# Introduction

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Space and time have become core concerns of variationist sociolinguistics over the past decades (Britain 2002, 2016; Schmidt 2010–2019; Auer et al. 2013; Auer 2018), an emphasis which in many ways marks the unification of variationist approaches with dialectology. This volume showcases a number of studies in this area; all focus strongly on the diachronic dimension, with most also concentrating on *space* in both its Euclidean and subjective senses, while a few focus in on its complement, *place*, taken in the sense of "place identity" (Johnstone 2011: 203). One of the difficulties with combining reports from unconnected studies in one volume is that unity ends up being unnaturally foisted upon projects with disparate aims. Despite the wide range of methods covered in these chapters, that is not the case here.

A glance through the chapters reveals that at least four themes come up repeatedly:

– Place identity vs. contact and mobility
– Fragmentation of the city
– Shifting indexicalities
– Geography and language change

These are central themes in variationist sociolinguistics, and characteristically they play on the notion that individual speakers are in a dialectic with the macrosocial forces that envelop them. Labov's view typifies this approach:

> [T]he individual is very difficult to understand; even the small group is very hard to understand unless you know something about the community or group they're coming from, because the individual's behavior is determined by the social forces that intersect with their individual lives.
>
> (William Labov, 19 July 2006, in Gordon 2006: 348)

What we see in these chapters, however, is not so much an exploration of individual motivations and behaviours, as an account of the interaction, or even competition, between the larger-scale factors and the way they conspire to induce broad,

quantifiable patterns of linguistic variation. Individuals are not neglected, but the focus is not on them.

This book is at heart an update of 'first wave' sociolinguistic methods and concerns, focusing as it does on these broader patterns. The 'update' lies in a more complex social analysis than was originally present in the sociolinguistic enterprise. The analysis is not Marxian in the sense of explicitly dealing with significant rifts, and hence opposing interests, in society. The brief discussion of Bourdieu in the book does not deal with linguistic capital, but rather with a 'discourse of values' (see chapter by Duncan). Social class, gender and ethnicity play their part as factors to be associated with variation, but they are not held up to scrutiny. Rather, the emphasis is on historical processes over a long period, including suburbanisation, de-industrialisation and counter-urbanisation, as well as major political changes in twentieth-century Europe. Coupled with this are not only the notions of place and space, but also identity – especially when it is based on place. Geography is central to several papers, bringing with it not only the investigation of spatial differentiation, but also a critical evaluation of diffusion models. Often set up in contrast to diffusion is transmission (Labov 2007; D'Arcy 2015; Jankowski and Tagliamonte, this volume); together, diffusion and transmission form a sociolinguistic and acquisition-based theory of language change.

As a way of demonstrating the connections between the papers, let us consider how they meet in their shared coverage of the themes mentioned above, arguing that the contributions are mutually enriching.

## 1.   Place identity vs. contact and mobility; fragmentation of the city

Several chapters deal with the themes of identity, contact, mobility and fragmentation; here, I will highlight the discussions where this is to the fore. **Johnstone** (Chapter 1) is placed first, with good reason. In her programmatic, scene-setting treatment, she considers cities as wholes rather than a collection of disparate communities. She highlights the city as heterogeneous and with the potential to fragment, emphasising the sociolinguist's role as characterising how that heterogeneity plays out through time, while also investigating differences in mobility within the city.

In many ways **Duncan** (Chapter 3) picks up where Johnstone's theoretical chapter leaves off. He too looks at heterogeneity and fragmentation, but uses empirical data to show how this maps onto linguistic variation. Homing in on residents of St Louis, Missouri, he finds that those who live in the suburbs use a vowel system that is more levelled, and less characterised by the Northern Cities Shift (NCS; Labov, Ash and Boberg 2006), while those who live in the downtown area use

more characteristically local, NCS, variants. Duncan sees this as a matter of identity and *habitus* (Bourdieu 2010); however, he is able to conclude that mobility is an intervening variable between identity and language production: mobility is part of the *cause* of the identity. Duncan firmly locates his conclusions within a detailed account of the history of urbanisation in the USA.

In a South German context, for **Beaman** (Chapter 2) the city is seen as a place of influence and possible loss of dialect, with differences in size favouring/disfavouring dialect loss (a theme later taken up by Ziegler, Oberdorfer and Herbert, this volume). Like Duncan, Beaman deals with change over a considerable time span. However, she has the advantage of a panel study. By re-interviewing 20 participants after 35 years, she finds considerable differences between individuals in the extent of their convergence towards a more standard German. The participants' social histories are quite varied, some having moved away and returned, others having moved within the region, and yet others having remained sedentary. In the end, local identity factors trump contact and mobility – though it is not always possible to say which comes first. This conclusion is different from, but not inconsistent with that of Duncan.

## 2.    Shifting indexicalities

Rather than looking at the linguistic consequences of social change, it is possible to start from the linguistic variable and trace its patterning through time. **Nesbitt** (Chapter 7) takes this approach to the NCS in its heartland of Michigan. The characteristic vowels of the NCS have long been a largely unnoticed indicator in the US, being characteristic of the Northern Cities region but not attracting any attention either from locals or from outsiders; in fact, the accent is often regarded as epitomising correctness. And yet, in recent years these vowels, particularly raised variants of /æ/ (as in TRAP), have become 'markers', perceived by some as 'accented' or even 'bad English'. Nesbitt uses a variant of the matched-guise technique to investigate this.

Another vowel, this time in the Swedish of Gothenburg and its rural surroundings, is likewise undergoing a change in its indexicalities. Using recordings, an attitude survey and an Implicit Association Test, **Nilsson**, **Wenner**, **Leinonen** and **Thorselius** (Chapter 8) trace the use and the social evaluation of the so-called 'damped' /iː/, pronounced [ɨː]. This variant led a double life: in the first part of the twentieth century as a marker of place (here, the rural district of Skärhamn) as well as class and femininity (in Gothenburg, indexing refinement). Today, in Skärhamn it indexes authenticity and localness, while the more normative [iː] is considered urban; in Gothenburg, there is little conscious awareness of it, if anything signalling

'somewhere far away', including 'rural', while for younger people it has lost its association with a higher class. Interestingly, most younger Gothenburgers in the sample seemed unaware that they actually used it themselves. The broader social context is one of contact between Skärhamn and Gothenburg caused by commuting to the city.

A rather different approach to changes in indexicality is the chapter by **Marzo**, **Natale** and **De Pascale** (Chapter 5). This study deals with attitudes to regional Italian varieties as a whole (rather than individual features) in the context of the emigration of speakers to another country. The authors find that Italians in the home country and those who have settled abroad differ in their view of 'good' regional standard Italian: those in Italy favoured Milanese, whereas those who had moved abroad preferred Neapolitan Italian. The explanation, the authors believe, lies in changes in what is believed to constitute the standard, possibly influenced by an 'expat nostalgia'.

## 3.   Geography and language change

In this final section, we are dealing with chapters which focus specifically on geography, where 'geography' can be seen as physical space and (Euclidean) distance mediated by social and historical changes.

**Pröll**, **Elspaß** and **Pickl** (Chapter 10) use a questionnaire to investigate forms used in cities across two countries (Austria and Germany), by using large, stratified samples, and by asking a specific question: does spatial variation exist within single urban conglomerations? Or is the observed variation better explained as social variation? Taking three highly contrasting conglomerations, the Ruhr district, Berlin and Vienna, they conclude that, in the more widely spread-out Ruhr, there are still traces of the former local dialects, while in Berlin the differences, while having a social component, are more readily predictable from the former division between West and East Berlin. Vienna, which is more compact geographically, shows little linguistic variation purely ascribable to geography; social distinctions prevail, but these are only marginally reflected in the linguistic variation. However, there is a weak north/south divide in the linguistic responses.

**Ziegler**, **Oberdorfer** and **Herbert** (Chapter 9) investigate the relative influence of larger vs. smaller cities on their hinterlands, choosing Vienna and Graz as their test cases. They focus on one feature of derivational morphology, diminutives. Not only is their use held to be characteristic of German in Austria, but they take forms different from the normative standard. Using two age-stratified corpora of spoken language, they quantify the use of the various forms. Results show that Viennese speakers use the fewest local Austrian diminutives, though they are still

more frequent than standard ones. Graz speakers use proportionally more Austrian variants. As for the surrounding districts, in each case their distributions tend more towards the use of Austrian variants than is the case for the cities, with use being greater in the hinterland of Graz than in that of Vienna.

**Jankowski** and **Tagliamonte** (Chapter 6) tackle head-on the issue of the spread of innovative forms across geographical space, by looking at the spread of an innovation in Toronto and its large hinterland. In Canadian English, there is a gradual shift from the forms *somebody, anybody, everybody* and *nobody* to *someone, anyone, everyone* and *no one*. In addition to looking for evidence of diffusion or transmission, the authors hypothesise that smaller, relatively isolated communities will promote the change to a lesser extent than large, well-connected cities; they thus test Trudgill's (2011) theory of *sociolinguistic typology*. The results show that the constraints, in this case the ranking of the four forms (with *someone* in the lead), remain the same, even if the frequencies of *-one* is higher in Toronto than in the rural areas. Contrary to expectations, there is also little effect of distance from Toronto: all the rural locations are proceeding at the same rate. This leads the authors to the conclusion that there is no hierarchical diffusion, which would show sensitivity to distance from the centre. (Hierarchical diffusion is also addressed by Blaxter et al., in this volume, with a different methodology.) Because the constraints remain the same, there is, they argue, little diffusion of any sort. Instead, they argue that there is parallel, non-contact driven transmission following a trajectory originating a long way back in time.

**Britain** and **Grossenbacher** (Chapter 4) investigate dialect change by focusing on the link between urbanisation, counter-urbanisation and social networks. Their main point is that, in England at least, there is currently, and has been for several decades, a strong out-migration from urban to rural areas, leading to the transplantation of levelled, often standardised middle-class accents. This means that speech in the villages is often less dialectal than in the local towns and cities. The feature they look at is the continued use of the vowel /ɛ/, as in DRESS, in a small group of words including *have*, and the vowel /ɪ/, as in KIT, in words including *get*. The field site is East Anglia (the easternmost part of England); here, the non-standard vowels have persisted in a small number of words. Interestingly, the word *get* takes on a quality that is intermediate between the canonical standard vowels KIT and DRESS, while *have* is intermediate between DRESS and TRAP. This feature is not salient in the community, and the authors suggest this is why they have been maintained, even in villages which are the most 'levelled'.

In common with Jankowski and Tagliamonte, **Blaxter**, **Gopal**, **Leemann** and **Willis** (Chapter 11) set out to test the diffusion model against data collected in a geographically systematic way. Their approach is a radical departure, however, in that it compares differences in population density and linguistic similarity between

adjacent locations, in order to determine whether diffusion occurs in a hierarchical fashion or diffuses steadily. This follows Trudgill's (1974) hierarchical diffusion model by which more densely populated areas transmit features to less densely populated areas; if the linguistic similarities between adjacent locations do not correlate with differences in population density, then the diffusion moves at a constant rate independently of density, and is thus not hierarchical. A second important departure in the chapter is the use of Twitter data to obtain linguistic data at a very high geographical resolution (cf. Stevenson 2016). Of the two features the authors examined, one showed clear evidence of hierarchical diffusion across the country: this is the spread of the preposition-drop construction, as in 'we went _ the pub last night', corresponding to 'we went to the pub last night' in other varieties. In this chapter, the combination of a new quantitative approach to regional variation with a new methodology allowing for fine-grained geographical data demonstrates how advances in theory and method have the capacity to point a way forward to new understandings.

This book, then, brings together important research that in many ways is a natural continuation of Labov's variationist enterprise, enriching it in the process.

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