Giuliana Regnoli

Social Network Integration, Norm Enforcement and Accent Perceptions in Indian Transient Student Communities

Abstract: The present paper aims to shed new light on the closely related concepts of social network and community of practice by taking into account a transient community of Indian university students located in Heidelberg, Germany. By drawing on qualitative and quantitative data collected through sociolinguistic interviews and questionnaires, the paper will analyse the locally contracted ties that the community members construct in their everyday lives in relation to their linguistic practices within and outside their student community. The results show that the transient aspect of the community is a valuable sociolinguistic factor in the fostering of in-group affiliations. The relatively short-lived context at issue promotes language maintenance practices which, in turn, structure internal network subgroups based on ethnicity. Here, the density and the multiplexity of the network support the speakers' first languages resisting institutional pressures to language shift.

Keywords: *accent variation, Indian Englishes, language maintenance, network structure, transient multilingual speech communities*

1. Introduction

The effects of interpersonal relationships on language variation and change have long been investigated in sociolinguistics.[1] Sometimes, they have more impact on the language choices of the speakers than most categorical extralinguistic variables. Although consistent, in fact, categories such as 'gender' and 'ethnicity' "may relate indirectly to the procedures of participants in constructing and categorizing social worlds that reflect their analysis of locally meaningful social groupings".[2] These micro-level social clusters may help "explain individual behaviour of various kinds which cannot be accounted for in terms of corporate group membership", that is, in terms of class structure.[3]

The social function of network has been defined as a 'norm enforcement mechanism'[4] in which the loyalty of community members to their social network is directly related to their conformity to its collective values. In other words, conformity to linguistic norms is the sociolinguistic correlate of network membership. As Milroy puts it, "the closer an individual's network ties are with his local community, the closer his language approximates to localized vernacular forms".[5] Likewise, there is a gradation of conformity in terms of norms and values which goes hand in hand with the individual's integration into the network.

[1] See Rosetta Lippi-Green, "Social Network Integration and Language Change in Progress in a Rural Alpine Village", *Language in Society*, 18 (1989), 213-234; Lesley Milroy, *Observing and Analysing Natural Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Jenny Cheshire, "Linguistic Variation and Social Function", in Suzanne Romaine, ed., *Sociolinguistic Variation in Speech Communities* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), 153-66; John J. Gumperz, "Social Network and Language Shift", in John Gumperz, ed., *Discourse Strategies* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1971), 38-58.
[2] Lesley Milroy and Mattiew Gordon, *Sociolinguistics: Method and Interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 116.
[3] Lesley Milroy, *Language and Social Networks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 135.
[4] Elizabeth Bott, *Family and Social Network. Roles, Norms and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families* (London: Tavistock, 1957).
[5] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, 175.

Homogeneity of norms and network density are even more significant in multilingual communities. In such contexts, norm-supporting and norm-constructing network practices may account either for the phenomenon of language maintenance or the social trajectory of language shift.[6] Moreover, distinctive ethnic communities involving strong personal ties tend to gravitate to form bonds with other networks which have similar linguacultural norms.[7]

The present paper endeavours to provide insight into social network structure and language use in a small transient community of Indian university students located in Heidelberg, Germany. Although very little attention has been given to the Indian diaspora in EFL countries, i.e., countries where English is spoken as a foreign language and, most importantly, to Indian speech communities in Germany, Indian migration to Germany is momentous. In a country where people know neither West Bengal nor Bengalis, but would recognise all Indian ethnic identities as one, being and acting as a Bengali is only possible *within* the Indian community in question. It is only here, in fact, that the kaleidoscope of ethnic identities acquires social significance.[8] This calls into question what Jayaram describes as the renegotiation of the 'problem of ethnicity', i.e., the willingness of diasporic subjects to shed their regional, linguistic and/or ethnic identities depending on the contingent circumstances.[9] Ethnicity conceptualisations have been equally observed in relation to a commonly held folk belief in the community according to which Southern Indians have a distinctive accent when speaking English. Their English is often said to be 'funny' and 'highly influenced by their L1s' in contrast to the English of Northern Indians, which is usually described as 'smoother' and 'thick'.[10]

In order to postulate whether network integration plays a role in ethnicity renegotiation in transient multilingual communities, the paper will investigate norm conformity and inclusivity by answering the question whether in-group affiliations are valuable extralinguistic factors in accent discrimination. After a brief sketch of previous related research in ethnicity renegotiation in primary diaspora situations and transient multilingual communities (section 2), an outline of the Heidelberg Indian student community will be provided in section 3. Section 4 will describe how the data were gathered and analysed and section 5 will shed light on network bonds and network integration in the community at issue. Conclusions will be provided in section 6.

2. Ethnicity in the Indian Diaspora and Transient Multilingual Speech Communities

The Indian diaspora today constitutes a major force in world culture. According to India's Ministry of External Affairs, more than 20 million Indians live outside the subcontinent, either as people of Indian origin, i.e., people who have acquired the citizenship of the host country (PIOs) or as non-resident Indians, i.e., people living abroad on a temporary resident permit (NRIs).[11] However, this is a narrow estimate based on the definition of the Indian diaspora as being constituted only by people who migrated from the Republic of India. In this respect, Skutsch uses a broader definition so as to include

[6] Sarah J. Shin, "Paibu Dollar Please! Bilingual Korean American Children in New York City", *Bilingualism. Language and Cognition*, 2 (1988), 147-167; Li Wei, "Variations in Patterns of Language Choice and Codeswitching by Three Groups of Chinese/English Speakers in Newcastle upon Tyne", *Multilingua*, 14 (1995), 297-323.
[7] Anthony Giddens, *Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).
[8] Giuliana Regnoli, "Translanguaging as an Expression of Transnational Identity. Ethnicity Renegotiation in the Indian Diaspora", *Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts*, 5 (2019a), 165-184.
[9] Narayana Jayaram, *The Indian Diaspora. Dynamics of Migration* (New Delhi: Sage, 2004).
[10] Giuliana Regnoli, "Language Attitudes, Ethnic Identities and Meta-Linguistic Awareness. An Accent-based Study of the Indian Transient Student Community of Heidelberg", Ph.D. dissertation (University of Naples "L'Orientale" and University of Heidelberg, 2019); Giuliana Regnoli, "Indexicality and Contextualisation. Linguistic, Cultural and Social Stances of Indian English speakers in Heidelberg", M.A. thesis (University of Naples "L'Orientale", 2016).
[11] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, http://mea.gov.in, accessed 2 November 2020.

people who migrated from the whole of the Indian subcontinent, i.e., Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.[12]

It is not until very recently that linguistic studies of Indian primary and secondary diaspora situations have been given much attention. Earlier research on language in the Indian diaspora has focused on the status and maintenance of Indian native languages.[13] A great exception has been Mesthrie's work on the Indian diaspora in South Africa which principally examined Bhojpuri Hindi,[14] sociolinguistic aspects of language contact and localised varieties of Indian English (hereafter, IndE) in contact situations.[15] With the exception of South African IndE, Indian varieties of English are a fairly recent area of study since research has often been restricted to individual case studies rather than to comparisons of language contact across different diasporic settings.[16]

Recent work on the linguistics of the Indian diaspora tends to provide a more comparative perspective on the topic aiming to deepen the theoretical framework of studies of language change and language contact, such as the degree of universality in the process of focusing on migration situations,[17] selections of traits from contact feature pools[18] and interplays between identity, social access and language change.[19] Specifically, they address theoretical and methodological questions concerning issues of endonormativity, transnationalism, and community structure, attitudinal orientation and identity development. While the regional spread covered by Indian diasporic studies ranges from the US via Africa and the UK to Singapore, the Caribbean and the South Pacific, non-anglophone contexts are still underresearched (see section 3).

Alam and Stuart-Smith's work in a Glaswegian Pakistani community of practice, for example, explores the emergence of a local ethnic accent with subtle adaptation of heritage features reflecting newly emerging identities.[20] Their detailed spectral moment analysis of syllable-initial /t/ shows a significant correlation between fine phonetic variation and ethnicity for three measures (mean, skew, kurtosis), thus revealing a clear patterning correlated to the social practices and gradience of the participants. The realisation of retroflex stops for the voiceless and voiced coronal plosives /t/ and /d/ is, in fact, a stereotypical feature of IndE accents, and is also investigated in many first-generation British-Asian speakers.[21] Similarly, Leung and Deuber's case study of fundamental frequency (F0) in Indo-Trinidadian speech proves to be significant as a marker of Indian ethnicity.[22] Despite the commonly held stereotype according to which Indo-Trinidadians have a distinctive speech pattern,

[12] Carl Skutsch, *Encyclopedia of the World's Minorities* (London: Routledge, 2005).
[13] Rekha Sharma and E. Annamalai, eds, *Indian Diaspora. In Search of Identity* (Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages, 2003); Richard K. Barz and Jeff Siegel, *Language Transplanted. The Development of Overseas Hindi* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988).
[14] Rajend Mesthrie, *Language in Indenture. A Sociolinguistic History of Bhojpuri-Hindi in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand U.P., 1991).
[15] Rajend Mesthre, *English in Language Shift. The History, Structure, and Sociolinguistics of South African Indian English* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992)
[16] Marianne Hundt and Devyani Sharma, eds., *English in the Indian Diaspora* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014).
[17] Paul Kerswill and Peter Trudgill, "The Birth of New Dialects", in Peter Auer, Frans Hinskens and Paul Kerswill, eds., *Dialect Change: Convergence and Divergence in European Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2005), 196-220.
[18] Salikoko Mufwene, *The Ecology of Language Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001).
[19] R.B. Le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of Identity. Creole-based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1985).
[20] Farhana Alam and Jane Stuart-Smith, "Identity, Ethnicity and Fine Phonetic Detail. An Acoustic Phonetic Analysis of Syllable-initial /t/ in Glaswegian Girls of Pakistani Heritage", in Hundt and Sharma, eds., *English in the Indian Diaspora*, 29-53.
[21] See Devyani Sharma and and Lavanya Sankaran, "Cognitive and Social Forces in Dialect Shift. Gradual Change in London Asian Speech", *Language Variation and Change*, 23 (2011), 399-428; Mangarat Rai Bhardwaj, *Colloquial Panjabi* (London: Routledge, 1995).
[22] Glenda A. Leung and Dagmar Deuber, "Indo-Trinidadian Speech. An Investigation into a Popular Stereotype Surrounding Pitch", in Hundt and Sharma, eds., *English in the Indian Diaspora*, 9-27.

very few studies have focused on ethnolects in Trinidad from a phonological perspective.[23] In this light, Leung and Deuber collected data in a survey format among Indo- and Afro- Trinidadians in order to investigate the above-mentioned belief. Recurring to perceptual cues of laypeople who described Indo-Trinidadian speech as "light, soft, fine, and high in pitch"[24] their findings reveal that F0 is indeed one of the salient cues which Trinidadians rely on to distinguish ethnicity since a high-pitched voice tends to be associated with Indo-Trinidadians.

Thus, recent debates about the Indian diaspora have started to address questions of what internally heterogeneous diasporic speech communities look like and how community boundaries and emerging identities affect attitudes.[25] The role of identity is always crucial to language change. Schneider, for instance, argues that major events may drive change in World Englishes (hereafter, WEs) due to the shift to endonormative orientation based on new identities[26], while Schreirer uses the framework of WEs to refine the understanding of different social roles in koineisation and new-dialect formation.[27] In such contexts, speakers' constant need of renegotiating the 'problem of ethnicity'[28] is resolved in their willingness to shed their regional, linguistic and ethnic identities, sometimes in deference to their more general pan-Indian one. In this sense, "a person may be Bengali [or] Indian"[29] depending on specific sociocultural and linguistic circumstances. Hence, specifics of bilingual identities may affect language variation.[30]

Some communities exist in relation to specific social practices, activities, and relationships.[31] Because of this, members are typically aware of their role and relationship to other communities as part of normal functioning. However, as Morgan points out: "[e]ven when members are aware of the values, attitudes, and norms ... of a speech community, their positive standing is not always guaranteed, especially when regular travel and transmigration are the norm".[32] Although work on Indian diasporic stable communities has received wide recognition, only a limited number of studies have examined the peculiar configuration of transient multilingual speech communities. Transient communities represent dynamic language scenarios in which people from diverse sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds come together for a limited period of time around specific shared activities. In such relatively short-lived contexts, norms and attitudes tend to be less stable and more negotiable than in other settings. This fluidity in terms of linguistic norms and attitudes entails a constant renegotiation with respect to language choice and the social meaning which is associated with different ways of speaking.[33] While stable communities are generally characterised by similar standard language ideologies, such shared

[23] Glenda A. Leung, "A Synchronic Sociophonetic Study of Monophthongs in Trinidadian English", Ph.D. dissertation (University of Freiburg, 2013); Shelome Gooden, Kathy-Ann Drayton and Mary Beckham, "Tone Inventories and Tune-text Alignments. Prosodic Variation in 'Hybrid' Technique Prosodic Systems", *Studies in Language*, 33 (2009), 396-436.
[24] Leung and Deuber, "Indo-Trininadian Speech", 13.
[25] Hundt and Sharma, eds., *English in the Indian Diaspora*.
[26] Edgar Schneider, *Postcolonial English. Varieties around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2007).
[27] Daniel Schreirer, "On Cafeterias and New Dialects. The Role of Primary Transmitters". In Sarah Buschfeld, Thomas Hoffmann, Magnus Huber and Alexander Kautzsch, eds, *The Evolution of Englishes. The Dynamic Model and Beyond* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2014), 231-48.
[28] Jayaram, *The Indian Diaspora.*
[29] Wardlow Friesen and Robin A. Kearns, "Indian Diaspora in New Zealand: History, Identity and Cultural Landscapes", in Parvati Raghuram, Ajaya K. Sahoo, Brij Maharaj and Dave Sangha, eds., *Tracing an Indian Diaspora. Contexts, Memories, Representations* (New Delhi: Sage, 2008), 210-236, 225.
[30] Devyani Sharma, "World Englishes and Sociolinguistic Theory", in Markku Filppula, Juhani Klemola and Devyani Sharma, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of World Englishes* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2017), 232-251.
[31] Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger, *Situated Learning. Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1991).
[32] Marcyliena Morgan, "Speech Community", in Alessandro Duranti, ed., *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology* (London: Blackwell, 2004), 3-22, 13.
[33] Janus Mortensen and Anne Fabricius, "Language Ideologies in Danish Higher Education. Exploring Student Perspectives", in Anna K. Hultgren, Frans Gregersen and Jacob Thøgersen, eds., *English in Nordic Universities. Ideologies and Practices* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014), 193-223.

assumptions cannot be assumed *a priori* in transient multilingual ones since members may develop their own language ideological beliefs which act as interpretative resources toward different ways of speaking. In this sense, a transient community is similar to a community of practice, which is a different social construct from the traditional notion of speech community, primarily because it is "defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages".[34]

In the present work, the speech community/community of practice will not be defined beforehand but will rather result from the study. In the context of the Heidelberg Indian social group, factors such as the respondents' knowledge of accents and dialects and their network integration are fundamental concepts which will provide insight into the speakers' perceptions and structure of their community.

3. Research Area

The Indian diaspora in Germany is a fully established and highly influential ethnic group. In 2016, India represented the most important non-EU country of origin for high-skilled migrants and the second most significant sending country for international students.[35] Today, Germany represents the country in Europe with the largest number of Indian immigrants after the UK and Italy.[36] As a matter of fact, the Indian diaspora in Germany has become more and more visible through the founding of numerous associations and clubs and through its cultural commitment, political success and the establishment of prominent worship places such as Hindu temples and *gurdwaras*, i.e., places of assembly and worship for Sikhs.

Heidelberg is a university town situated in the Southwestern German federal state of Baden-Württemberg (hereafter, BW). The Indian population in Heidelberg has been growing steadily over the last fifteen years. According to the figures of the Heidelberg City Hall, there has been an increase in both NRIs and PIOs of a staggering 230.7% between 2003 and 2018, currently making it a combined strength of 1.055 individuals.[37] Though small, the Indian local community is quite active and mainly comprises IT professionals and university students. Heidelberg provides excellent education and research opportunities for students and scholars from all over the world and has been attracting undergraduates and graduates from India for years. Today, the Heidelberg Indian community mainly consists of upper middle-class students who came to Germany in order to further their education and improve their professional skills. Having generally had an English-medium education and having pursued a bachelor's degree in their mother country, these students are enrolled at different master's and Ph.D. courses covering Physics, International Business and Engineering, Medical Anthropology and Transcultural Studies.[38]

Heidelberg is home to one Indian association, i.e., the Heidelberg Indian students' association (hereafter, HISA), a non-profit organisation established in 2003 by a group of Indian students with the intent of bridging the gap between the Indian migrant community and the local one. The association

[34] Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnel-Ginet, "Communities of Practice. Language, Gender, and Power All Live", in Kira Hall, Mary Bucholtz and Birch Moonwoman, eds., *Locating Power. Proceedings of the 1992 Berkeley Women and Language Conference* (Berkeley: Berkeley Women and Language Group, 1992), 89-99, 96.

[35] Simone Burkhart, Nabila Chehab-van den Assem, Karin Essig, Judith Grützmacher, Urlich Heublein, Lea Jechel, Susanne Kammüller and Jan Kercher, *Wissenschaft Weltoffen. Daten und Fakten zur Internationalität von Studium und Forschung in Deutchland* (Bielefeld: Wbv, 2017).

[36] Mustafa Aksakal, "International Migration and Place-based Inequalities. The Case of High-skilled Migration and Student Mobility to Eastern Germany", in S. Irudaya Rajan, ed., *India Migration Report 2019. Diaspora in Europe* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2019), 1-15.

[37] Heidelberg City Hall, https://www.heidelberg.de/hd,Lde/HD.html, accessed 28 October 2020.

[38] Many universities in Germany, Heidelberg included, offer international students the possibility to enrol at selected courses taught entirely in English. Thus, admission does not require any proof of skills in German. See Regnoli, *Indexicality and Contextualisation*.

has been officially recognised by the University of Heidelberg as an international student organisation and has been a life-partner of the 'Indian Students in Germany' project, working in collaboration with the Indian Embassy in Germany. The organisation "is dedicated towards the welfare of the Indian students and community in and around Heidelberg"[39] and has been proudly working in this direction from the last 17 years. HISA is constantly engaged in the organisation of cultural events (e.g., movie nights, flash mobs), festivals (e.g., Diwali, Holi, Navratri, Independence Day), Yoga days as well as Business Entrepreneurship and start-up competitions. At present, it has some 300 registered members (with a fairly equal number of men and women) coming from the University of Heidelberg, the European Molecular Biology laboratory (EMBL), the Max Planck Institutes (MPI) and the SRH Hochschule Heidelberg.[40]

The Heidelberg Indian student community holds an interesting folk belief that Southern Indians have a distinctive English accent. While Northerners are often described as speaking English in a 'smoother', 'neutral' or 'good' way, the English of Southern Indians is usually depicted as 'highly influenced by their L1s', 'rough' and 'stereotypical'.[41] These descriptors account for the social stereotypes and overt attitudes of the community members towards IndE accent variation. Furthermore, different accents seem to index locally situated ethnic identities within the community.

In light of these considerations, the present paper endeavours to shed new light on the role that the community members' inclusivity plays in perceived accent variation.

4. Data and Methodology

The wider study from which these results are drawn is based on the triangulation of the sociolinguistic network framework and the ethnographic framework.[42] Such approaches use longitudinal ethnographic studies to access members of communities and to observe their shared developing sociolinguistic practices. Moreover, they offer excellent ways of investigating the kind of subtle social differentiation that needs to be identified if the development of speaker awareness is to be considered in conjunction with emergent local ethnic identities. Specifically, the study adopts an experimental design combining both quantitative and qualitative methods in what is generally referred to as a 'convergent parallel design' where quantitative and qualitative data are collected independently and concurrently.[43] The combination of methodologies has been deemed important since the field in question has not been explored in the past.

The paper presents data gathered from sixty speakers (39 master's students and 21 Ph.D. ones) aged 21-30, coming from sixteen Indian states, speaking fourteen different languages as L1 (one Germanic language (English), 9 Indo-Aryan ones, 4 Dravidian ones) and the same number of IndE regional dialects. The size of the sample is justified by the relatively 'smallness' of the speech community and proved to be sufficient to allow for generalisations about the entire Indian student population of Heidelberg. The data were collected between February and early October 2018. Participants were approached through friend-to-friend recommendations, usually in local establishments such as university libraries, but also privately, in their households.

[39] HISA (Heidelberg Indian Students' Association), http://hisaheidelberg.com, accessed 8 July 2019.
[40] Although the majority of the community consist of students, it is important to mention that HISA includes members from the PIO and NRI local communities as well.
[41] See Regnoli, *Language Attitudes, Ethnic Identities and Meta-Linguistic Awareness.*
[42] See Gumperz, "Social Network and Language Shift"; Milroy and Gordon, *Sociolinguistics. Method and Interpretation*; Dell Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics. An Ethnographic Approach* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974); Lesley Milroy and James Milroy, "Social Networks and Social Class. Toward an Integrated Sociolinguistic Model", *Language in Society*, 21 (1992), 1-26.
[43] John W. Creswell and Vicky L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011).

The present study will focus on the results from the (i) network analysis as well as the (ii) correlation analysis. With respect to (i), two calculations have been computed: the Guttman Coefficient of Reproducibility and the Rasch Scalability Coefficient. The coefficient of reproducibility measures the predictability of responses according to their position within a said table, while the scalability coefficient measures the observed numbers of errors according to the Guttman scale model over the sum of the expected numbers of errors.[44] (ii) Spearman-Rho rank and Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient have been performed on each of the main extralinguistic variables, i.e., gender, ethnicity and time spent in Heidelberg, on the dependent variable, i.e., network integration, and on the results of one of the tasks of the survey, i.e., the accent identification task.[45] Pearson's *r* is a statistic used when a correlation is linear. It is defined as "the *covariance* of the two variables divided by the product of their standard deviations".[46] Speakman's rho is a non-parametric measure of correlation calculated using the same methods as the Pearson correlation, but the data are transformed into ranks first. In this way, continuous data are converted to an ordinal scale. In other words, while Pearson's *r* quantifies the linearity of a relationship, Spearman's rho assesses its monotonicity.[47]

5. Results

Social class has always been the main social variable to be investigated in traditional sociolinguistic studies. However, there are some social groups which are not class-differentiated and that nevertheless show linguistic differentiation. In such micro-level social clusters, individuals may further demarcate themselves by patterns of (perceived) linguistic variation and their network allegiances may be invoked "to explain individual behaviour of various kinds which cannot be accounted for in terms of corporate group membership".[48] The Heidelberg Indian student community is no exception. At the time of the fieldwork, a network approach was considered suitable since it provided a set of procedures which enabled a study of a small community where speakers could not be discriminated in terms of any kind of social class index.[49] Moreover, a network analysis offered the possibility to deal with variation between individual speakers rather than between groups, which was ideal for the ethnographic perspective of the study (see section 4).

A network-strength scale has been devised according to four criteria which assessed the participants' network characteristics with reference to those different relationships within their community of practice that have emerged during the fieldwork as significant to the members. Informants scored one point for each of the following conditions they satisfied: (i) same faculty of at least two more Indian students; (ii) proximity to more than five Indian students; (iii) free time spent with other Indian students; (iv) regular participation in Indian associations in Germany, particularly in HISA. Network density has been measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (0) highly

[44] Jobling and Snell, "The Use of the Coefficient of Reproducibility in Attitude Scaling", *The Incorporated Statistician*, 11 (1961), 110-118.

[45] The accent identification task aimed to elicit the speakers' language attitudes towards IndE accent variation indirectly. In doing so, the study used the 'verbal-guise' technique (Campbell-Kibler, 2010), which uses more than only one or two speakers compared to the most widely used method of the 'matched-guise' technique (Lambert *et al.*, 1960). The participants had to listen to eight different guises reading the same passage and, after each stimulus, were asked to rate the speakers on various measures along 12 semantic differential five-point Likert scales. The eight speakers selected for the guise, i.e., four female ones and four male ones were all highly educated (enrolled in either master's or Ph.D. courses), came from different Indian states (i.e., four Northern ones and four Southern ones) and had different L1s as to cover ideally the state language/ethnic ratio of the entire subcontinent.

[46] Daniel E. Johnson, "Descriptive Statistics", in Robert J. Podesva and Devyani Sharma, eds., *Research Methods in Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2013), 288-315, 305. Emphasis in the original.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, 135.

[49] Regnoli, *Language Attitudes, Ethnic Identities and Meta-Linguistic Awareness*.

unintegrated to (4) highly integrated. Network integration indices have then been compared with their rankings in a sociometric diagram.

participant	i	ii	iii	iv	tot	status
SDfKa	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
JGMfKe	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
MMfKa	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
AHfKa	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
MGofUt	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
STfBi	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
DSfWB	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
SMfMa	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
AVmDe	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
SVmKa	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
VSmTN	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
MNmKa	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
PPmKa	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
ARmKe	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
SSmKe	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
BJmGu	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
ABmDe	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
ASmMP	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
BSmGu	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
URmRa	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
DTfUt	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
TKfMa	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
JGfMa	+	+	+	+	4	highly integrated
VJRfKa	(-)	+	+	+	3	integrated
PGfMa	+	(-)	+	+	3	integrated
APmTN	(-)	(-)	+	+	2	somewhat integrated
DLfMan	(-)	+	(-)	+	2	somewhat integrated
RFmMa	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
ATmDe	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
SSmUt	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
KDmWB	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
OFmTN	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
SPmKa	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
SSmKa	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
PNmKe	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
SAmKa	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
PVfKa	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
DVfAP	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
JDfMa	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
SPfBi	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
NKSfTN	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
ASfKe	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
VRmTN	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
SSmHa	+	+	+	-	3	integrated
SSmMa	+	+	-	-	2	somewhat integrated
MGfUt	+	+	-	-	2	somewhat integrated
TDfMa	+	+	-	-	2	somewhat integrated
RMfMa	+	+	-	-	2	somewhat integrated
NPfMP	+	+	-	-	2	somewhat integrated
RDfKa	+	+	-	-	2	somewhat integrated
GSmDe	+	+	-	-	2	somewhat integrated
HTmUP	+	+	-	-	2	somewhat integrated
RNmKa	+	+	-	-	2	somewhat integrated
SLmKa	+	+	-	-	2	somewhat integrated
SHfUP	+	-	-	-	1	unintegrated
SLfUP	+	-	-	-	1	unintegrated
SDfMP	+	-	-	-	1	unintegrated
KGfPu	+	-	(+)	-	2	somewhat integrated
SSfWB	-	-	-	-	0	highly unintegrated
KMmKe	-	-	-	-	0	highly unintegrated

Table 1: Network Strength Scale (n = 60) Guttman Reproducibility Coefficient = 0.97*; Rasch Scalability Coefficient = 0.75* (adapted from Regnoli, 2019b: 133)

To assess the development of the set of data in question and to test the fit of the implicational scale, two calculations have been computed: the Guttman Coefficient of Reproducibility and the Rasch Scalability Coefficient. Data from both calculations result statistically significant, i.e., they show less

than 10% error cells (Guttman Reproducibility Coefficient = 0.97*; Rasch Scalability Coefficient = 0.75*).

As can be seen, network allegiances in the community are relatively dense and multiplex. In other words, the community is highly inclusive despite the common folk belief that Southern Indians have a 'rough' and 'stereotypical' English compared to the 'smoother' and 'neutral' one of the Northerners. Following the principle of 'anchorage', which entails considering the network from the point of view of the individuals, it is possible to uncover the informal relationships the community members are embedded in.[50] Each person, in fact, may be viewed as a focus from which lines radiate to points, which correspond to the other people they are in contact with, in forming the so-called 'first-order network zone'. Indeed, the more distantly connected people form a second, a third- or a fourth-order zone. According to Boissevain, the first two order zones appear to be crucial since individuals generally use second-order contacts to attain different goals.[51] Usually, it is the 'friend of a friend' who helps attain such goals.

The high density of the network may be considered to "function effectively as [a] norm-enforcement mechanism"[52] since its interactional characteristics exert influence on behaviour. In order to avoid the inadequacy of specifying a link without considering its content, the sociometric status of the participants was compared to their integration indices which, in turn, aligned with the network multiplexity. The sociometric status shows an interesting correspondence for the highly integrated members since they top the scale for integration just as they do for status. Table 1 reveals that the volume of exchanges and, therefore, of shared knowledge within the network is significant. Highly integrated speakers (n = 23) constitute the so-called "ego"[53] or core of the first-order network zone, and integrated ones (n = 19) form the ego's second-order zone. Well-integrated participants are socially positioned to access multiple sub-communities of practice such as HISA or other Indian communities in Germany. Moreover, the content of the links between the ego and the mediating first-order contact is very definite. Highly integrated members and integrated ones usually constitute the linguistically influential peer groups of the community. On the contrary, somewhat integrated (n = 13), unintegrated (n = 3) and highly unintegrated (n = 2) members occupy the more peripheral zones of the network. As described in other network studies, peripheral members and, particularly, those unintegrated and highly unintegrated are not generally known by the core members, but only by integrated or secondary ones.[54]

In order to establish whether there were some meaningful connections between network density and perceived accent variation within the student community, correlation analyses were performed. For this purpose, Spearman-Rho rank and Pearson's product-moment coefficient's correlation were performed on the dependent variable of *network* and on the results from the Accent Identification Task. More specifically, the sum total of the guises from the accent identification task recognised by each participant and the network-integration indices analysed above were tested for correlations between them.

Figure 1 suggests a significant weak positive correlation between accent recognition and the sociometric status of the community members ($r = 0.35$; $r_s = 0.35$; $r^2 = 0.09$; $p = 0.017$*). The density plot shows that at point (5,4) the shades are darker, i.e., the density of the values is higher. The majority of the informants who identified five guises correctly (x = 5) are highly integrated members (y = 4). On a similar note, the peak of the histogram is at x = 5, which means that highest accent recognition among all the samples is at x = 5. Likewise, the histogram to the right shows that the same

[50] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*.
[51] Jeremy Boissevain, *Friends of Friends. Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974).
[52] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, 52.
[53] Ibid., 46.
[54] Cheshire, "Linguistic Variation and Social Function".

applies to the values on the y axis and, as expected, the peak is at y = 4. Since the plot is more spread on the south-west of the figure, there is a linear correlation of variables on both axes, which is corroborated by the positive r and r_s values. Both variables move in the same direction. This result sheds light on the importance of network ties, accent perception and language variation within the Indian student community at issue since it shows that the more integrated the participants, the better at recognising different IndE accents.

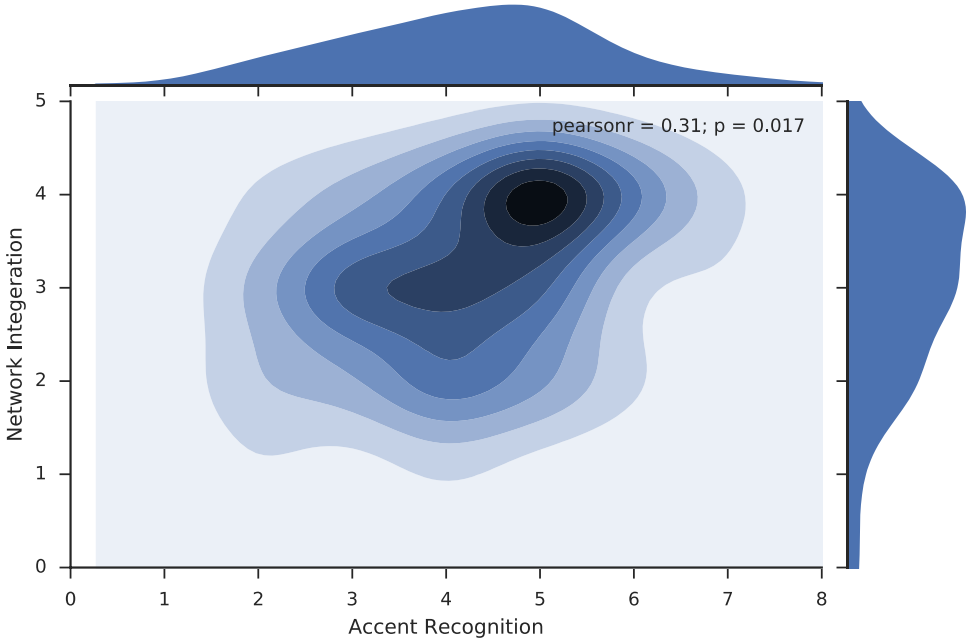

Fig 1: Correlation between network and accent identification (r = 0.31; r_s = 0.35; r^2 = 0.09; p = 0.017*; from Regnoli, 2019b: 179)

Extreme density generally produces homogeneity of norms and values. According to Milroy:

> [s]ince this homogeneity of norms might be expected to extend to interactional and specifically linguistic norms, the density of these networks may partly account for the great consistency with which speakers characteristically show loyalty to vernacular speech norms, despite the social stigma attached to it.[55]

This seems to justify the norm-supporting and norm-constructing network ties as well as the homogeneity of norms and values that guide the participants' language use within the community. As a matter of fact, while the results from the accent identification task described above indicated fine-grained differences in the ratings of Northern and Southern IndE accents in a wide range of status and solidarity traits - with Northern IndE guises having better ratings than the Southern ones - the lack of significance in the reactions towards the attitude traits characterising the Northern and the Southern IndE stimuli indexes homogeneity of norms and values with respect to perceived accent variation. In other words, this result shows the linguistic power of the majority - embodied by the Northern Indian subcommunity, whose views have gradually been accepted and copied by the minorities, i.e., the

[55] Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, 61.

Southerners. As expected from the folk belief expressed in section 3, while the Northern Indian participants seemingly have stereotypical views about themselves and the South, students coming from the South have by and large taken over the stereotypes of the Northerners about themselves.

Homogeneity of norms is expressed in the community's linguistic practices as well. While English is the language the community members use most frequently both within and outside their community of practice in different domains, strong L1 language maintenance practices are equally observed. The density and the multiplexity of the network support the speakers' first languages resisting institutional pressures to language shift. The close-knit affiliations of the community, in fact, go hand in hand with network structures as identified in other multilingual communities since, as Giddens points out, distinctive ethnic communities involving strong personal ties tend to gravitate to form bonds with other networks which have similar linguacultural norms.[56] The local Malayali community of Heidelberg constitutes one such example. Religious communities appear to be important focal points for many migrant communities since their networks may account either for the phenomenon of language maintenance or the social trajectory of language shift.[57] In the community in question, similar triggers have been identified. As a result, it comes as no surprise that 60% of the Catholic sample have multiplex networks with members of the Malayali Catholic community. Their monthly gatherings not only help foster inter-network allegiances but also shed new light on the sociometric rankings of the social network structure since 40% of them are highly integrated (see Table 1).

This last example shows that, unlike in stable communities, network ties very seldom weaken in transient multilingual ones for the importance that community members give to inclusivity. In these contexts, minority languages usually resist institutional pressures to language shift because the close-knit, dense and multiplex affiliations of the community are supported by its transiency. Thus, these short-lived contexts promote language maintenance practices - manifest in the stable and continuous use of the speakers' L1s – which, in turn, tend to structure internal network subgroups based on ethnicity.

6. Conclusion

The present study on network integration in a transient community of Indian university students located in Heidelberg suggests that community is highly inclusive despite the common folk belief that Southern Indians have a 'rough' and 'stereotypical' English compared to the 'smoother' and 'neutral' one of the Northerners. Crucially, the data emphasised that the community's ties are dense and multiplex, and the content of its links is firm. The correlation analysis of network integration and perceived accent variation shed light on a positive relation indicating that the more integrated participants are better at recognising different IndE accents. Overall, the results are consistent with the idea that the speakers' constant need of renegotiating the 'problem of ethnicity' (Jayaram 2004) is resolved in their willingness to shed their regional, linguistic and ethnic identities depending on specific sociocultural and linguistic circumstances. However, the adoption of their ethnic identities within their network does not weaken their allegiances and results in norm conformity and inclusivity, which tend to be common features in transient multilingual communities.

[56] Giddens, *Sociology*.
[57] Shin, "Paibu Dollar Please!"; Li Wei, "Variations in Patterns of Language Choice and Codeswitching".