in the context of rhetorical or discourse types, the ‘use’ dimension.

Agha refers to “cultural models of speech – a metapragmatic classification of discourse types – linking speech repertoires [of linguistic elements] to typifications of actor, relationship, and conduct”,³⁶ he too referring, in other words, to both

³⁶ Asif Agha, “Registers of Language”, 23.

‘user’ and ‘use’ aspects. And if this were not enough, Eckert says referring to her terminology:

This kind of style (what one might call *persona style*) is orthogonal to the formality continuum that is associated with style in traditional variation studies (e.g. Labov 1972). The focus on formality in these studies keeps the study of variation in the cognitive realm (see Eckert 2004) as it determines the amount of attention paid to speech, limiting stylistic agency to the manipulation of status in the socio-economic hierarchy. Styles associated with types in the social landscape bear an important relation to class, but not a direct one. They are the product of *enregisterment* (Agha 2003) and **I might call them registers were it not for the common use of the term in sociolinguistics to refer to a static collocation of features associated with a specific setting or fixed social category**. Asif Agha’s account (2005) of *enregistered voices* is quite precisely what I am talking about here, locating register in a continual process of production and reproduction. Sociolinguists generally think of styles as different ways of saying the same thing. In every field that studies style seriously, however, this is not so – style is not a surface manifestation, but originates in content. The view of style I present here precludes the separation of form from content, for the social is eminently about the content of people’s lives. Different ways of saying things are intended to signal different ways of being, which includes different potential things to say.³⁷

³⁷ Eckert, “Indexical Field”, 456; highlighting mine.

³⁸ Sali Tagliamonte confirms too, but less intolerantly, that ‘register’ and ‘style’ are often, unhelpfully, used interchangeably: *Analysing Sociolinguistic Variation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 34. What is worse is their crossing between macro-categories.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Coupland, *Style*; Eckert, “Three Waves” and “Indexical Field”.

⁴¹ Blommaert, *Globalisation*.

⁴² David DeCamp developed the concept of creole continuum specifically for the description of the linguistic situation in Jamaica: David De Camp, “Toward a Generative Analysis of a Post-Creole Speech Continuum”, in Dell Hymes, ed., *Pidginisation and Creolisation of Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 249-270.

This unfolding variation in the referential meanings of central terms (‘style’ and ‘register’, in this case) is rather unsettling.³⁸

Relevantly to another plane of interest mentioned earlier, Agha also says that “speakers of any language can automatically assign speech differences to a space of classifications of the above kind, and correspondingly, can respond to others’ speech in ways sensitive to such distinctions. Competence in such models is an indispensable resource in social interaction”.³⁹

To ignore the overlapping reference to the user and use dimensions for a moment, and to make an important proviso increasingly foregrounded today, as we have begun to see: these models, identities or personal user characteristics, are not fully, fixedly or uniquely determined or conditioned by our backgrounds (as the critiques we have seen of early variationist sociolinguistics seem to have assumed that it was assumed),⁴⁰ not irrevocably indexing, reflecting and limiting one’s status, once and for all. People more and more, in our complex, globalised, urbanised, late-modern world – but even before this – can have multiple identities, for a start, and are exposed to others’ more or less systematically.⁴¹ Identity projection can also be a matter of choice. People may have a range of social and geographical identities or be able to assume them along a continuum – as is familiar from creole studies where speakers are described as being able to range between ‘basolect’, ‘mesolect’ and ‘acrolect’ (on a more or less wide span of the creole continuum), according to their communicative goals and interlocutors.⁴²

One can thus also have *intra-speaker* (or *intra-user*) variation on the *user* dimension when a speaker chooses, among his/her repertoire of ‘-lects’ or of single variables which are iconic (in that community, at that moment), how to linguistically represent or display his or her identity, or chooses one for playful or humorous

or whatever purposes (as we will see in Suzanne Romaine's paper in this issue, or in those by Emilia Di Martino or Balirano and Hughes, for example). A speaker's using one or other of his or her own 'lectal' varieties is, it is worth stressing again, thus also a question of choice; any speaker, of whatever status or age, gender, etc., will also have a 'repertoire' (of varying width and richness) of 'dialects' (or '-lects') and languages, as well as 'styles' and 'registers' (whatever they are) to be able to consciously choose from and switch between for various purposes. Chief among these purposes, perhaps, would be stance-taking of identity (social, personal, cultural), of accommodation/convergence to, or distancing/divergence from that of one's interlocutors or a specific community, etc. Some types of this have been called 'styling' as we saw, and the vast earlier literature on 'code-switching' testifies to its ubiquity (not only in multilingual or heteroglossic or diglossic contexts) and to its long history as a recognised practice.

Intra-speaker variation also most obviously occurs, however, on the *use* dimension – and this was indeed the first and only type of intra-speaker variation to be recognized for a long time – when an individual chooses, i.e., among variables/styles according to the context of use or of situation (by choosing what is appropriate or not to that situation, his/her role, the subject matter, topic or field, the relationship with the interlocutor, etc.) for the desired effect on the interlocutor etc. The current work on style and register does seem to mainly still refer to this.⁴³ For example, as we can see perhaps with Asif Agha below when he is discussing power asymmetries (among what we are calling *register repertoires*, in his terms, *register range*) :

an individual's register range, the variety of registers with which he or she is acquainted – equips a person with personal emblems of identity, sometimes permitting distinctive modes of access to particular zones of social life.... Differences of register competence are thus often linked to asymmetries of power, socioeconomic class, position within hierarchies, and the like.⁴⁴

I am suggesting here, therefore, that any given speaker thus has two linguistic 'repertoire sets of varieties':⁴⁵ his or her repertoire of dialects, languages, or -lects or linguistically displayed social or cultural identities, as well as a repertoire of situational and functional 'diatypes' (or 'registers' or 'styles'...) for the enacting of his or her different functional roles or identities (e.g. doctor, friend). Some speakers will be linguistically richer than others by having at their disposal more or fewer -lects as well as registers to choose from.

To add in now further distinctions made: the 'use' (or diatype) dimension – the one referred to by some as 'register', by others as 'style' (though not exclusively, as we *have* seen above) – is usually further distinguished, in the British tradition, following Halliday and Hasan's classical (1976) and widely known treatment, of course, into 'field', 'tenor' and 'mode'. For them, 'field' is "the total event, in which the text is functioning, together with the purposive activity of the speaker or writer; [it] includes subject-matter as one of the elements". 'Tenor' refers to "the type of role interaction, the set of relevant social relations, permanent and temporary,

⁴³ As Sali Tagliamonte confirms while saying they are often used interchangeably too: see *Analysing Sociolinguistic Variation*, 34.

⁴⁴ Asif Agha, "Registers of Language", 24.

⁴⁵ A further caveat: Agha (ibid.) uses the term repertoire too but to refer to the linguistic repertoire of forms or items *within* a variety.

⁴⁶ Michael A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (London: Longman, 1976).

⁴⁷ Coseriu worked most of his life in Italy, Uruguay and Germany. His terminological system is consequently well-known among sociolinguists working there.

⁴⁸ Later published in Eugenio Coseriu, “Los conceptos de ‘dialecto’, ‘nivel’ y ‘estilo’ de lengua, y el sentido propio de la dialectología”, *Linguística Española Actual III* (1981), 1-32. See also the Coseriu archives <www.coseriu.de> (in particular Sprachliche Varietäten).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Leonhard Lipka, “Variety is the Spice of Life – Language Variation and Sociolinguistics”, in *Energie und Ergon, Sprachliche Variation – Sprachgeschichte – Sprachtypologie- Studia in honorem Eugenio Coseriu. Band II – Das Sprachtheoretische Denken Eugenio Coserius in der Diskussion*, ed. by H. Thun (Tubingen: Gunter Narr, 1988), 317-325; Viggo Bank Jensen, “Eugenio Coseriu, Scandinavian Linguists and Variational Linguistics”, *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Languages, E-Learning and Romanian Studies*, June 2011, <nile.lub.lu.se/ojs/index.php/elears/index>, 18 August 2012.

⁵¹ Alberto Mioni, “Italiano tendenziale: osservazioni su alcuni aspetti della standardizzazione”, in P. Benincà et al., eds., *Scritti linguistici in onore di Giovan Battista Pellegrini*, vol. 1

among the participants involved”; ‘mode’ is the “function of the text in the event, including both the channel taken by language – spoken or written, extempore or prepared – and its genre, rhetorical mode, as narrative, didactic persuasive, ‘phatic communion’”, etc.⁴⁶

There is, however, also another important, useful and insightful taxonomic and terminological tradition concerning variety and variation in language – though intriguingly generally neglected outside of continental Europe or Latin America – which adopted, and ran even further with, the ‘dia-’ paradigm than did Gregory with his use of ‘diatype’ modelled on ‘dialect’. We have used it more or less surreptitiously in our editors’ introduction above, but it deserves to be addressed full on; it is also used by several of our authors. This is the continental tradition identified with the Romanian linguist Eugenio Coseriu⁴⁷ who distinguished terminologically already in 1958 (by analogy with ‘dialect’ and ‘diachrony’, itself in alternation with ‘synchrony’, of course) between ‘diatopic’, ‘diastratic’ and ‘diaphatic’ (later: ‘diaphasic’) types of language variation.⁴⁸ The first two terms ‘diatopic’ and ‘diastratic’ (which Coseriu attributed to the Scandinavian linguist Leiv Flydal from 1951) neatly and usefully distinguish terminologically between spatial/regional/geographical and social stratum types of user characteristics which are still (not very helpfully) lumped together under ‘user’ variation, or, confusingly, both under ‘dialect’ in the other tradition – though, of course ‘sociolect’ is now being used for the second type in another tradition which is running with the ‘-lect’ suffix rather than with the ‘dia-’ prefix, to indicate varieties; ‘genderlect’ has also been coyly coined; and see also Hasan’s slightly dismissive mention of ‘geolect’ and ‘sociolect’;⁴⁹ ‘idiolect’, an older familiar coinage, does not of course quite fit as a social type label.

Leonhard Lipka, and Viggo Bank Jensen separately give us useful historical introductions to Coseriu’s sociolinguistics and taxonomy (which also includes a corresponding ‘syn-’ series), its relationship to other scholars, sociolinguistic models, traditions and terminologies.⁵⁰

The ‘diaphasic’ dimension which Coseriu added to Flydal’s two, refers to stylistic variation, i.e. all by itself, to all the ‘use’ or register and genre or discourse types of variation, which was innovative at the time of course, before even the Hallidayan enterprise – also in tune with the earlier British Firthian school. The Italian sociolinguist Alberto Mioni in 1983 proposed adding a further parameter to Coseriu’s ‘dia-’ ‘architecture’, the ‘diamesic’, to refer to variation according to the medium, (e.g. along the written to spoken continuum, and in different genres) which can be seen to correspond basically to that of ‘mode’ in the ‘use’ type of variation dimension above.⁵¹ Italian as well as Hispano-phone sociolinguistics, can thus indeed be seen to regularly distinguish terminologically and thus taxonomically ‘diatopic, diastratic, diaphasic’ and ‘diamesic’ variation, alongside diachronic variation, in what looks like a very useful and satisfying taxonomic series.

It is not, however, unproblematic itself. Although the dialect or use categories are better covered, the diaphasic dimension in particular, as will have been obvious by now, is still too vague and all-encompassing, just as are ‘style’ and/or ‘register’,

since it, like them, still has to cover for many types of variation which would need to be distinguished, as they are in the wide field of sociolinguistics together with discourse analysis, rhetoric, genre analysis, etc. though not neatly nor unambiguously in any of them. Miguel Casas Gomez provides a useful discussion of this,⁵² as does indeed Massimo Cerruti.⁵³

The terms ‘diaphasic’ (and diaphatic) are also rather non-transparent. Moreover, there is some uncertainty (and curiosity) regarding the origin/meaning of the ‘phasic’, ‘phatic’ parts. It/they would seem to have two possible etymologies: *phanein*, Grk ‘to appear, to show oneself’, but also possibly (according to Gaetano Berruto) *phemi*, ‘say’, *phat (os)*, ‘spoken’, *phasis*, ‘voice’, used to keep the communication channel open (as in the original meaning of Malinowski’s ‘phatic’ in ‘phatic communion’). Neither of these etymologies is fully clarifying or satisfying however with regard to its acquired wide (but also vague) range of uses to indicate register, genre, ‘use’ variation.

In Italian sociolinguistics, ‘*diafasico*’ includes ‘*registro*’ which is connected to the existing relationship between interlocutors, and ranges between, on the one hand, formality and informality and, on the other, ‘*sottocodici*’ or ‘*lingue settoriali*’ (LSPs) which depend on discourse topic. As Gaetano Berruto writes, “[l]a variazione diafasica si manifesta attraverso le diverse situazioni comunicative e consiste nei differenti modi in cui vengono realizzati i messaggi linguistici in relazione ai caratteri dello specifico contesto presente nella situazione; viene quindi anche detta *variazione situazionale*”.⁵⁴

He does also then appeal to the Hallidayian categories of ‘field, tenor’ and ‘mode’ to further articulate the ‘*dimensione diafasica*’. His mentioning an alternative cover term, *situazionale*, is perhaps a clue to the sort of discomfort caused by the semantic non-transparency of the label. Miguel Casas Gomez, as mentioned earlier, usefully discusses and criticises, among other aspects, the indeterminacy or vagueness or too encompassing nature of the diaphasic dimension itself,⁵⁵ while Jakob Wüest criticises it for the opposite reason: that the diametric distinction was unnecessarily separated out from within it.⁵⁶

The ‘dia-’ series seen so far, anyway, does thus still not fully cover with single terms the various single types of variation. There is, however, an even more detailed set of distinctions also to be found (using the ‘dia-’ model), which has perhaps also ‘stretched it’ a bit too far; this is the set of ‘Usage Labels’ used by the lexicographers of the *Dictionary of Lexicography*.⁵⁷ These do not seem to have caught on more widely, however, despite the fact that they are at least semantically transparent and (a little) ‘plainer’ as labels and that they might perhaps have helped to more usefully distinguish the types of variation further for other fields too. Perhaps not. At any rate, Hartmann and James’ metalinguistic series is made up of: ‘diachronic’, ‘diaevaluative’, ‘diafrequentative’, ‘diainegrative’, ‘diamedial’, ‘dianormative’, ‘diaphasic’, ‘diastratic’, ‘diatechnical’, ‘diatextual’ and ‘diatopic’.⁵⁸ We can see that the original Coseriu labels are mainly kept, apparently; however, in the new wider set where they are supplemented by other distinctions they acquire narrower meanings. ‘Diaphasic’ in particular, becomes (or, actually, re-becomes)

(Pisa: Pacini, 1983), 508-510 (according to the 2011 edition of the Treccani Enciclopedia Italiana on ‘variazione diamesica’, <[⁵² Miguel Casas Gomez, “Consideraciones sobre la dimension diafasica”, *Pragmalingüística*, 1 \(1993\), 99-123.](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/variazione-diamesica_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/>”, 18 August 2012).</p>
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⁵³ Massimo Cerruti, “Premesse per uno studio della variazione di registro in italiano”, *Rivista Italiana di Dialettologia*, 33 (2009), 267-282.

⁵⁴ See in Gaetano Berruto, “Variazione diafasica”, *Enciclopedia dell’Italiano* (2011), Treccani.it; and “Varietà diamesiche, diastratiche, diafasiche”, in Alberto Sobrero, ed., *Introduzione all’italiano contemporaneo. La variazione e gli usi*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1999, 4th ed.), 37-92.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Jakob Wüest, “La notion de diamesie est-elle nécessaire?”, *Travaux de linguistique*, 59.2 (2009).

⁵⁷ Reinhard R. K Hartman and Gregory James, eds., *Dictionary of Lexicography* (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁵⁸ The ‘dimension of usage’ they are each paired with – given in a table along with examples of scales and popular terms for ‘marked’ vocabulary – on the *Dictionary*’s page 151, are, respectively, “currency (period), emotionality

(attitude), frequency of occurrence, assimilation (contact), mediality (channel), normativity (standard), formality (register), style (social status), technicality (subject), textuality (genre), regionality (dialect)".

⁵⁹ Anita Rosberg, "Text Typology: Register, Genre and Text Type", in A. Trosberg, ed., *Text Typology and Translation*, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), 3-23.

⁶⁰ Norbert Dittmar, "Areal Variation and Discourse", in Peter Auer and Jürgen Erich Schmidt, eds., *Language and Space. An International Handbook of Language Variation. Theories and Methods* (Berlin: De Gruyter-Mouton, 2010), 865-878.

simply a reference to the formality (register) dimension of usage (as if it only meant tenor, its original reference), and the reference of 'register' is thus narrowed too. The reference of 'diastratic' they connect to social status, but call this 'style'. This set is perhaps after all not therefore as helpful as it may have seemed at first sight – the terminology has been further jumbled, at least in relation to usage elsewhere.

In the meantime, at any rate, the investigation of the dimension of 'use' and the construction of social meaning in context has now been mostly taken up by the discourse analysis and genre analysis disciplines, rather than by sociolinguistics, though it had started there. We need only think of 'genre' and 'text type' to round out the concept of register to remind us of how it has tightened up in more recent times. Anita Trosberg, and John Swales are useful guides to this. The so-called 'use' or 'diaphasic' type of variation dimension and even the term 'register' itself, used from its beginnings for only indicating the 'tenor' or 'formality/informality' dimension, is still not unambiguous.⁵⁹

There is again a whole other area, or level of talk, which we have hardly mentioned, and which varies across users (individuals but probably much more so on the wider general diatopic or areal, and diastratic variety dimensions, and of course across language-cultures): that which would be studied on the level of contrastive or cross-cultural pragmatics, i.e. 'discourse variation'. This is discussed, for example, by Norbert Dittmar in his 2010 essay "Areal Variation and Discourse", where he speaks of research on complex urban dialects and the findings concerning the Berlin Urban Vernacular variety style of talk, its interest lying especially in its characteristic *Berliner Schnauze* or wit/gob rhetorical style, such as brash impudence, quick repartee and humour, verbal incisiveness, "loud-mouth bluster", rather than on the usually studied phonological, morphological or lexical levels.⁶⁰

Before we continue a little further with our examination of taxonomic distinctions that could be made of the types of variation and varieties, and start on other themes, let us just get these very simple macro-ones straight. *Intra*-linguistic variation can be both, or either, *inter*-speaker variation (user/diatopic, diastratic) and *intra*-speaker variation ('use, diaphasic, diamesic'); they can intersect too, and naturally undergo diachronic variation.

Inter-linguistic variation could then be seen as that between and across languages, for example, in code mixing and code-switching among ('syntopic, synstratic') varieties and/or full-blown languages; not to forget what happens in translation when, in the passage from one language to another, the contents, as well as the connotations, the discourse and rhetorical styles, indeed, and the other various dia-typical features may have to vary, change, mutate.

Varieties of mixing and mixed varieties

All types of varieties (-lects and -types, or registers) can mix in any speaker's intra-linguistic or inter-linguistic practice; there can be switching between and among them and hybridization in situ (or they can develop into more or less stable

contact varieties), and there can be ‘crossing’.

Let us also not forget that the intuitively neat enough distinction between the ‘user’ and ‘use’ dimensions we have implicitly been using as a guide, is also again not so neat. For example, ‘user’ ‘diatopical’ varieties or ‘geolects’ can have ‘use’ or ‘diaphasic’ meanings, as when the use of a dialectal or regional variety is construed socially not only on the ‘diastratic’ dimension as lower-class, for example, but also on the so-called ‘diaphasic’ dimensions where it can be seen as expressing informality or intimacy. The terminology may be unstable/variable, but the insights and their validity are clear enough.

To turn now from more narrowly and specifically terminological issues, once again to more general methodological issues, though these too with their share of terminological interest, there is no need, in our opinion, to enter the purported deterministic/constructivist, static/dynamic debate between variationist sociolinguistics (of one-to-one correspondence between variables or styles and social or regional categories) and late-modernist approaches to styling as social meaning construction, as delineated by Nikolas Coupland, for example, or by Penelope Eckert, or Asif Agha, to recall three of the most lucid and insightful more recent discussions from within what has been called the 3rd wave of sociolinguistics, as we saw. I believe there is no contradiction between studies which seek to look at where and when and for whom variation (of the various types) occurs and those which ask why it does, and through which process; they are complementary. As Eckert states, indeed, her proposal is not one “to replace, but to refine and supplement”.⁶¹

That is essentially the issue, I believe. If speakers are seen as the active users of the linguistic resources at their disposal in their repertoires – with their current social meanings and connotations acquired and recognised in or across their various communities, or languages, rather than simply as unaware enactors entrapped in static language styles – then their choices of specific varieties, styles or even single variables, are simply to be seen as their styling themselves, displaying and embodying their ‘emblems of identity’ (to use Agha’s 2004 term again). The fact that variationism also always saw diachronic variation as possible because of the synchronic variation (as we saw), would belie the view that it views indexing of a speaker’s characteristics as fixed, invariable and unchanging, as if those variables or styles were not arbitrarily assigned, or constructed, and therefore changeable.

The fluidity of late-modern and globalised urban social life and of the consequent necessity for variation, variability and adaptability in language, also enables a new liberating vision of what it is to know a language “in the world of globalized communication, where people often communicate with bits and pieces of genres and registers”.⁶² ‘Fragments’, ‘truncated varieties’, ‘bits and pieces’, ‘bricolage’, ‘heteroglossia’, ‘code-mixing’, ‘code-switching’ and ‘shifting’, ‘crossing’, ‘mixing’, ‘remix’, etc.⁶³ – these are current buzz words, but not without reason. They are some of the practices which allow us to thrive in the heterogeneous contact zones of our late-modern cities and in the globalised world, for example, and not only in intercultural communication. We normally need and have varying levels and

⁶¹ Eckert, “Indexical Field”, 2.

⁶² Jan Blommaert, *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization. Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 210.

⁶³ For example, for the notions of ‘heteroglossia’, see notably Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel”, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 261–62; and for that of ‘crossing’, see Ben Rampton, *Crossing: Language and Ethnicity among Adolescents* (London & New York: Longman, 1995).

⁶⁴ The Common European Framework for Languages based on notional-functional principles, for the accomplishing or doing things in communicative contexts, contemplates language users' different profiles of language skills for different purposes: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp>, 19 September 2012.

⁶⁵ Though one is at a loss to select from *their* vast repertoire of work, see, e.g. Braj Kachru, "The bilingual's linguistic repertoire" (1982), in the updated version "English in the Bilingual's Code" he includes in his *The Alchemy of English* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1986), 57-80; Yamuna Kachru, "Code-mixing, Style Repertoire and Language Variation: English in Hindi Poetic Creativity", *World Englishes*, 8.3, 1989, Special Issue on Code-mixing: English across Languages, ed. by Tej K. Bhatia and William C. Ritchie, 311-319.

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Georges Lüdi, "Multilingual Repertoires and the Consequences for Linguistic Theory", in Kristin Bührig and Jan D. ten Thije, eds., *Beyond Misunderstanding. Linguistic Analyses of Intercultural Communication* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006) 11-42.

⁶⁷ Blommaert, *Sociolinguistics of Globalization*, 210.

⁶⁸ The well-known term and notion as coined by Robert B. Le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller in *Acts of Identity: Creole-Based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), in creole continuum contexts.

repertoires of competences for accomplishing different purposes in different contexts. This is not unfamiliar a principle to anyone dealing with language learners, and the CEFR, for example, of course,⁶⁴ but it has also long been recognised among scholars normally living in and aware of multilingual, culturally heterogeneous 'worlds' – with the added world presence of English. One need only remember the work of Braj and Yamuna Kachru for example,⁶⁵ or more recently that of Georges Lüdi.⁶⁶ Jan Blommaert, specifically focusing recently on the sociolinguistic effects of globalization, invokes another of the late-modern *topoi*, that of mobility:

a sociolinguistics of globalization needs to be a sociolinguistics of mobile resources, not one of immobile languages. Our focus of analysis should be the actual linguistic, communicative, semiotic resources that people have, not abstracted and idealized (or ideologized) representations of such resources. Our focus should, therefore, be on repertoires, on the complexes of resources people actually possess and deploy. I already mentioned the 'truncated' nature of multilingual repertoires in super-diverse contexts such as those of the contemporary 'global' city. Multilingualism, I argued, should not be seen as a collection of 'languages' that a speaker controls, but rather as a complex of specific semiotic resources, some of which belong to a conventionally defined 'language', while 'others' belong to another 'language'. The resources are concrete accents, language varieties, registers, genres, modalities such as writing – ways of using language in particular communicative settings and spheres of life, including the ideas that people have about ways of using, their language ideologies. What matters in the way of language for real language users, are these concrete forms of language....⁶⁷

Our perception of what it is to 'know' a language has thus shifted, or must do. Even perhaps our definition of what a language and a variety is (without more than a quick nod at the whole question of the standardisation, purist views of monolithic, correct, language use).

The intercultural interaction moment, and the status of a language (as a 'variety') being used in and for intercultural interaction (say as a lingua franca), as well as more general and connected questions of linguistic mobility, contact and mixing, deserves just a little more attention here, embedded at this point in the flow of topics.

We need in the meantime to keep the distinction between multilingual and interlingual in mind, and to refer first to a final, fundamental and relevant sets of notions for us here, those of how language use may or may not index or constitute acts of identity or ethnicity.⁶⁸ Wack refers us, for example, in her useful discussion, to Eckert's concept of 'persona':

... ethnographic studies have brought us a clearer view of how ways of speaking are imbued with local meaning (Eckert 2005: 5). By combining ethnography with language variation and social meaning, she explains that ethnography, however, does not mean that somebody speaks a particular language or variety because he or she is born in a particular type of community or belongs to a particular ethnic group. With the focus on social meaning, she is much more concerned about the question what it means that a person makes use of a particular language or style and what function it serves for him and also for his speech community In other words, people do not talk in a particular way because of who they are or because of which speech community they belong to, but

they make up their own identity – something Eckert calls the construction of personae (cf. Eckert 2005: 23) – because of the way they talk.⁶⁹

The construction of identity perspective, in particular, and thus that of the mobility or non-fixedness of identity and ethnicity is also paramount in Rampton's fundamental and just as well known concept of 'crossing'.⁷⁰ As Wack continues,

[he] argues for a redefinition of ethnicity, as for him it is not fixed but negotiable. He regards ethnicity not necessarily as a stable part of identity that is given by birth and cannot change through life, but rather as something produced: it is produced in so far that it is constructed. Consequently, if something is constructed and not inherited, it is changeable. It can easily be deconstructed again. Therefore, Rampton proposes to consider the option of adopting somebody else's ethnicity and constructing one's own new ethnicity.⁷¹

A review of Rampton's influential *Crossing* book, by Rymes, is also worth citing extensively:

Language 'crossing', the term coined by Rampton to describe codeswitching by linguistic outsiders, is itself not a new phenomenon. It is part of the experience of the immigrant, the tourist, the exchange student, and increasingly, any participant in a large urban community. Recently such crossing has attracted broad interest, and the depth of the experience – the "motions and flavors of ... vastly different subjectivities" that are possible through language crossing (Hoffman 1989:210) – has been explored in several memoirs devoted to such experience (Hoffman 1989, Davidson 1993, Kaplan 1994, Torgovnick 1994). Like these literary explorers, some scholars of language have begun to notice the poetic potential of language crossing, as well as the often undervalued insight of the "non-native speaker" (Kramsch 1997). Amid this increasing recognition of language diversity, and reflection on the human complexity of multilingual interactions and communities, Rampton's book brings sociolinguistic and anthropological insight to the analysis of crossing.⁷²

We must thus also avoid the dangers of seeing fixity in ethnicity too, as if variables were correlating with fixed or stable or unique individual or group characteristics; ethnicity too is negotiable. Furthermore, we all "know that it is impossible to talk about identities except by explicit reference to alterity, and yet it is remarkable how often we talk of identity as if it were absolute and not relational".⁷³ The twin notions of identity and alterity are indexed together, we might say, in crossing and in other intercultural or heteroglossic practices which multilinguals of various sorts (including those whose repertoires contain only fragments of others' languages or styles) can engage in.

If we fully adopt the concept of repertoire, not only of 'use' varieties but also of 'user' varieties, and recognise the social and linguistic world as one of fluidity rather than fixity, and that speakers can have multiple identities or personae, as well as have differing and different communicative goals and purposes, roles, etc., we can then also envisage not only that we will express them in our linguistic choices, but can also envisage intra-personal and inter-personal contact and mixing and

⁶⁹ Daniela Wack, *Sociolinguistics of Literature: Nonstandard English in Zadie Smith's White Teeth* (Munich, GRIN Publishing GmbH, 2005), <<http://www.grin.com/en/e-book/60365/sociolinguistics-of-literature-nonstandard-english-in-zadie-smith-s-white>>, 19 September 2012.

⁷⁰ Rampton, *Crossing*.

⁷¹ Ibid., 6.

⁷² Betsy Rymes, review of Rampton, *Crossing*, in *Language in Society*, 27.4 (1998), 552-555.

⁷³ Adi Hastings and Paul Manning, "Introduction: Acts of Alterity", *Language & Communication*, 24.4 (2004), 291-311.

hybridity, and shifting and change. We will have styles of speaking which emerge only situationally and are not properly varieties but functions (as I suggest we see ELF, for example), or code-mixing instances which do not represent varieties but again situational instances of mixing, each one different from another.

Hybrid varieties may stabilise (as is said of some of the new Englishes around the world or of creole languages in their formation), and form new hybrid, more or less recognisable, ‘varieties’. These will still shift or vary situationally, however (imagine again also DeCamp’s creole continuum concept for which Robert Le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller originally coined their notion of *acts of identity* by speakers choosing how and when to place their talk and themselves along the continuum). We can mix and switch not only between full-blown languages which we may have in our more or less rich individual linguistic repertoires, but also mix and switch between them or dialects or registers or styles or whatever, and, more to the point, between bits of linguistic ‘things’ we only have fragments of. This we might see happening, for example – to allude to three of our papers, by Nisco, Guzzo and Vigo, respectively – when a Gullah word is inserted by a non-fully Gullah competent speaker into wider colloquial AAVE, or AE, or when fragments of Italian or even of Italian phonology are used by 3rd generation immigrants in the UK who only speak English, or when in intercultural communication we borrow or quote a word from one of the other languages of the other speakers.

Moreover, quoting or mimicking or borrowing or code-mixing, or ‘crossing’ – to remind us again of some of the terms for using fragments of other/s’ languages, can also be used not only as an act of identity but also as one of alterity – whether for comedic effect, for playful or aggressive teasing, or for distancing and for negative stereotyping, etc. In Emilia Di Martino’s discussion, for example, we catch glimpses of what Hastings and Manning have called ‘acts of alterity’ when she quotes playful or ironic mimicry of royalese by the media. We can also see it at work, and then even driving language change in the standard, behind the ‘sneaking up’ of the once sub-standard ‘snuck’. Indeed, jocular, ironic quoting and/or coining can also drive change. Suzanne Romaine’s paper shows this, among many other things, but we can also remember familiar cases from elsewhere and other disciplinary discussions – we need only think of how techy jocular (metaphorical) jargon (like ‘twitter’ and ‘tweet’, or the older ‘chat’, or indeed, ‘mouse’ or a myriad other terms in netspeak or computer terminology have become simply technical terminology),⁷⁴ or how connotations change across time (e.g. the changing values of ‘nigger’, ‘black’, of ‘queer’, ‘queen’, ‘gay’, to name only a few) and how communities adopt and re-appropriate others’ negative terms for them, in acts of resistance and identity.

Before finally leaving the reader to the individual papers, hopefully with enhanced curiosity, I wish to return once more to the variation *vs.* variety question implicitly announced in our title, to the necessity indeed to not confuse the notion of situational or contextual variation with the situational or contextual use of a variety, using the controversial status question of English (or any language) as a Lingua Franca touched on by Vigo as a focus. This also necessitates recourse to

⁷⁴ For a discussion see, for example, my ‘Twixt twitalk and tweespeak (not to mention trouble) on Twitter: a flutter with affectivity’, in *Anglistica*, 10.1-2 (2006), 169-191.

the notions of repertoire, of fragments and of contact, of code-switching, set out above, as well as intercultural and pragmatic awareness and competence. I suggest that ELF can best be seen as an instance of what Juliane House calls 'language for communication' (rather than a 'language for identification'); as such of course (if it were a variety) it would fall within the 'use' varieties of a language.⁷⁵ It is worth noting on this that House is careful to call it English "in its role as lingua franca"; as such it would not pose a threat to other languages, either.⁷⁶ In my view too, if I may interpose it, using English as a Lingua Franca, does not pose a threat to one's own native language, since it simply adds another wider 'circle' of possibilities – a wider network of contacts (a loose, low context one) – hardly one which threatens the intimate inner-circle of high context communication and community identity. Being able to use it in this way, in a context of use, however minimal one's level of competence in English as such, is simply part of one's communicative repertoire, part of one's 'multi-competence' for performing different acts of different sorts or pursuing different purposes in different contexts. House's distinction, indeed, puts one in mind also of the earlier distinction, made by Randolph Quirk in 1981 when he talks of the individual's right not only to have a "community identity through repose in his most local variety" of language but also of the same individual's linguistic "needs in a wider role – ultimately as 'citizen of the world'",⁷⁷ and of Henry Widdowson's distinction made in 1982 between the 'homing' and 'questing' instincts in his discussion concerning English for cross-cultural communication (as mentioned too in my own 1990 discussion of the two centripetal and centrifugal uses of a language, in ever widening and less intimate circles of identity functions).⁷⁸

Apart from treading warily and aware-ly with the terminology referring to types of variation varieties, i.e. to be aware of the possible shifting nature of such as 'variety', 'style', 'register', etc, and of others like 'identity', 'crossing', 'mixing', 'hybridity'⁷⁹, (not gone into here or we would never have finished), we might also, finally, I suggest, do well to be attentive to such terms as 'indexing'. This does seem suspiciously correlationist itself as if there were a strict 'pointing' correspondence between sign and signified. That this correspondence is now seen as fluid, non-fixed, negotiated, constructed each time in context, makes it no less correlationist. Furthermore, one need not see the early variationists as necessarily excluding it as being immobile or static or not in a strict one-to-one correspondence with fixed social categories; so I will not enter the needless debate (in that there is no need for a debate). Useful insights come from the synergy of different approaches and types of data, both despite terminological variation and because of the fluidity of ideas.

At any rate, an interdisciplinary or better, a *trans*-disciplinary approach, with cultural studies, the various branches of sociolinguistics and ethnography of speaking, linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis and pragmatics, together bringing their insights and perspectives, is after all, in the declared spirit of our journal.

⁷⁵ Rather than being a 'variety' proper, it would be best to see it as a fleeting instantiation of a selection of bits from one's repertoire. This would bear more discussion than we can give it here, however.

⁷⁶ Juliane House, "English as a Lingua Franca: a Threat to Multilingualism?", *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7.3 (2003), 556-578.

⁷⁷ Randolph Quirk, "Cross-Cultural Communication and the Concept of Nuclear English", in Larry E. Smith, ed., *English for Cross-Cultural Communication*, (London: Macmillan, 1981), 151-165; see also in Charles Brumfit, ed., *English for International Communication*, (Oxford: Pergamon 1982), 15.

⁷⁸ Henry Widdowson, "English as an International Language II: What Do We Mean by International Language?", in Charles Brumfit, ed., *English for International Communication*, (Oxford: Pergamon 1982), 9-13; Jocelyne Vincent Marrelli, "English for Crosstalk: Pidgin for Pentecost?", in Jean Aitchison et al., eds., *English Past and Present*, (Fasano-Bari: Schena, 1990), 197-227.

⁷⁹ The vagueness or indeterminacy (and contradictions in use) of this notion, so facetiously bandied about as a buzz word today, has been a favourite target of mine in several oral presentations, and would I suggest need to be critically, systematically addressed.