Why *dat* now?: Linguistic-anthropological contributions to the explanation of sociolinguistic icons and change[1]

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One way to renew conversation between linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics is to bring concepts of linguistic ideology to the explanation of the iconization of specific sociolinguistic variables and associated sociolinguistic change. Sociolinguists such as Eckert (2000) and Milroy (2004) have made provocative efforts to incorporate linguistic-anthropological concepts into sociolinguistic explanation. What is still lacking is a full explanation of why specific linguistic variables emerge from the flow of speech and social life to become sociolinguistic icons or emblems and set off relatively rapid or intense changes. This article brings Joseph Errington's (1985) use of the concept of pragmatic salience to bear on insights gleaned from vanguard sociolinguistic and linguistic-anthropological work. Drawing on empirical examples from a spectrum of studies, a model is sketched from these elements to suggest an account of how an ideological bent directs linguistic change.

KEYWORDS: Linguistic ideology, iconization, pragmatic salience, sociolinguistic variation, linguistic change

PREAMBLE: WHY DOES THE QUESTION ARISE?

In organizing this special issue, Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall (this issue) have given a welcome call to return the fields of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology to an earlier close connection. I must preface my attempt to contribute to the agenda with an admission. When I first received the proposal for this project, I had only a dim and rather puzzled awareness that there was a disconnection between linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. It is not that I was unaware of important differences in questions researchers ask or the way they approach answers. Rather, I tended to think of these as the usual different foci within any field. There are such discontinuities within what is clearly 'linguistic anthropology' or 'sociolinguistics' itself; the discontinuity between 'linguistic anthropology' and 'sociolinguistics' did not seem to me to be of a different kind, though perhaps of a different degree. I did not in fact have the labels *sociolinguistics*

and *linguistic anthropology* directly aligned with any of the more fundamental divides that I perceived; more often I conceptualized one as nested within or overlapping broadly with the other.

Nor was I very disturbed about the disconnection when I did run into it; I had probably been professionally socialized to maintain a certain unconcern about disciplinary boundaries. From my earliest graduate student days I recall hearing one of the founders of the field declare that the term *sociolinguistics* was so broad as to be meaningless. At the Language Behavior Research Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley, where I was trained, the graduate student cohort included linguistic anthropologists, sociolinguists, just plain linguists, and others from fields like education, psychology, and cognitive science. Especially among those who worked with John Gumperz (himself a linguist by training turned anthropologist by professional affiliation), it was impossible to tell the formal discipline of the players without a scorecard. Only in the last few years have I confirmed the official disciplinary base of some members of my cohort.

It is true that I occasionally ran across troubling indices of the official divide between linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. I first detected a problem nearly fifteen years ago, while reviewing a British edited volume. In it, an otherwise very compelling contribution indicted the field of 'sociolinguistics' for ignoring a set of issues that were in fact precisely those that linguistic anthropologists had been writing about for decades in their work, which I had naively thought counted as 'sociolinguistics.' I was bemused (but not amused, as the published review reveals); wasn't the seminal 1972 volume edited by Gumperz and Hymes entitled *Directions in Sociolinguistics*? The entire linguistic-anthropological enterprise led by that volume appeared not to be recognized at all, much less as part of sociolinguistics, by the otherwise very insightful author under review, but I took this to be a British phenomenon.

Much later, a promising young American sociolinguist who had been trained in a linguistics department and whose work I admire greatly asked me what text I would use for an undergraduate introduction to sociolinguistics. Or maybe it was linguistic anthropology. My point is that I did not recognize the distinction, perhaps particularly because it is least salient in the foundational material that I think all students of the social – and cultural – life of language should know. Whatever I answered, it was unsatisfactory. My sociolinguist interlocutor was taken aback that I suggested a book for one field that she viewed as belonging to the other.

Thus it was that I accepted the proposal to contribute to the present agenda not so much because I was concerned about the central problem posed, but because I was interested in a conversation with the proposed participants (not a conversation that I conceived of as a dialogue between two sides). But now just one final – and the most significant – personal confession: after I accepted this invitation with a bit of a mental shrug, the pragmatic meaning of the boundary between linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics was driven home to me in a gatekeeping encounter with journal reviewing (not the journal that one of our

organizers recently edited so ably, nor the one in hand). It would be professionally indiscreet to detail the circumstance (quite possibly even to mention it), but it led me to realize that some colleagues equate a mandate for a social approach to language with 'sociolinguistics,' and 'sociolinguistics' with the multivariate study of synchronic variation in speech – period. All ended happily enough for reviewers and author, I believe, but I had become more urgently aware of the material stakes involved in the questions posed by the editors of this special issue.

In attempting to renew communication, then, one thing we will need to do is to ask why a division might have grown up between sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology in the first place and what interests are invested in it. Is the division entirely inadvertent, or are there patrols on the boundary? In particular, because we are students of ideology, the classic question '*Cui bono?*' is in order. We need to consider the institutional structures and rewards (slim as those may seem in our fields) that encourage the gaps that have grown.

THE QUESTION AT HAND

How might linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics profitably resume their earlier conversation if a silence has obtruded? Contemporary anthropology has become known primarily as what we might call a phenomenological rather than an explanatory enterprise. Its principal questions most often address the nature and situated meaning of experience for participants rather than the causes of those experiences. Particularly through its hallmark practice of ethnography, linguistic as well as cultural anthropology can be depended on to complicate and question any and all analytic assumptions about what people are doing, or for that matter about what people are (whether taken as members of particular social groups or categories or as personifications of some more general human nature). What anthropology is most often seen as bringing to the sociolinguistic party, then, is its emphasis on examining *in vivo* the pragmatic meaning of human activities, and particularly the situated social creation of such meaning, as something that cannot be taken for granted and whose ongoing construction is always a topic to be investigated.

Sociolinguists such as Bucholtz and Hall (2004), Natalie Schilling-Estes (2002), Penelope Eckert (e.g. 2000, 2004) and Barbara Johnstone (2004) have all argued that sociolinguistics should adopt the social-constructionist perspective of anthropology not as an afterthought but as a foundation of the sociolinguistic project. Traditional sociolinguistic research more typically begins by taking predefined social categories (e.g. class, gender, race, ethnicity) as independent variables and then turns to local ethnography only to explain surprising findings or statistical outliers to the patterns found. Johnstone suggests that linguistic variationists who are interested in the local meanings of patterns of linguistic form instead have to start with ethnography to decide what the possible explanatory variables might be in the first place. (We might need to ask whether most sociolinguists are in fact consciously interested in

local meanings.) As an example, Johnstone gives Guy Bailey's (1991) analysis of Texans' use of the monophthongal *ah* [a] variant of the sociolinguistic variable (ay) (as in *Ah lahk Texas* for *I like Texas*). Bailey's long-term observation of Texans enabled him to discover that the social 'variable' that best accounts for the rate of monophthongization is interviewees' reported satisfaction with Texas as a place to live. In the face of such highly local patterns of social significance, Johnstone argues that sociolinguistics should not just add participant-observation to its repertoire of field techniques but rather use it to rethink its theoretical foundations.

In the same volume, Eckert (2004) drives home the fundamental necessity of an ethnographic approach to sociolinguistic variation by revisiting her own work. She asserts that by bringing social class to her research conceptually as an independent variable and persisting with it throughout fieldwork, she missed or nearly missed the dimensions of social life to which her adolescent subjects themselves actually attended and the rather different way that they broke up the universe of social experience. Eckert's ethnography was in fact exquisitely sensitive; what better observation have we ever been given of the significance of the hair toss? But she reports now that her fundamental analysis of sociolinguistic variation could have been done differently and could have better captured the nuanced patterns if she had begun with a more phenomenological approach to social life. This admirably reflexive endorsement of ethnographic method in some ways supports the critique of mainstream sociological and sociolinguistic assumptions long articulated by practitioners of conversation analysis (CA). Emanuel Schegloff (e.g. 1997), for one, has argued tirelessly that we cannot assume that just because a speaker is, say, Asian, female, or a medical doctor, such macrosocial categories are relevant to the analysis of particular interactions. For conversation analysts, social categories are analytically relevant only if and when the participants themselves make them relevant in a given interaction, and Eckert's ethnographic insight resonates with this point.[2] (See Sidnell, this issue, for a discussion of convergences and differences in the anthropological and CA approaches.)

Such sociolinguistic calls to apply anthropological methods seem to me to be entirely right and are most welcome. In the rest of this article, however, I would like to emphasize a quite different potential contribution of linguistic anthropology to the original and central traditional problem in the sociolinguistic project, narrowly defined (see Labov 1963; Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968): explaining language change.

To be sure, linguistic anthropologists have long contributed to explaining language change: for example, as it is found in the form of language change, shift, or loss in bilingual and minority communities (see e.g. Gumperz and Wilson 1971; Gal 1979; and contributions to Dorian 1989). Beyond such studies of the fate of linguistic systems in contact, linguistic anthropologists have also made progress in explaining the particulars of fine-grained change in linguistic structures within a language system perceived as unitary, an issue

that lies squarely within classic sociolinguistics. The specific contributions to the explanatory project of sociolinguistics that I wish to focus on here derive unsurprisingly from anthropology's insistent focus on meaning-making, but not only through the emphasis on ethnographic discovery procedures discussed above. Rather, they come from the study of linguistic ideologies, by which linguistic anthropologists mean cultural construals of the structure and role of language in social life, together with their political and moral loading (Irvine 1989; see also Woolard 1998).

LINGUISTIC IDEOLOGY AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION

In his seminal discussions of the concept, Michael Silverstein (1979) has argued that a grasp of linguistic ideology is essential not just to understanding social life and the full meaning of people's interactions with language, but to *understanding the evolution of linguistic structure itself* (see also Woolard 1998: 11). For Silverstein, the 'total linguistic fact,' the 'fundamental datum' for a science of language – that is, for linguistics – is 'irreducibly dialectic.' He argues that this fundamental object of linguistic investigation is formed out of the 'unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms . . . [in] situations of interested human use mediated by the fact of cultural ideology' (1985: 220). That is, all three elements – linguistic form, social use, and human reflections on these forms in use – mutually shape and inform each other. To understand and explain any one of them we must take into account both of the other two, in Silverstein's view. If not, we have not just a partial explanation but in fact only a partial object.

The anthropological agenda of research on linguistic ideologies has been taken up in an avalanche of work in the past ten years or so, to the point that it was recently characterized in a linguistic-anthropological LISTSERV discussion as 'hegemonic' (with the detrimental constraining effects on alternate discourses that *hegemony* implies). The enthusiasm for research on language ideology came not just from linguistic anthropologists but also from some researchers primarily identified as cultural anthropologists (e.g. Robbins 2001; Boellstorff 2004). Perhaps in part because it allowed renewed conversation between linguistic and sociocultural anthropology, much of the recent work has focused on the reciprocal links between linguistic ideologies and social relations. The links between linguistic ideologies and linguistic forms, and particularly the effects of the former on the latter, have been relatively slighted in recent years.

As originally posited by Silverstein and others, linguistic ideology was seen as a crucial mediating link between linguistic form and social structure. No single node in this model was cast as basic or foundational, and none as merely epiphenomenal and predictable from (one of) the others. For many who contributed to its initial growth, the hope was that framing linguistic ideology as an area of inquiry would allow all of the nodes to be connected and all the links to be examined: those from linguistic form to ideologies of form-in-use, from ideologies to social forms, from social forms to ideologies, from ideologies to

linguistic form. Moreover, linguistic ideologies were conceived of as embedded in material practice as much as in mental phenomena and explicit metalinguistic discourse. However, some linguistic anthropologists now worry that there is a trend toward the construal of ideology solely or primarily as metalinguistic discourse and a consequent lack of analytic attention to linguistic form and practice. Much of the recent work – and I include here my own – focuses on discourses about language rather than on linguistic practice and tends to flatten the original three-dimensional model. This no doubt owes in part to the difficulty of holding three elements in focus at the same time. But in turning an eye to linguistic ideology, is linguistic anthropology in danger of losing sight of the traditional linguistic fact of form itself, not to mention the total linguistic fact? If so, a return to closer conversation with sociolinguistics may help remedy the problem. In turn, sociolinguistic explanations of linguistic change could benefit from confronting the ideological dimension of this 'total linguistic fact.'

Several key theoretical concepts of linguistic ideology help keep the reciprocal effects of linguistic ideology and form in focus. Among these are Silverstein's (e.g. 2003) concept of indexical orders and Judith Irvine and Susan Gal's (2000) model of the semiotics of linguistic differentiation. These are often cited by sociolinguists involved in the rapprochement with anthropology explored in this issue, so I review them only briefly here. Anthropological reference points for this effort should also include Joseph Errington's important early work on the concept of 'pragmatic salience' (1985: 294–295; see also Silverstein 1981). Since it is not as often cited by sociolinguists, I discuss Errington's work at some length later in this article. Taken together, these linguistic-anthropological concepts can offer provocative insight into the mechanisms and even the drive engine of linguistic change.

Language users everywhere tend to associate particular linguistic forms with specific kinds of speakers or contexts of speaking (a basic assumption of variationist sociolinguistics). Meaning derived in this way from contiguity or association is known in the semiotics of C. S. Peirce (1960) (and others) as indexicality. In Silverstein's system, which builds on Peirce's work, *first-order indexicality* is the pre-ideological but still semiotic work of forming these associations. As Lesley Milroy points out, not only time-honored social categories such as class, gender, and ethnicity can be indexed linguistically, but also such local categories as church or peer group membership (2004: 167). That is, in picking such associative or indexical relations out of the flow of social life and talk, actors – both analysts and community members – do not simply perceive but actually in a sense create and re-create categories of speaking and speakers as well as types of sociolinguistic variables.

If first-order indexicality involves a semiotic act of noticing, *second-order indexicality* brings ideology to bear on the relationship noticed. Silverstein's second-order indexicality involves the politically and/or morally loaded cultural construal of the first-order indexical association with an intentional content or meaning. At this second level, actors rationalize, explain, and thus inevitably

naturalize and ideologize the sociolinguistic associations (indexical relations) that they have registered at the first order. This ideological projection of a natural relation between a *linguistic type* and a *social type* (cf. Agha 1993, 2005) gives rise to strategic exploitations by language users, which can move the semiosis to yet a third and in the long run to unlimited further orders of indexicality, motivating changing linguistic patterns.

In their studies of the semiotics of distinctiveness and differentiation, Irvine and Gal (2000) have contributed several important concepts of language ideology, particularly that of iconization, which works similarly to Silverstein's second-order indexicality. In iconization (which Irvine and Gal have recently renamed *rhematization* [Gal 2005]), actors treat linguistic signs as natural depictions or images of the inherent nature of speakers.[3] Speakers are taken to be the way that they supposedly sound (e.g. noble, harsh, lazy, rational), and the way that they sound comes to be heard as itself epitomizing that way of being. (The concomitant ideological processes of erasure and fractal recursivity complement and extend the fundamental process of iconization, but I will focus only on this last concept here.)

Another useful but less explored concept for the study of language ideology comes from Errington (1985), who analyzed changes in the famously complex Javanese system of 'language levels,' a multi-layered system of lexical registers involved in the expression of degrees of respect and deference to an addressee. To account for the way this system works and particularly for ongoing changes in it, Errington proposed the concept of 'pragmatic salience:' native speakers' awareness of the social significance of different linguistic alternants, manifested both in metapragmatic statements about language and in spontaneous natural use (1985: 294–295). 'Pragmatically salient' classes of morphemes are those that are recognized by speakers as more crucial linguistic mediators of social relations.

Each of these theoretical constructs – indexical order, iconization, and pragmatic salience – attends to the way that participants themselves attend to and socially interpret the details of linguistic form. Taken together, they suggest how linguistic ideology can motivate and give direction to specific linguistic changes.

The potential for such theoretical contributions of language ideology studies to explain linguistic form has not been ignored by sociolinguists. Penelope Eckert (2000) and Lesley Milroy (2004) have made especially provocative efforts in this direction, proposing models of speaker agency in linguistic change and of ideological constraints on systemic change, respectively. Eckert argues that sociolinguistic changes can grow from speakers' consciousness and strategic performative use of specific linguistic forms such as vowel pronunciation to assert membership in particular communities. In Eckert's model, some details of which are discussed below, each speaker's linguistic style can be an individually woven fabric of multiple social positionings and claims to membership in various communities. Such a model goes against the grain of the traditional Labovian

sociolinguistic claim that major linguistic change comes from below the level of consciousness and is outside the control of the speaker's intentions and desires (see e.g. Labov 2002). But it reaches out toward the recent surge of work by linguistic anthropologists on linguistic ideology, which argues that cultural conceptions of language structure and use inevitably shape and alter that structure.

Lesley Milroy (e.g. 2004) has also explicitly brought linguistic ideology to bear on accounts of linguistic change, combining Silverstein's notion of the indexical order with a more traditional linguistic distinction between internal linguistic and external social motivations for sound change (see also contributions to Milroy and Preston 1999). In Milroy's account, some linguistic variables are free to follow what I will loosely call *systemic drift*, that is, changes that emanate from universal mechanisms of human speech production or perception or from patterns in the linguistic system itself (2004: 170). Other variables are occupied with the work some speakers do in making social distinctions. Use of these latter variables by other groups of speakers is constrained because of this emblematic exploitation by one social set of speakers, and thus in Milroy's view internal linguistic change is dammed by (external) social forces. Milroy offers the following characterization of this dynamic: 'local social factors operate as constraints on changes driven by internal factors. If the local social boundaries set in place by ideological processes weaken or disappear, language-internal changes can take their course, uninhibited by local ideologies' (2004: 171).

Like Johnstone and Eckert, Milroy recognizes that social categories are not universally salient and that therefore their relevance to sociolinguistic analysis cannot be assumed by researchers. That is, some sociolinguistic associations found to be significant in one community might never be picked out, much less formulated ideologically, in another. So, Milroy finds that race and ethnicity take precedence in American linguistic ideology while social class is more salient in British ideology (2004: 167). She goes further to argue that social factors should be seen in every case more as ideologically driven processes than as *a priori* social categories (cf. Heller this issue). Moreover, even in settings where a traditional social category such as class is relevant to speech, it does not necessarily remain so. If an occupational or ethnic distinction, for example, becomes socially irrelevant, its linguistic index will also fade as a driver of change. In such a case, Milroy argues that more regular, socially undifferentiated internal motivations for sound change patterns can then take over. Milroy gives the example of the locally relevant social distinction between 'islander' and 'mainlander' that accounted for the patterning of the (ay) variable in Labov's (1963) classic study of diphthong centralization in Martha's Vineyard. That social distinction emerged with the growth of the tourist industry and replaced older significant distinctions among ethnic groups on the island. Forty years later, the islander/mainlander distinction itself had lost social significance because of restructuring of the economy, and the socially motivated patterning of the change affecting (ay) had disappeared (Blake and Josey 2003). Further

changes affecting the patterning of the vowel, now unconstrained socially, appear to respond to linguistic conditions widely shared by many communities. That is, when the islander/mainlander social distinction disappeared, internally motivated changes seen to be moving through larger territories of Canada and the North American English-speaking world were free to continue unconstrained.

The vanguard work of Eckert and Milroy represents exactly the kind of advance we would hope to achieve by bringing linguistic anthropology, and particularly the theoretical constructs of linguistic ideology, back to sociolinguistic variation studies. But one important and tantalizing (or just plain annoying) question remains: Why these particular linguistic variables? Through what mechanisms do speakers' cultural construals – whether of community, stance, or self – come to settle on particular linguistic forms for their semiotic work of social differentiation while others are ignored? Why, for example, is it monophthongal *ah* that signals the contented Texan, as Bailey demonstrated? Why is it this same sound that Australians pick out from southern U.S. dialects in order to establish themselves in the country-western musical genre, as research by Nastia Snider (2002) has shown? Why was it my raised, diphthongized pronunciation of a short (ae) before a voiceless stop, as in *thee-at one* for *that one*, that gave my Maryland-born mother chills when I was growing up in western New York?[4] Why does the stopped variant of the initial sound in English 'these, them and those' rise to consciousness so that the phrase 'dese, dem and dose' becomes such a widespread linguistic stereotype of an American social type?

How and why, in short, do particular linguistic icons become iconic? Even in the most compelling work in linguistic ideology, the question of why particular variables emerge is rarely directly addressed. More work is needed to explain just how and why specific features become ideologically salient and drive change – 'why *dat* now?,' if I may paraphrase the famous question that conversation analysis posed with a somewhat different purpose in mind (Schegloff and Sacks 1973: 299; see also Bilmes 1985). We need something like a mechanism or mechanisms equivalent to natural selection to account for the ideological selection of linguistic features.

It may be that in asking for explanation at this level, I am proposing a naively positivist quest after a chimera or attempting to tie down a creative process of meaning-making to a predetermined structure, precisely as my colleague Judith Irvine has warned us not to do (2001: 43). I am aware that I am verging on crackpot linguistics here. But I do not think the explanatory enterprise should be consigned entirely to positivism. And we should not forget that in the olden days of dialectology there was no recognition of patterned sociolinguistic variation itself, only the concept of 'free variation,' a capricious, unaccountable oscillation between normatively accepted linguistic alternants. Systematic and patterned sociolinguistic variation was formerly viewed as a chimera, but now it is accepted as an accountable phenomenon. It therefore seems worth asking for explanation of the origins of sociolinguistic icons, explanations that address the total linguistic fact in all its ideological and social complexity.

ELEMENTS OF A THEORY OF LINGUISTIC IDEOLOGY, STYLISTIC ICONIZATION, AND CHANGE

In the following discussion I draw together the work of several researchers in order to sketch an approach to explaining the specific ways in which speakers' linguistic awareness and ideological activity motivate iconization that then leads to particular linguistic changes. The salience of variables to speakers is at issue, but there are many sources of salience (Schilling-Estes 2002).

John Rickford and Faye McNair-Knox (1994) have suggested that frequency of occurrence is one source of salience. Another fundamental factor in salience is contrast. In situations of contact, we would expect semiotics of contrast and differentiation to be a very important motivator (see, for example, Cavanaugh 2005). Most simply, when two normatively recognized language varieties are in contact, the categorical absence of a feature in one and its presence in the other makes it salient to speakers and thus a relatively obvious candidate for iconization. There are many examples in the literature of accelerated linguistic change (relative to the rest of the system) in this kind of contrastively iconic variable. For example, glottalization has gone 'hog wild' in Guatemalan Xinca (Campbell and Muntzel 1989) since it is absent in Spanish, to which Xinca is socially subordinated. The notable expansion of invariant *be* in African American Vernacular English, given its absence in Standard English (e.g. Alim 2002; Bailey and Tillery 2004), is a similar case.

Irvine (1992; Irvine and Gal 2000) gives a particularly subtle explanation of the way that such a contrast accounts for the spread of click sounds from Khoisan to Nguni Bantu languages, such as Zulu and Xhosa, in southern Africa. Presence in one and absence in the others appears to have led to the ideologization of click sounds by Nguni speakers as the essence of 'foreignness.' This iconic value led clicks to be adopted as a way for Nguni speakers to express social distance in their own languages. This is seen particularly in the ritual avoidance register known as *hlonipha*, which required that certain everyday words or names be avoided out of respect owed to particular others (Irvine and Gal 2000: 40). The respect/avoidance vocabulary was a main point of entry and spread for click sounds.

Where potential sociolinguistic variables are less categorical and less conspicuously contrastive, which ones will be picked out of the stream of talk to bear special social meaning and which ones ignored? Errington's (1985) work is particularly relevant to this question. As noted above, to account for changes within the Javanese politeness system, Errington posited that what he calls *relative pragmatic salience* creates a greater propensity of some morphemes than others to be amenable to social semiotic work. More pragmatically salient classes of morphemes are those that are recognized by speakers as more crucial linguistic mediators of social relations, and they are therefore more often mobilized strategically for social goals. Errington hypothesized that because of this more

frequent strategic mobilization, these elements will be subjected to more rapid linguistic change than those that are less pragmatically salient.

What makes a class of morphemes salient? Errington suggests three nested features: (1) whether they refer; (2) to what they refer; and (3) the mode in which they refer (see also Silverstein 1981). In relation to the first feature, referential elements will be more salient than non-referential ones. Within referential lexemes, personal reference will be more salient than non-personal. Finally, Errington proposes that the indexical mode of reference (deixis) will be more salient than the non-indexical, because the indexical mode of reference is by definition anchored in the social situation of use, which gives it more obvious and unavoidable social loading. Personal pronouns, then, are the most pragmatically salient class of lexemes because they are referential, they refer to persons, and their mode of reference is indexical. Such indexical referential elements have a more crucial role in mediating social relations.

Errington expects more pragmatically salient classes such as personal pronouns to be more activated ideologically because they are more accessible for reflection. He suggests that this tendency in turn should show up in patterns of more rapid linguistic change as well as in metalinguistic commentary because, exploiting what we might call their second-order indexicality, speakers strategically manipulate the recognized social norms of use for pragmatically salient lexemes in order to convey social messages about themselves rather than just about their addressees. (The latter is the normative function of the deferential Javanese speech levels.)[5] Subjected to frequent creative manipulation, these elements are more likely to mutate over time than those less salient ones that fly under the interactional radar (1985: 297). Gradual change is the result of numerous recurrent occasions of such strategic use (1985: 297). And indeed, Errington finds in the Javanese politeness system that change has been much more rapid in pronouns than in other lexemes, which are relatively stable. In particular, there has been repeated devaluation of elite formal second-person pronouns.

To be sure, Errington's hypothesis about pragmatic salience was tailored to fit the Javanese system of politeness levels and its focus on deference to persons through lexical alternations. Following Silverstein's (1981) discussion of the 'limits of awareness,' Errington comments that phonology, the prototypical level of sociolinguistic variation classically studied, does not generally have the pragmatic salience of lexemes and is less available to speakers' awareness. Phonology in his view therefore better fits the Labovian model of sociolinguistic change as coming from below the level of consciousness. Indeed, Errington found that in contradistinction to the lexical changes, phonological change has been introduced into the Javanese speech levels from below, through unconscious processes of overgeneralization of existing normative contrasts between the levels.

Echoing questions raised earlier by Labov, Errington asserts that the use of phonological variables generally answers the question 'Who are you?' while

more salient alternations, like those between variants of pronouns, are aimed at the question 'How are you feeling about me?' (Errington 1985: 304). Traditional sociolinguistics has always treated the first question as the more fundamental, seeing sociolinguistic variables primarily as indices of identity categories and attempting to account for stylistic variation as parasitic on these social patterns, as simply more conscious efforts to claim these same identities in transitory states. Anticipating the recent surge of theoretical interest in stance (Ochs 1992; see also e.g. Kiesling 2004; Kockelman 2004; Lo 2004; Clift 2006; Shoaps 2007), Errington finds that a different account is needed for the morphological and lexical elements involved in rapid stylistic change. They are not only more consciously available to speakers but they also tend to index the answers to the question 'How are you feeling about me?' That is, these pragmatically salient elements index what we could call *subjective interactional stances*, rather than directly indexing identities. This idea fits well with the more recent depiction by Eckert and others of sociolinguistically relevant identities as emergent in local processes and activities, as discussed earlier. In effect, Eckert's ethnographic approach leads us to see identity itself as a proxy for clusters of significant activities and stances. The implications of this perspective are addressed in greater detail below.

Although Errington himself does not expect pragmatic salience to account for phonological change, I would like to propose, on the basis of some provocative observations from sociolinguistics, that the pragmatic salience of morphemes and lexemes can interact with phonology to provide ideological motivation for some patterns of use and sound change. We can see this interaction, for example, in Elizabeth Traugott's (2001) re-examination of Ellen Prince's (1987) data on stylistic variables in Yiddish. Traugott finds that the elements to which the speaker pays most attention with increased phonological style monitoring are those that encode subjective evaluations, such as intensifiers, evidential markers, discourse markers, and – as is predictable from Errington's characterization of pragmatic salience – deictics of person and place. In Prince's and Traugott's terms, these markers of subjective evaluations are variables that have more potential social value than others. We could again translate such attention and social value into a broader conception of pragmatic salience, and again we see that such salience focuses on elements that answer the question 'How are you feeling?' (though perhaps not 'about me' but rather about other matters at hand).

Traugott also reconsiders the American English variable that William Labov (1972) labels as (DH), the alternation between voiced interdental fricative and voiced stop, as in *these, them, those* versus *dese, dem, dose*. Traugott suggests that (DH) has become a social/style stereotype (Labov 1972, 2001) precisely because this fricative is 'an almost unique signal of definiteness and deixis' in English (Traugott 2001: 129). We could say, then, that its specialization in indexical reference makes this phonological element pragmatically salient and especially ripe for social semiotic and stylistic work, as an extended version of Errington's model would predict. This observation neatly complements the identity-based

explanation offered earlier by Eckert (2000: 221), that the stopped variant is a widespread and salient urban marker of emphasis and toughness in the United States because of its association with immigrant groups, variously Italian, Polish, or Spanish-speaking in different urban areas.[6] Eckert argues that the stopped (DH) is picked up by the native English-speaking generation as a tropic marker of toughness paralleling ethnic and class identity, which is a process of creating a second-order indexicality. This explanation is convincing as far as it goes, but it does not tell us why *this* variable is used to index *those* populations (so to speak). The pragmatic salience of the lexemes in which the variable typically occurs can provide that part of the explanation, as Traugott's comments imply. When we put Eckert and Traugott's accounts together, the variable (DH) appears to be involved in answering both of the questions 'Who am I?' and 'How am I feeling about this?,' which may account for its strength as not just a sociolinguistic index but an iconic stereotype.

One sociolinguist who has explicitly asked why icons become iconic is Norma Mendoza-Denton (2008), and the account she has developed for /I/ raising in gang-identified Latina girls' English is closely related to the idea of pragmatic salience as developed here. The raised vowel functions as an in-group marker of forms of Latina ethnicity among gang-identified girls, answering the question 'Who am I?' But raising is unevenly distributed across the lexicon. Mendoza-Denton finds that Th-Pro forms (e.g. *everything, something, nothing*) are particularly prone to such raising, and it is in the use of such forms in discourse marking ('He was good *and everything*') that the most frequent and extreme raising of this vowel is found (Mendoza-Denton 2008). Mendoza-Denton pushes to explain why it should be the Th-Pro forms that play this role in the pattern of variation (2008: 285). She suggests that the indexical meaning of these forms in their use as discourse markers not only invites but positively dictates inferencing by the interlocutor (2008: 286) – that is, they are pragmatically salient indexes of subjectivity, of 'how I am feeling about this,' that the hearer is expected to be able to interpret because of shared membership in a community of practice.

In her discussion of sociolinguistic icons, Eckert has also put forward some very specific proposals that stress the place of phonological variables within what I will characterize in Errington's terms as pragmatically salient elements (Eckert 2000: 216). By *sociolinguistic icon*, Eckert means both iconic linguistic forms and iconic speakers, but I am focusing here on the former. Eckert suggests that the cultural environment in which phonological variables occur affects their uptake as sociolinguistic icons. Those forms that occur frequently in the enactment of key cultural themes will be more likely to become key sociolinguistic variables; in the adolescent world, these key themes include toughness and sexuality. Thus Eckert finds that cursing, fighting words, public teasing, arguing, flirting, and short, culturally loaded utterances – *dude, cool, excellent, damn* – often involve the most highly stylized linguistic forms (see Kiesling 2004 on *dude*).[7] Drawing Errington's work into this picture, we can

propose that indexical personal references carry similarly heavy sociocultural loads in at least some societies (Errington cites Brown and Gilman (1960) for a classic discussion that suggests this is a widespread phenomenon).

For Eckert, it is not a coincidence that situations (e.g. 'fighting'), genres ('cursing'), social categories ('burnout'), and linguistic form (negative concord, (DH), and/or raised (ay)) can all be linked. Young people take up the elements of style right along with, and as inherent parts of, the situation, the genre, and the stance or identity that they index. We can put this in terms proposed by the theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1981): speakers acquire not languages or variable sociolinguistic markers as such but rather social 'voices.' In Bakhtin's conception, voices merge linguistic form with social intention (1981: 292–293). It is this social intention that Silverstein and Errington see as not only an unavoidable part of the total linguistic fact to be explained but a rich resource for explanation of linguistic form.

Like Errington, Eckert is circumspect about the scope of the data that her social model explains. Eckert notes that the place of a variable not only in the cultural system but also in the linguistic system may affect its propensity for iconization. She suggests that some linguistic elements may be exploited for stylistic purposes simply because they are easier to adopt, in a linguistic sense. The more easily a variable is separable from the rest of the grammar, the more easily adoptable it is and also the more 'easily identifiable and available for meaning negotiation.' Lexical items, discourse markers, and intonation contours (e.g. the 'Valley Girl' intonation that originated in Southern California and spread widely from there) can be consciously 'adopted in at least stereotypic fashion with little contact with their native speakers' (Eckert 2000: 216).

Phonological variables are more embedded in a total linguistic system and less separable from each other than are lexical items, discourse markers, and intonation contours, and so are less available for conscious adoption. Yet even within phonology, Eckert argues that there are varying degrees of separability from the system. Phonemes that participate less with other phonemes in a system such as the vowel space are more isolable and easier to emphasize as style material. So it would not be just the deictic specialization of the voiced interdental fricative phoneme in English (which Errington might emphasize) that would lead it to become a sociolinguistic icon, but also for Eckert the uniqueness of that specialization. No other sound has a similar deictic role in English, making this variable more easily separable from the rest of the grammar and manipulable for stylistic purposes.

In Eckert's own research on vowel change in suburban Detroit, the starkest social distribution was found not in the monophthongal vowels involved in the Northern Cities chain shift, which coexist and are closely linked in a systemic shared vowel space and are not easily isolated from each other. Rather, it was the diphthong involved in (ay) raising (as in *fight*) that showed the clearest, most distinctive social patterns. (The other most dramatic and clear variable was negative concord, a syntactic phenomenon that is also fairly detachable

from the rest of the grammar.) The variable (ay) overlaps in distribution with only one other diphthong, (oy); moreover, (oy) rarely occurs and then most commonly in environments that highly disfavor (ay) raising (Eckert 2000: 216). Therefore, (ay) may be more isolable and speakers may be freer to vary this vowel, achieving a clearer, more salient social contrast by increased differentiation of this diphthong than would be possible with one of the more systemically involved monophthongs. Other vocalic variables such as (o) fronting, which overlaps considerably with other vowels, have delicate patterns and less identifiable social meaning. In contrast, (ay) raising among Eckert's adolescent speakers had 'a kind of iconic status' and served as a 'road map for certain key social concerns' (2000: 216–217).

Thus, in the case of the (ay) variable, Eckert emphasizes its structural place in the phonological system as well as the cultural load of words in which it occurs, such as *fight*, in accounting for its higher propensity for stylistic exploitation. In view of Errington's model of pragmatic salience and Traugott's observation about deictics, I want to highlight a third factor: the special role that (ay) plays in person deixis in English. Might it be significant that one-third of the tokens of (ay) in the data that Eckert analyzed occurred in the first-person pronoun *I*?[8] This resonates strikingly with Errington's hypothesis about the pragmatic salience of personal pronouns and their consequent propensity for strategic manipulation and linguistic change.

Moreover, might the pragmatic salience of the pronoun *I* and its frequent involvement in signalling speaker's subjective stance be factors not only in vocalic trends among suburban Detroit adolescents but also in the significance of the monophthongal *ah* variant of (ay) in signaling Texan identity as well as in establishing authenticity for the Australian country-western singer, as found in studies discussed earlier? This is not to exclude in any way the possibility that the ideological availability and appeal of this variable are clinched by the systemic difference between monophthong and diphthong in the variants. In fact, I would propose that just such interaction of sociocultural and linguistic systems underlies most leading variables in stylistic iconization and ensuing linguistic change.

That the (ay) variable so highly associated with the pragmatically salient, stance-indicating first person pronoun should also be such a strong stylistic icon in several English-speaking settings may well be mere coincidence or an artifact of analytic attention, and we would have to pursue this question with systematic rigor and caution. Picking and choosing one's linguistic coincidences has led to bad historical linguistics at least since the 16th century, when Goropius Becanus proved that Flemish was the Adamic language on the basis of a few lexical coincidences between his native language and Phrygian (Eco 1997: 96–97). Nonetheless, given that we have some elements of a theory to motivate the link, it seems worth the risk of exploring these coincidences before dismissing them.

CONCLUSION

Drawing together the insights of the several sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists whose work is reviewed here, I have proposed that specific sociolinguistic icons and linguistic changes associated with them arise from a convergence of principled and therefore analyzable linguistic-systemic and social-pragmatic factors. In this convergence, specific phonological elements are foregrounded when and because they occur within morphemes or lexical items that are themselves foregrounded in interaction. These morphological and lexical elements are foregrounded socially because of their role in articulating interactants' evaluative stances or relations in interaction and/or culturally because of their centrality to identity-defining activities, in a kind of semiotic house that Jack built.

Obviously I am cobbling together here a series of conceptual elements, each with its own theoretical complexities still to be resolved. Combining them multiplies those complexities, and considerable further work is needed to fully develop, much less test, this crude model. But whether the kind of model sketched here is correct or not, by bringing linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics back into close conversation, we might eventually enable a needed account for why very particular linguistic elements get picked out, ideologized, mobilized, and iconized for social purposes by specific speakers, and for how these elements become not just socially productive but linguistically (re)productive, while other linguistic elements escape notice as the worker bees in the everyday world of 'just talk.'

In his discussion, John Gumperz (this issue) points out that the early interdisciplinary conversations across our fields were initiated and succeeded because they were essential to the research agenda the participants had undertaken. In his account of earlier projects, there was work to be done, and multiple expertises were needed to do it. The explanatory project sketched here is similarly a research program that could only succeed if undertaken collaboratively and on equal terms by linguistic anthropologists, sociolinguists, and historical linguists.[9] Experimental approaches to variation and its perception are very likely to be necessary as well (see Milroy and Preston 1999). Separate endeavors tend to lead us back to only two-dimensional visions of the three-dimensional total linguistic fact. In my own current attempt to explore linguistic iconization in contemporary Catalan, I have (to my certain chagrin) confirmed the need for the variationist's study of the patterned details of linguistic practices that both underlie and are produced by the linguistic-ideological processes that I study as an ethnographer.

What Errington wrote about his model of pragmatic salience over twenty years ago probably still holds true, despite some of the bolder ventures in recent sociolinguistics:

> To look for links between structural change and communicative function is nothing new in sociolinguistic analysis, but to invoke a notion of 'native speaker awareness'

as an explanatory link between the two may be more controversial. (Errington 1988: 19)

It seems to me a formidable but not entirely quixotic goal for linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics working together to try to achieve: not simply to take into account but to try to account for the total linguistic fact.

NOTES

1. *Acknowledgments.* An earlier version of part of this article was presented as 'Language Ideology, Identity, Contact and Change: Developing an Approach in the Catalan Case' in the colloquium 'Sociolinguistics and Linguistic Anthropology: Shared Histories and New Perspectives,' Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, organizers, Sociolinguistics Symposium 16, Limerick, Ireland, July 6–8, 2006. I thank the organizers as well as Celso Álvarez-Caccamo, Penny Eckert, Joe Errington, Michael Silverstein, and anonymous reviewers for their comments, which improved this version despite its remaining shortcomings.
2. Although ethnographers may agree with Schegloff's criticism of macrosociological assumptions, they often disagree vehemently about what legitimately counts as evidence of such 'local' relevance to participants. Many ethnographers object to what they see as the fetishization of that which can be captured in audiorecordings and their transcriptions (see also Ashmore, MacMillan and Brown 2004), as well as to covert assumptions about what can or cannot be seen 'in' the transcript that are actually based on the analysts' own cultural experience. For a response to these and other critiques of CA, see Sidnell (this issue).
3. The term *rhematization* has a more precise fit with the terms of Peircian semiotics. Where *icon* refers to a relationship between a sign and its object, the notion of rheme addresses the relationship between the sign and its interpretant (Gal 2005). In the study of linguistic ideology, what has always been in question is the interpretation of a sociolinguistic element by community members and their projection of an iconic or emblematic relationship between linguistic forms and speakers. Because of their current use in the literatures on linguistic ideology and sociolinguistics, the terms *icon/iconization* are retained throughout this article, with the understanding that they are meant to capture this social projection of a sign relationship.
4. Corroborating the salience of this variable, a *New York Times* reporter (Sultan 2006) emerged from an interview with William Labov to chase this vowel across upstate New York as the holy grail of sociolinguistic variation.
5. Silverstein (1979: 206–207) calls these manipulative uses 'creative indexicality,' as opposed to 'presupposing' or regular invocations of already established indexical relations.
6. Irish immigrants may also fit into this ideology, as Michael Silverstein points out (personal communication).
7. An anecdotal example is the way that a dismissive use of the word *poop* as an epithet elicits the most Californian front rounded vowel in the sociolinguistic repertoire of a 13-year-old California native I know, who is disengaging from his parents' Midwestern vowels and orienting to those of his peers from his own native region. I have also observed that phone conversations (where a certain amount of planning is possible) are a key site for sociolinguistic semiotic work. Among adolescent males

I have overheard in recent years, the voice drops to an unnaturally deep pitch, the intonation flattens markedly, and the vowels become their most Californian on the phone.

8. The variable (ay) had a high rate of monophthongization in this position, different from the raising phenomenon in which Eckert is interested. Thus if the relationship I propose between iconization and indexical person reference exists here, it is a very complex one. As Eckert points out, it would require us to see (ay) more broadly, 'as a variable that runs the entire gamut from monophthongization to extreme diphthong.' She further notes that since monophthongization of this variable is linked to African American Vernacular English, raising of (ay) then would clearly be seen as not just about urbanness but also about whiteness (Eckert, personal communication).

9. Michael Silverstein (personal communication) notes the relevance of the historical-linguistic concept of the 'morphologization' of phonetic processes to the ideas I have sketched in this article. A particularly stimulating example is Margaret Winters's (2006) account of the spread and subsequent disappearance of the palatal subjunctive marker through the parallel spread and then retraction of subjunctive uses in the history of French.

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