The social life of cultural value

Asif Agha*

*Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 325 University Museum,
33rd and Spruce Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA*

Abstract

In this article I discuss processes through which the values of cultural forms are formulated, maintained and communicated across social populations. My empirical focus is the emergence and spread of a prestige register of spoken British English, nowadays called 'Received Pronunciation'. I discuss a number of characterological discourses of speech and accent that articulate the values of the register and bring them into circulation before particular audiences. I argue that the historical spread of the register was linked to the circulation of such discourses during the 18th and 19th centuries. I propose specific models for understanding the circulation of discourse across social populations and the means by which these values are recognized, maintained and transformed.
© 2003 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Register; Accent; Value; Social interaction; Discourse analysis

1. Introduction

My main concern in this paper is with processes of *enregisterment*, processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms. The empirical case on which I focus is a particular phonolexical register of Standard British English, nowadays called Received Pronunciation, or RP. I shall be concerned in what follows with the way in which the register has come to count as a status emblem in British society, an emblem of speaker status linked to a specific scheme of cultural values. Yet my larger purpose is to draw attention to a series of social processes—processes of value production, maintenance and transformation—through which the scheme of cultural values has

* Fax: +1-215-898-7462.
E-mail address: asifagha@sas.upenn.edu (A. Agha).

a social life, as it were, a processual and dynamic existence that depends on the activities of social persons, linked to each other through discursive interactions and institutions. I argue that cultural value is not a static property of things or people but a precipitate of sociohistorically locatable practices, including discursive practices, which imbue cultural forms with recognizable sign-values and bring these values into circulation along identifiable trajectories in social space. Though the specific objects of value I consider here are linguistic forms, the processes of valorization and circulation I describe are quite general. They apply to—indeed, treat language like—any other cultural form.

Relative to such processes, every register exhibits various kinds of growth and decline, expansion or narrowing, change or stabilization along one or more dimensions of register organization, e.g. a change in the size and composition of repertoires, in the range of pragmatic values associated with its forms, in the social domain of persons acquainted with these forms and values (Agha, 2002, in press). These issues are critical to the historical case of RP. No widely recognized standard of English pronunciation existed in the 17th century; yet by the late 19th century the register was well established, widely seen as a form of semiotic capital in British society. In the second half of this paper I focus mainly on the expansionist phase of RP enregisterment, the period roughly between 1760 and 1900. By the end of this period, competence in RP was widely recognized as a prerequisite for social advancement, as a gateway to employment in the upper echelons of government and military service. Yet how did the register come to be known to its users? How were its values established, maintained or, by degrees, transformed through this process?

Before we turn to the historical questions let us consider some basic features of contemporary RP.

2. Received pronunciation: basic issues

RP is familiar to anyone living in Britain today as a socially valued accent. The term 'accent' names a folk-concept, however. Although the term is used in everyday discussions of sound patterns, it is neither very precise nor free of ideological distortion. There are at least three ways in which the folk-term distorts the phenomenon it describes.

First, accent contrasts are an inherently relational phenomena but are often grasped as monadic facts about a sound pattern. Not everybody is felt to have an accent. Everyday talk of accents implicitly presupposes a baseline against which some sound patterns—but not others—are focally perceived as deviant, foregrounded accents. In a common type of case, accent is what other people have; here the phonetic norms of *one's own group* comprise the default baseline of unaccented speech. But the norm can also be externalized as the speech of *some other group*, real or imagined, relative to which one's own speech is felt to be the accented, deviant— even defective—variety by some speakers. This is true for RP, as I presently show.

A second point is that the folk-term 'accent' does not name a sound pattern alone, but a sound pattern linked to a framework of social identities. The social identity is

recognized, indexically, as the identity of the speaker who produces the utterance in the instance, and described, metalinguistically, through the use of identifying labels. In the case of geographic accents the most typical labels are derived from names of locales (e.g. 'he speaks with a *Scottish* accent'). But RP is a supra-local accent; it is enregistered in public awareness as indexical of speaker's class and level of education; it is valued precisely for effacing the geographic origins of speaker.[1] The identifying descriptions associated with its forms consist mainly of characterological labels and discourses that identify speakers in terms of the mental, aesthetic and class attributes discussed later. Here, the ideological work converts perceived variation of sound into perceived contrasts of social persona and identity (Silverstein, 1996; Agha, 2002).

The third point concerns the conditions under which accents become recognizable to particular individuals. In folk-terms, accents are often described as if they operated in an all-or-nothing way: people either have accents or don't, either have certain social identities or don't. Yet in actual interaction the recognition of speaker type by the hearer of an utterance operates relative to certain contextual prerequisites. Consider the case of geographic accents:

> ...a Liverpool working-class accent will strike a Chicagoan primarily as being British, a Glaswegian as being English, an English southerner as being northern, an English northerner as being Liverpudlian, and a Liverpudlian as being working-class. The closer we get to home, the more refined are our perceptions. (Wells, 1982, vol. 1, p. 33).

Notice that *all* of these characterizations are correct. A person who has a 'Liverpool working class accent' is at once working class, a Liverpudlian, a northerner, English, British and so on. It is the hearer's capacity to ascribe a taxonomically specific identity (e.g. to affix a specific identifying term) to speaker that varies. It varies, moreover, as a function of the hearer's prior history of socialization to speech contrasts. In the case of geographic accents, speech that is 'closer...to home' is experienced more frequently and, on average, tends to be characterizable in more specific ways. But what about supra-local accents? A prior history of socialization is indeed involved, though it has a different character as I show in some detail later.

Let us begin by considering the issue of exposure to the RP accent: How are the forms of RP typically experienced by speakers of British English?

---

[1] Received Pronunciation (RP) may initially be described as the accent associated with the dialect of English generally called Standard British English (SBE). SBE has all of the properties characteristic of prestige varieties in a contemporary 'standard language' community: It contrasts with regional dialects as a 'supra-local' national language; it is widely used in writing and print. For many speakers, SBE is neither the variety acquired first, nor the one used most frequently in casual conversation (Trudgill, 1999); yet the variety is preeminent in public life due to its social prestige, its links to education and economic advancement. In all of these ways, SBE is en-register-ed in cultural awareness as a valued commodity. Once acquired, the commodity can be displayed in speech and writing, and such display counts as an index of the status position of speaker/author in many venues of social life. My concern here is not with SBE, however, but with the accent associated with its spoken form.

2.1. Asymmetries of competence

Although RP is routinely *heard* and widely *recognized* as a valued accent, it is actually *spoken* by a very small proportion of the British population.

> RP is, after all, what anyone living in the United Kingdom hears constantly from radio and television announcers and newsreaders and from many other public figures. *Everyone in Britain* has a mental image of RP, even though they may not refer to it by that name and even though the image may not be very accurate. Many English people are also regularly exposed to RP in personal face-to-face contact. For *a small minority*, it is their own speech. (Wells, 1982, vol. 2, p. 279; emphases added)

Most Britons encounter RP as hearers of RP utterances; only a small minority actually speak it. Indeed, as I show in the next few sections, the *competence to recognize* RP utterances has a wider social domain (i.e. is a competence possessed by many more people) than the *competence to speak* it.

According to some estimates the number of Britons who fully command the RP standard amounts to no more than 3% of the population (Hughes and Trudgill, 1987, p. 3; Milroy and Milroy, 1999, p. 151). Yet RP is widely imitated and approximated in the speech of a larger number of speakers in a series of quasi-equivalent 'paralects' (Honey, 1989b). Differences between these '-lects' are socially valued, of course, motivating evaluations of speaker persona along dimensions such as class or educational background. How are boundaries between these types recognized or identified?

The most explicit method involves the use of metadiscursive labels to name discursive varieties. Such labels personify speech by linking sound patterns to attributes of speakers. For example, Wells (1982) proposes the following labels for internal varieties of RP: *Mainstream RP* for the most common, unmarked variety; *U-RP* for 'U[pper class]' accents (stereotypically spoken by duchesses and elderly Oxbridge dons); *Adoptive RP* for the accent of those who did not speak RP as children; and *Near-RP* for analogous supra-local varieties spoken outside of England (e.g. the educated accents of Scotland, Wales, Australia and South Africa). Wells observes that the boundaries between these types 'may well correspond to our perceptions of social reality rather than to exclusively linguistic and phonetic considerations' (Wells, 1982, vol. 2, p. 280). In this case, of course, the metadiscursive labels themselves impose social classifications onto phonetic repertoires. For example, the names for varieties spoken in England link phonetic repertoires to stereotypic categories of speakers, viz., to persons who are in the 'mainstream', or are 'u[pper class]', or have 'adopt[ed]' accents to which not born. Observe that phonetic varieties have now become objects—or, object discourses—in relation to a metadiscourse linking speech to social classifications. But what can we say about the phonetic repertoires themselves?

2.2. A phonolexical register

The phonetic repertoires of RP are differentiated from those of other accents by phonological rules, many of which take delimited lexical sets as their domain. RP is

primarily a *phonolexical* register in this sense.[2] Wells (1982) lists several dozen such rules, including rules for the distinctive treatments of diphthongs, of vowels before /r/, for word-initial /h/ dropping, for the insertion or loss of /r/ in particular positions, as well as rules for a series of vowel mergers and splits that remain confined to particular lexical sets at given moments in the history of phonological change. Phoneticians describe such changes by using lexical items (common members of such lexical sets) as names for the domain of a phonological rule. For example, in mid-eighteenth century, the medial vowel was pronounced [a:] in the PALM set, [a:r] in START, and [æ:] (phonemically /æ/) in BATH; but all three sets of words have /ɑː/ in 20th century RP. Accent changes involve contingent lexical domains for many reasons. One reason is that such changes do not always extend to the entire stock of words meeting the structural description of a phonological rule (Wells, 1982, p. 233). Hence, in the environment __s#, an orthographic <a> is now pronounced /ɑː/ in some RP words (*pass, glass, grass, brass*), while others retain the older /æ/ (*lass, morass, gas, crass*). The contrast between /æ/ and /ɑː/ now occurs in more than a dozen phonolexical sets in RP, an overall state of affairs referred to as the TRAP–BATH split. Contrasts among internal varieties of RP involve phonolexical sets as well, e.g. the vowel in the TRAP set is pronounced /æ/ in Mainstream RP, but occurs as a diphthong—either [ɛæ] or [eæ]—in U-RP.

The fact that phonological rules operate over specific lexical domains has some practical consequences for performance: knowing the prestige forms of RP is partly a matter of knowing the precise lexical boundaries within which particular phonological rules apply. Over- or under-generalization of a rule is often socially perilous. The complexity of repertoire variation itself contributes to the differences in competence among speakers noted in Section 2.1.

The examples also show that our ability to describe such phonetic variation requires the use of metadiscursive labels to fix the classes in question. Technical analyses of the register concurrently employ phonetic and sociological modes of reasoning, as Wells observes. Yet the two modes can be employed independently as well, and frequently are, by the ordinary language user. One way in which speakers can discern accent contrasts is to attend to phonetic differences audible in utterances. A second method is to use metadiscursive labels—such as Mainstream RP, U-RP, Adoptive RP—which anchor phonetic repertoires to classifications of persons in social space. Of course the technical labels discussed above are not widely known. Yet the experience of RP in Britain today is nonetheless mediated by a range of metadiscursive practices that bring register-dependent images of persons into wide circulation in the public sphere. I begin with a set of everyday personifying terms, turning then to characterological practices that are partly independent of them.

---

[2] Structurally comparable systems of this kind occur in many other languages (see Agha, 2002, pp. 39–43), though they are not always ideologically comparable (see Irvine, 1998). Indeed the term 'accent' itself constitutes a highly culture-specific ideological framework for characterizing and discussing contrasts of phonolexical register.

2.3. Everyday personifying terms

A number of personifying terms are very widely known. They are used in everyday descriptions of language use, in prescriptions and proscriptions to others, in public discussions of the 'best' kinds of usage, and so on. These terms are not simply neutral descriptors. They imbue the phenomena they describe with specific characterological values. The class includes expressions like *the Queen's English, Public School Pronunciation,* the *U/non-U* terminology, phrases like *talking proper* and *talking posh*, and *Received Pronunciation* itself. Many of these terms anchor speech repertoires to named positions in social space but differ in the degree of explicitness with which they achieve the effect.

The term *Public School Pronunciation* alludes to a social institution whose products are viewed as exemplary speakers. The term *Queen's English* recalls a Victorian cosmic polity in which differences of rank among the sovereign's subjects were assessed in part by their capacity to uphold a speech standard. Other terms, such as the *U/non-U* terminology [introduced into public debates about language standards by Ross (1954) and Mitford (1956)], link speech forms, including accent, to class distinctions. In this case, the accent named can be sociologically centered in an explicit way, as in 'U[pper-class] accent'. In contrast, terms such as *talking proper* and *talking posh* (which apply to diction as well as accent) do not name positions in social space; they describe discursively performable demeanors—'doing proper' or 'doing posh,' as it were—associated with particular activities, settings and social types.

The term *Received Pronunciation* is rather more implicit in its characterological work. It belongs to a small set of idiomatic phrases formed by using the term *received* (in the sense of 'generally adopted, accepted, approved as true,' now rather archaic) as a modifier to nouns that denote cultural forms having a historically normative force (viz., . . .*religion/opinion/wisdom/custom/canon*). Though the phrasal idiom is attested as far back as the 15th century, the term *pronunciation* was not included in the class of modifiable nouns till the twentieth century. Once accepted in common usage, however, the term *Received Pronunciation* also implies a historical product. It locates a speech variety as something handed down by a tradition about which there is a consensus in the judgment of some contemporary group—its 'receivers,' as it were—who, although unnamed by the term itself, are presumably the best judges of its historical authenticity and value. Hence the term describes a speech variety which is centered 'elsewhere' in social space: it is a discursive variety to which the actual speech of most speakers corresponds only imperfectly (see Section 2.1); it is also a variety whose 'correct' forms and usage (i.e. whose metadiscursive standards) are guaranteed by someone else. The register name thus contributes to a politics of anxiety linked to the register from its earliest inception.

All of these terms link speech to images of persons in various ways. Yet the terms are merely a backdrop to a much wider range of metadiscursive practices linking speech to social personae in everyday life. Some of these practices are not officially 'about' speech at all, but typify discursive personae in the course of 'other' work. Such typifications are inevitably expressed through overt (perceivable) signs, though

not always through linguistic expressions; even when they are linguistic in character, such typifications differ enormously in the denotational explicitness with which they ascribe characterological attributes to the register's forms.

2.4. Public sphere metadiscourses

Although RP is indeed an accent which Britons hear 'constantly from radio and television' (as Wells notes above), much of the experience of its forms in the public sphere is accompanied by metadiscursive activity typifying accent forms and values:

> In our serious newspapers political columnists and other journalists regularly pass comment on the accents of public figures, while television critics discuss the accents of actors, programme presenters, and other television personalities. The correspondence columns of both national and local newspapers frequently carry letters from readers commenting on various forms of accent—favourably, or, more often, unfavourably—and when the BBC uses people with marked regional accents to present radio programmes or to read the news, waves of protest are expressed in letters of complaint to the BBC and sacks of hate-mail to the presenters themselves...Writers of contemporary novels and memoirs use observations about accent as a crucial part of the description of character... Most of the characters in Anthony Burgess's recent memoirs are introduced with reference to their accent. (Honey, 1989a, p. 10)

In all of these cases, phonetic substance is linked to a set of social personae, whether explicitly, as in descriptions of persons and their accents; or implicitly, as in the case of literary treatments, where characters are made palpable to the reader through depictions of accented speech. In some cases implicit typifications are rendered more explicit through 'uptake' and response in subsequent speech events: In the case of the BBC announcers who speak with regional accents, particular social personae are only implicitly palpable in the announcer's performance; but in their subsequent letters of complaint and hate-mail, the audiences of these broadcasts describe such enacted personae in highly explicit—sometimes vituperative—terms in the very course of dismissing them. Let us now consider a few other, relatively implicit metadiscourses of accent.

One such case involves the manipulation of spelling conventions in represented dialogue involving U-RP speakers. Words represented as U-RP speech (a.k.a 'Conservative RP') are often mis-spelled in the popular print media, as shown in Table 1.

Here the use of mis-spelling constitutes an implicit metapragmatic commentary on norms of speech. For, armed with the folk-view that every word has a correct spelling and a correct pronunciation, the reader can only construe defective spelling as an implicit comment on defects of pronunciation-implicit, because no-one has actually said that the pronunciation is incorrect. The mis-spelling of words also invites inferences about oddity of character (viz., that upper-class speakers are pompous, eccentric, out of touch, etc.) rarely described explicitly in these texts. Such mis-spelling performatively replay folk-stereotypes about the aristocracy in a highly effective

Table 1
Popular media mis-spellings of U-RP words

Spelling used for U-RP words	Standard spelling
kebinet office	cabinet office
clawth	cloth
crawss	cross
lawft	loft
hape	hope
arm-air	army
fah	fire
pah of the British empah	power of the British Empire
stains	stones

Source: Honey, 1989a.

way. But while these stereotypes are effectively disseminated in the press and easily recognized by readers, they are not actionable. The dissemination of register-based images of persons is here a covert effect of a genre whose official point is just harmless humor.

Consider now an even more implicit case. The cartoon in Fig. 1 is a metadiscursive representation of improper discursive behavior. Yet it is not itself an instance of language use. The typifying metasigns are entirely pictorial and non-linguistic; but the typified object-signs include speech as well as other behavioral displays. The cartoon depicts the social failure of the smaller, slim person (let us call him 'Mr. Slim') vis-à-vis the larger, aristocratic gentleman ('Mr. Round'). After the two are introduced in frame 1 on the top left, Mr. Slim (notice the ill-fitting suit, the ill-at-ease expression, the slouching posture) remains anxious and silent for the next three frames; but the gracious Mr. Round (who in contrast is elegantly dressed, socially adept, exudes an amiable grace) has managed to draw Mr. Slim out of his shell with casual repartee by frame 5. Yet as Mr. Slim begins to speak he is all teeth and knuckles, he gesticulates wildly, his speech is obstreperous, over-excited, graceless; we can only imagine his accent! The result is an increasing tension in Mr. Round's demeanor in the last five frames—he frowns, looks askance, scowls at Mr. Slim—resulting, in the final frame, in the brusque dismissal in a puff of smoke.

The cartoon does not isolate accent as an object of metasemiotic scrutiny. It visually depicts the social perils of improper demeanor in many sign modalities (dress, posture, gait, gesture), including speech activity. It reflexively formulates *cross-modal icons or images* of personhood (Agha, in press), a paradigm of two such images, in particular: one is the image of personhood in which ill-fitting clothing, toothy grins, wild gesture, obstreperous (and, perhaps, crude) speech all go together (Mr. Slim); the other, in which elegant dress, graceful bearing, and well intoned speech are all of a part (Mr. Round). Any British reader of the cartoon knows how accent aligns with these other signs: Mr. Round speaks RP, Mr. Slim very likely does not.

In the foregoing I have discussed a number of public sphere discourses that reflexively typify speech and accent in various ways. I have been concerned to show
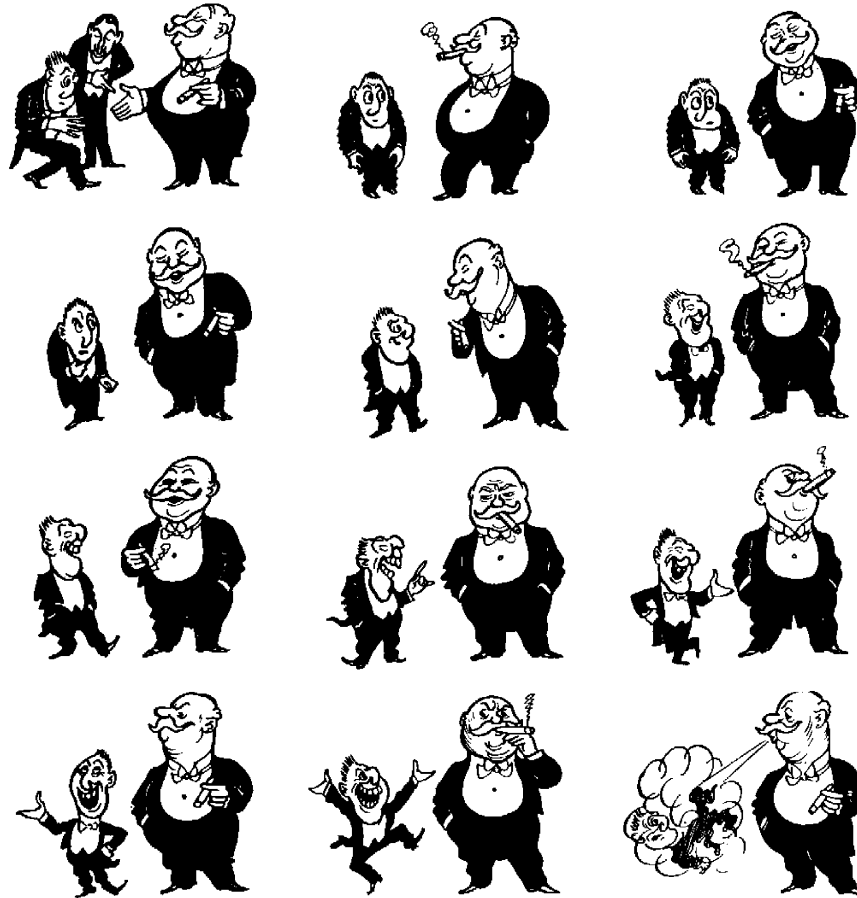
Fig. 1. Bainbridge Cartoon, ca. 1920.

that the everyday experience of accent in Britain routinely contains *reflexive typifications of accent* as part of the experience. Messages containing RP (or alternatives to RP) contain metamessages that typify, comment on, or otherwise characterize speech and accent as pragmatically deployable systems of signs. When the meta-pragmatic aspect of these messages is relatively implicit or when typifications of speech are linked to typifications of other signs, the fact that the text in question typifies accent may be relatively non-transparent (i.e. less easily reportable in subsequent discourse; see Silverstein, 1981) even though the typification is readily recognized in contextualized encounters with the messages themselves.

This culture of reflexive activity does not exist merely at the level of public sphere institutions. It lives through the evaluative activities of ordinary persons. The characterological values of RP are easily elicited from ordinary individuals as well. Let us consider some of these data.

2.5. Elicited metapragmatic judgments

RP is not only one of the most storied accents of contemporary times, it is also among the best studied. A number of studies have shown that members of the British public typify RP in specific characterological terms and, conversely, employ stereotypes of speech in reasoning about types of persons. These studies are quite heterogeneous in goals and methodology but all make use of elicited metapragmatic data, e.g. questionnaire-based responses to queries about speech and associated indices of demeanor.

Even the 1972 National Opinion Poll, though not a linguistic survey, provides an initial set of clues. Respondents were provided with a set of 11 choices, and asked: 'Which two of these would you say are most important in being able to tell which class a person is?'. The largest group of respondents (33%) rated 'The way they speak' as the most important factor.[3]

Other studies have focused on accent in particular (Giles, 1970, 1971; Giles and Powesland, 1975). Several patterns have been reported through the use of 'matched guise' experiments, where speakers are asked to evaluate a sample of discursive data exhibiting differences of accent for selected features, such as persuasiveness of speech, or characteristics of speaker. These experiments indicate that Britons view accents in terms of a stratified model of speaker rank. Unmarked or Mainstream RP is the accent accorded the highest social value; aristocratic or U-RP is generally ranked lower, as are the educated accents of Wales and Ireland ('Near-RP'); provincial accents form a middle region; distinctively urban accents are among the lowest ranked. Table 2 offers an approximate picture of some of these results.

Particular accents on this scale are also linked to specific characterological images of persons, including ideas about mental ability and personal habits. Respondents judge RP speakers to be *more* ambitious, intelligent, and confident, cleaner, taller and better looking—even though they are evaluating audiotaped data [!]—but also *less* serious, talkative, good-natured and good-humored than non-RP speakers[4] (Giles, 1971).

Similar results occur in studies of accent endorsement and accuracy of self-reported speech. Newbrook (1999) characterizes the results of his study of West Wirral (see Table 3) as 'typical' of northern England. Many more speakers endorse RP than

---

[3] The next few factors, in descending order of importance, were: 'Where they live,' 'The friends they have,' 'Their job,' 'The sort of school they went to,' followed by factors such as money, clothing and cars (Reid, 1977, p. 27). Though not specifically mentioned in the questionnaire, perceptions of accent are likely to have played a role in these responses, especially in the ranking of speech habits as number one overall and of schooling (cf. the stereotype of 'Public School Pronunciation') as number five.

[4] Observe that for some—though not all—of these evaluative dimensions, RP is ranked *higher* for stereotypes of 'power' (viz. ambition, intelligence, self-confidence, determination) and *lower* for stereotypes of 'solidarity' (good-humor, good-naturedness). Thus stereotypes of RP are broadly comparable to those linked to pronominal registers, as reported by Brown and Gilman (1960) for the European languages on the basis of a similar questionnaire survey. This type of inverse relationship between stereotypes of power and solidarity has now been described for many other structural classes of linguistic indexicals and in many other languages as well (see Agha, 1994, for a review of the literature).

Table 2
Accent speech levels in Britain

Highest ranked
Mainstream RP ('unmarked' RP)
Near-RP: educated English accents of Scotland, Wales & Ireland
Provincial accents (Yorkshire, West Country, Tyneside Geordie)
Urban accents: London (Cockney), Liverpool (Scouse), Glaswegian
Lowest ranked

Source: Giles, 1970, 1971.

Table 3
Patterns of RP endorsement and accuracy of self-report in West Wirral

Endorsement:	Endorse RP 81%	Endorse non-RP 16%	Cannot distinguish 3%	
Accuracy of self-report:	Accurate 59%	Over-reportage 29%	Under-reportage 9%	Dialect error 4%

Source: Newbrook, 1999, Tables 5.2 and 5.4.

endorse non-RP accents. Many more speakers exhibit over-reportage (i.e. claim to use RP but do not) than exhibit under-reportage.

These studies indicate that RP accent fits within a larger scheme of sociological differentiation linking speech to stereotypes of speaker[5]. This is also reflected in the linguistic insecurity of those who do not speak RP. The following comments by a Glaswegian about his own speech are typical:

> I mean I'm not a speaker as you can see. I don't…I'm just a common sort of, you know I'm not…I've often wished I'd gone to some sort of elocution lessons because I meet so many people in my job and I feel as if I'm lower when it comes to speaking, y' know. (Macaulay, 1977).

2.6. Cultural values and metadiscursive processes

I have been observing that folk-term 'accent' does not name a sound pattern as such but a system of contrastive social personae stereotypically linked to contrasts

---

[5] The stereotype that exemplary speech indexes positive speaker attributes (viz. mental ability, taste, behavioral finesse, social class, caste, etc.) is associated with prestige registers in many other languages [e.g. Javanese (Errington, 1988, 1998; Poedjosoedarmo, 1968), Persian (Beeman, 1986), Tibetan (Agha, 1998)] though the specific characterological constructs differ from case to case. Also cross-linguistically common are the asymmetries of competence noted for RP.

of sound. In particular the accent called RP is enregistered in cultural awareness as part of a system of stratified speech levels linked to an ideology of speaker rank. These value ascriptions are evident both in public sphere discourses and in responses elicited from individuals. But what is involved in claiming that such cultural values exist at all? For whom do they exist?

In speaking of 'cultural values' I wish to invite no metaphysics of shared belief. To say that pragmatic behaviors—such as uses of a register—have cultural *values* associated with them is simply to say that certain regularities of *evaluative behavior* can be observed and documented as data. Indeed, all of the evidence for register values presented above consists of data of observable metapragmatic activity. I have discussed several genres of such activity—the use of register names, journalistic depictions of accent, responses to playback experiments, etc.—in the sections above; they vary enormously from each other, both in form and specific import; some of these are elicited by linguists, others occur naturally as part of the fabric of social life.

Yet all such behavior is unavoidably positioned, by its very nature, as the activity of socially locatable persons. Insofar as many persons offer *comparable* typifications of a register formation the data furnishes evidence for the existence of metapragmatic *stereotypes*—social regularities of metapragmatic typification—identifiable for a particular *social domain* of evaluators, e.g. a particular sub-population within a society (Agha, 2002, pp. 24–32). There is no necessity, of course, that such evaluations always be consistent with each other society-internally; in fact their mutual inconsistency often provides crucial evidence for the co-existence of distinct, socially positioned ideologies of language within a language community.[6]

My concern in the remainder of this paper is with processes through which register formations change in social domain (e.g. become known to larger groups of people) and the way in which their values change through such processes. In what follows, I will pay particular attention to public sphere depictions of RP. But first a word of caution: it is not my purpose to assert that public sphere representations (such as the 'mass media' depictions discussed earlier) *determine* individual views, or anything of the sort. Contemporary mass media depictions are themselves the products of individuals caught up in larger historical processes; and the 'uptake' of such messages by audiences involve processes of evaluative response that permit many degrees of freedom. I am concerned rather with the ways in which these representations expand the social domain of individuals acquainted with register stereotypes, and allow individuals, once aware of them, to respond to their characterological value in various ways, aligning their own self-images with them in some cases, transforming them in others through their own metasemiotic work.

---

[6] In many cases the scheme of register values exhibits a degree of sociological fractionation (Agha, in press), a process of value competition that reflects the group-relative interests of particular persons (Hill, 1998; Agha, 1998). In other cases the sign-values may become rigidly naturalized, whether as attributes of particular groups (e.g. the speech of a privileged group counts as the exemplary form), or as impersonal standards, backed by the authority of canonizing institutions (e.g. national academies, school boards, lexicographic traditions); these processes appear to render the cultural formation non-contingent and often expand the social domain of the register.

I argue below that the *dissemination* or spread of a register depends on the circulation of messages typifying speech. Such messages are borne by physical artifacts: in the case of face-to-face communication, by acoustical artifacts, i.e. 'utterances'; in the mass mediated cases by more perduring text-artifacts—books, magazines, cartoons, musical scores, and the like—that are physical objects conveying information about cultural forms.[7] The circulation of messages depends on interaction between people, whether face-to-face interactions, or more indirect forms of communication linking persons to each other across larger spans of space and time (Sapir, 1949). Each event in this complex cultural process is a metadiscursive semiotic event with its own forms of recruitment to *roles of communicative participants* (senders and receivers of messages); its own *genre* characteristics; its own *referents*, and in particular, a set of depicted *characterological figures* or 'social personae' linked to speech.[8] Thus, in the above examples, the individuals who produce the texts discussed (journalists, novelists, cartoonists, etc.) constitute a cadre of *producers or senders* of metadiscursive messages about speech and accent in the public sphere. At the same time, members of the public are recruited willy-nilly to participant roles such as *receiver or hearer* of such messages in the very course of exposure to these media. Some among them subsequently become producers of influential messages in turn, thus reshaping subsequent forms of accent values through their own activities. But the constancy or change of the register over time is mediated by the characterological figures linked to speech in the messages themselves.

The social expansion of the register is mediated, in particular, by processes of *role alignment*. Any social person who is a receiver of such a message can, in principle, seek to align his or her own self-image with the characterological figures depicted in the message; wishing to transform one's own speech in favor of models depicted (e.g. wishing to emulate Mr. Round more than Mr. Slim in Fig. 1) is a simple type of role alignment in this sense. Each of the characterological depictions of accents in the texts discussed later has a rhetoric inviting certain forms of alignment as we shall see; and although there is no necessity to outcomes at the level of individual texts, the density and institutional stabilization of particular metapragmatic genres does appear to produce relatively stable trends for certain periods. One of the most interesting features of the logic of role alignment is that it shows the process of

---

[7] As Lyons (1995, p. 235) observes, '[t]he term 'utterance' can be used to refer either to the process (or activity) of uttering or to the products of that process (or activity).' In the latter, 'product' sense, an utterance is an acoustical artifact, a thing made through human activity in the physical substance of sound. The discursive artifact can carry messages insofar as it is an object of the senses (Urban, 1996) as do other kinds of physical artifact (Appadurai, 1986). And although a spoken utterance has a fleeting durational existence (relative to human perceptual rates), it is capable of conversion through the act of recording into more perduring physical artifacts-such as those made of ink and paper-that facilitate the more indirect, spatiotemporally remote forms of communication discussed in the paper.

[8] In his discussion of participant roles Goffman uses the term 'figure' for an image of personhood that is clearly differentiated from 'animator' in contexts of character depiction, such as story-telling, theatrical performance and the like (Goffman, 1974, p. 571; also Goffman, 1979). I use the term 'characterological figure' in a related sense. I am concerned here with any image of personhood that is associable with a semiotic display itself—such as the use of an accent—and thus detachable from the current animator in subsequent moments of circulation.

enregisterment to be relatively flexible, yet non-random. During the course of this apparently continuous process, many aspects of RP—its exemplary speakers, its canonical phonetic patterns—change in substantial ways, and do so more than once. Such changes reflect larger scale trends in society, but also amplify them.

Let me now offer a brief sketch of the historical issues as a prelude to a more extended discussion.

3. The emergence of a standard

There is a particular, Whiggish history of Received Pronunciation—found in many books on the subject—in which RP is viewed as descending from the prestige variety of English spoken in southeastern England in the 16th century, a region including London and the universities at Oxford and Cambridge.[9] Since this speech variety was spoken not by everyone in this region but by a privileged few (such as the London aristocracy, courtiers, those associated with the universities) it functioned at this time as a regional prestige sociolect rather than a dialect common to southeastern England as a whole. But though the sociolect was recommended as a literary standard in the 16th and 17th centuries, it neither had a large number of speakers, nor recognition as a standard to be imitated by everyone.[10] Even much of the national aristocracy—a landed gentry linked more to their estates than to London—spoke with regional accents without stigma. So the emergence of RP as a *national* standard involved the expansion of the register construct across social categories of users. How was this effect achieved?

The transformation of this regional sociolect into a supra-local variety is the product of a particular cultural history of language standardization, aspects of which I discuss later. We must understand however that the register formation possessed the features discussed in Section 2.6 at every point in this historical process: the formation has always involved characterological constructs linked to sound (different ones at different times) mediated and disseminated by discourses that circulate through,

---

[9] While there is little doubt that we can identify the *main* source variety in this way, it is equally evident that many other spoken varieties have served as occasional and sometimes dramatic sources of innovation in RP (e.g. the speech of the professional middle classes, London Cockney). All 'single ancestor' accounts of the origins of RP—or, indeed, of any other linguistic register—have an in-principle limitation: they presume a false analogy with biological descent. Biological species can descend from single ancestor species due to constraints on cross-species interbreeding and exchange of genetic materials; but linguistic registers have elements that are easily mixed and recombined across dialect and register boundaries. See Hope (2000) for an elegant discussion of this point. My own argument—that the historical transmission of RP involved metadiscursive processes that *actively reconfigure* particular features of the register relative to local contexts of transmission—avoids this pitfall and provides an alternative.

[10] The variety is alluded to by George Puttenham in his *Art of Poesie* (1589) when he recommends the young poet to adopt 'the usual speech of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within 60 miles and not much above.' However, even in the 17th century the court variety is often perceived as a form of restricted, in-group speech by dramatists and other literary figures who see themselves as out-group. They lampoon it in plays, describe it as 'amusing,' as having 'distended vowels' (Honey, 1989b, p. 585), thus indicating a degree of role distance, or non-alignment with its values.

and thus are frequently transformed by, the activities of persons linked to each other in particular, institutionalized genres of communicative activity. The events through which these constructs move through society are speech events involving senders and receivers *of* messages, as well as characterological figures—accent personae—typified *in* message content. Though each such event has a limited provenance and reach, the interlinkage of such events over historical time comprises a higher order structure, what I call a speech chain, through which the dissemination of RP and associated constructs greatly expands in demographic terms.

It is important to see, moreover, that the formation called RP did not come about all at once. Indeed, the fact that the process of its formation involved several distinct trends—layered upon each other in historical time, motivating each other by degrees—is critical to the way in which the register came into its heyday in the 20th century. During the 18th century, for example, the prestige court sociolect of the 16th century came to be championed as the model for a *national* standard of pronunciation. But the prescriptivist arguments advanced in favor of the proposal were written for—and initially read by—a very small portion of the population. In order for these discourses to have any larger consequence they had to be taken up by entirely different types of actors—a rather diverse group of producers of accent metadiscourses, as we shall see—and brought to the attention of a much larger population of persons in roles 'hearer' or 'receiver' of such messages.

In the period between 1760 and 1900 a range of genres of accent metadiscourses emerged and flourished; I discuss five such genres later. Though they differ enormously from each other, all of them promote the expansion of RP by formulating social personae linked to sound—a range of characterological figures—to which the 'receivers' of these messages can and do respond with various forms of response behaviors, types of role alignment that bring accent personae to life in the habits of speech production and perception of ordinary individuals.

I first sketch the logic of dissemination in schematic form in Section 4. I turn then in Sections 5 and 6 to the replication and transformation of RP stereotypes across this period.

4. A mechanism of social transmission

The question of the social mechanism by which linguistic values may be transmitted across space and time is relevant even to the simplest cases of lexical innovation. How does a new word, once coined, begin to circulate through social space? How does it begin to recur in disparate events of language use? One area of enormous lexical innovation in contemporary English, for example, is the lexical register of computerese, where terms like 'download', 'zip drive', 'RAM' and 'mouse' now prevail with denotational values quite distinct from those of their ordinary English homonyms. How do the distinctive denotational values of such words, once established, come to be shared? Now, the existence of a lexical item is, in one sense, an elementary Durkheimian social fact: the existence of the word as something usable in utterances presupposes a collective understanding of its existence. The difficulty

with the Durkheimian notion of social fact, however, is the question of how such a collective understanding itself comes about. How, then, does a social regularity of recognition emerge?

4.1. The case of proper names

Perhaps the most influential contemporary model for thinking about this issue was first worked out by Saul Kripke for the special case of proper names (Kripke, 1972), and later extended by Hilary Putnam to a larger class of cases (Putnam, 1975). Kripke proposed a particular historical mechanism for explaining how knowledge of a particular denotational regularity—the pairing of a name with a referent—comes to be socially shared. Kripke's insight was to see that even this rather elementary discursive fact cannot become a social fact independently of a historical process connecting distinct metadiscursive events of language use.

Let us consider the outlines of this historical process in the case of personal proper names. Names are conferred upon persons in a distinct class of performative speech events, called 'baptismal events,' many of which have specific ceremonial pre-requisites. In the context of Christian names, for example, the baptismal event takes place in a church, is presided over by a priest, is attended by the child and certain close kin. In such a case, the priest is a metadiscursive agent of enormous power in that he is entitled to create a discursive regularity—the pairing of a name with a referent—which has consequences for the way in which the name bearer is referred to and identified in subsequent life.
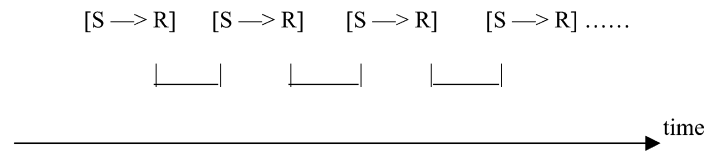
Yet insofar as a name is conferred upon a person in such a ceremony, it becomes a social fact in a very limited sense. Only the individuals present in the ceremony have a collective understanding that the name is now the name of the child. The general mechanism by which knowledge of a name-referent pairing spreads from this small group of individuals is through *further speech events* whereby the fact that the name is now the name of a particular person may be learned by others. The overall effect of such a historical chain of speech events is to make a particular kind of linguistic behavior—the act of using a particular name for a particular person—socially replicable. The speech events through which knowledge of a name is transmitted are necessarily events in which social persons occupy speech-act roles such as 'speaker' and 'hearer', and the name occurs as part of the linguistic message exchanged by the occupants of these roles. Observe that an individual can relay such a message as its 'speaker' only if he or she has been introduced to the name-referent link (i.e. has occupied the role 'hearer' of such a message) in a *prior* speech event.

4.2. Speech chains

Such a mechanism for the social transmission of messages across a population can be generalized beyond the case of proper names to talk about the transmission of any kind of cultural message across social space through the activity of discourse itself. The process of transmission depends upon a principle of role permutation that links a sequence of speech events into a *speech chain*, as shown in Fig. 2.

Definition: A **speech chain** is a historical series of speech events linked together by the permutation of individuals across speech-act roles in the following way: the receiver of the message in the (n)th speech event is the sender of the message in the (n+1)th speech event, i.e.

$$[S \longrightarrow R] \quad [S \longrightarrow R] \quad [S \longrightarrow R] \quad [S \longrightarrow R] \ldots\ldots$$

$$\lfloor\_\_\_\_\rfloor \qquad \lfloor\_\_\_\_\rfloor \qquad \lfloor\_\_\_\_\rfloor$$

$$\longrightarrow \text{time}$$

where the terms 'sender' and 'receiver' (or 'S' and 'R') are variable names for interactional roles, specified in different ways at different points along the speech chain

Fig. 2. Speech chains.

Any two contiguous links in the chain may differ from each other in a variety of ways. Particularly important are differences in the specific values of roles S and R,[11] and in the characteristics of their incumbents. In the case of written discourse the roles sender and receiver—more specifically, writer and reader—may be occupied by individuals living centuries apart. In the case of oral discourse the sender and receiver are often physically co-present as speaker and hearer.[12] Other links may involve

---

[11] Terms such as 'sender' and 'receiver' are not names of people but of interactional role categories inhabitable by social persons in events of communication. Such role categories are indefinitely decomposable into further sub-types; corporeal participants are not. It is now understood that the decomposition of 'sender' and 'receiver' roles into sub-categories such as 'speaker/animator/author/principal...' or 'hearer/addressee/reader/audience/overhearer ...' cannot be handled by appeal to static inventories of role labels. Their specific construal depends on semiotic cues occurring within messages themselves—the use of pronominal forms, quotation, parallelism, gesture, gaze, posture—which reflexively shape the construal of a participation framework for participants themselves (see Irvine, 1996; Hanks, 1996). I therefore use the terms 'sender' and 'receiver' as names for variables whose specific values are established for participants only by appeal to such cues. It follows that different events in a speech chain will involve different role specifications, shaped in each case by cues that are currently in play.

[12] The special case of dyadic conversation—often viewed as the most concrete type of discursive event—obtains for any segment of such a chain where all the speech events (1) involve oral utterances, (2) occur in the same scene/setting, and where (3) the roles S and R are allocated alternatively to just two individuals. The feeling of concreteness associated with this special case derives from the fact that the roles sender and receiver—presupposed by anything that counts as a message—happen to be filled by persons co-present in the physical setting where the message occurs. Yet any two individuals engaged in a conversation have, of course, participated in various discursive interactions before, and thus bring to the event biographically specific discursive histories. The capacity of individuals to produce and understand such messages—to function as competent speakers and addressees of them—is shaped differentially by these prior discursive histories, e.g. the ability to recover the correct reference of a proper name requires participation in a chain of transmission as noted earlier.

public sphere discourses. In the case of a television broadcast that makes a public figure better known, the role of audience/viewer of the message may be occupied simultaneously by millions of people; and the occurrence of the speech event may presuppose the cooperation of dozens of people in the role sender of message.

In the case of proper names such a speech chain structure serves to maintain the pairing of a name with a referent over many occasions of language use, thus creating sociohistorical continuities in referential practice. Indeed, the understanding that a name correctly and uniquely refers to a particular person is socially shared only by members of a given *speech chain network*, i.e. by the class of social persons who have all been 'hearers-of' events belonging to a given speech chain.

Co-membership in a speech chain network depends not on knowing one another, but on having something common in one's discursive history. All members of a speech chain network need not be acquainted with each other. In the case of proper names, co-members are linked to each other by a continuous history of name transmission, i.e. each member of the network is linked to the baptismal event of name-conferral through a continuous speech chain.[13] An individual need not know *when* that baptismal event occurred, or even *that* it occurred. The social existence of a name–referent link merely *presupposes* an event of name-conferral; it does not in general require its verifiability.[14] In the more general case, co-membership in a speech chain network requires neither conscious knowledge nor verifiability of a shared discursive history by participants themselves, only an awareness of the symbolic values transmitted across the chain.

4.3. Transmission of accent values

Such a mechanism for the transmission of messages can be generalized beyond the case of proper names to talk about the transmission of any kind of cultural message across a population. In the following discussion I apply the model to the spatio-temporal movement of discourses about accent. In generalizing from the case of proper names, however, it is important to see that the idea that speech chain processes transmit 'messages' across social space is coherent only to the extent that we

---

[13] Thus, if I know of two people with the name 'John F. Kennedy' I belong to two distinct speech chain networks—i.e. I have been a 'hearer' of at least two prior speech events, each linked historically to a distinct baptismal event, and thus to two different persons bearing the name—a situation which might lead me to inquire in some subsequent speech event 'Which John F. Kennedy do you mean?' of my interlocutor.

[14] The issue of verifiability of baptismal events does become critical, however, in more specialized areas of cultural life such as historical research, legal proceedings, rights to citizenship, etc. These practices therefore rely on specialized text-artifacts—including public records, such as county registers and birth certificates—that are socially designed to answer questions about the verifiability of baptismal events and of consequent facts of social identity. Yet by their very nature such artifacts are neither accessible to everyone nor called upon in everyday uses of names. In other cases, such as claims to co-membership in a 'fictive lineage' or 'tradition,' aspects of a shared discursive history are not only presupposed but consciously believed and overtly claimed; in such cases, the claims may well be unverifiable, or verifiable and demonstrable as false. But here criteria of verifiability may themselves be disputed—and frequently are, as in the case of religious traditions—and even linked to epistemological conflicts that create internal boundaries within the tradition.

have criteria on the identity of messages. In the case of proper names, both criteria of message form and content are necessary.[15] In the case of the discourses of accent discussed later, criteria of message content (i.e. that the discourse typifies accent in some way) are crucial to all cases; in cases where authorities are cited and quoted, the precise form of prior messages is carried over as well.

The demographic profile of members of a speech chain network is an important variable shaping the sociological effects of this process. We have already seen that contemporary public sphere discourses of accent link individuals to each other on a mass scale. In the case of electronically mediated discourses the persons recruited to roles of sender and receiver are not single individuals but groups of individuals who often share a demographic profile. For example, in the case of the BBC broadcasts noted earlier Section (2.4) the role sender of the message involves the joint activities of many categories of corporate employee; and the receivers of the message may be sorted by broadcast genre—the news vs. the talk show, pop music vs. opera—into specific target audiences that differ in demographic profile (class, age, etc.).

The 18th and 19th century metadiscourses discussed later transmit ideas about accent through print artefacts—books, manuals, magazines, newspapers, etc.—that can be read at different times by different persons. Yet for any given point in the speech chain, we can estimate several characteristics of social persons occupying roles of sender and receiver (their number, their demographic characteristics, their relative social status, etc.). We can thus estimate the social trajectories through which particular messages moved and the categories of persons they reached. All of the speech-chain linkages discussed later must be understood as involving speech events linking individuals to each other in events of speaking, reading, writing and so on. Yet the account focuses more on the demographic profiles of members of these networks, referring to particular historical individuals only in some cases.

Let us now see how this type of analysis can illuminate the case at hand.

5. The transformation of habits of speech perception

There is ample evidence that metadiscourses of accent in 18th and 19th century Britain involved identifiable speech chain trajectories through which accent values moved in space and time. Although the genres that I now consider articulate the values of accent for different audiences—and vary in degrees of explicitness, and type of reception by each audience—the structure of speech chain linkages across genres connects the effects in one domain to those in another, creating historical transformations of a more global kind. Let us consider the characteristics of these genres and the connections between them.

---

[15] Thus every 'message' which introduces a name–referent pair to someone else must contain a token of the proper name. This is a criterion on the identity of *message form*. In addition, such a message must also contain some semiotic device which introduces the referent (viz., through ostension, definite descriptions, etc.) The latter is a criterion on the identity of *message content* (not message form) since acts of identifying the referent may be accomplished by a variety of sign forms.

5.1. Early prescriptivist works

In the second half of the 18th century, scholarly writings on English speech and accent—including treatises on elocution, oratory and education, as well as dictionaries—began to proliferate in an unprecedented way. Mugglestone (1995) observes that five times as many works on elocution appeared in the period 1760–1800 than had appeared in all the years before 1760. Whereas several 17th century phoneticians had produced descriptions of English pronunciation (see Dobson, 1968), many of the 18th century writers sought to connect descriptions of pronunciation to prescriptions for national standards. These works eventually had a widespread influence, but only through the intermediation of speech-chain processes involving works from entirely different genres. For, initially at least, these prescriptivist works exerted an influence only within a small discourse community [cf. Watts (1999) on the restricted circulation of prescriptivist discourses in the early 18th century].

The treatment of accent within these works initially faced some difficulties too. Although Samuel Johnson had included pronunciation in his plans for a dictionary, the actual dictionary, published eight years later in 1755, did not cover pronunciation in any systematic way. Johnson's difficulty lay partly in the fact that no accepted orthography was yet available for representing the sounds of English.

The creation of a phonetic notation for use by the general public (as an aid to 'correct' pronunciation) was a central preoccupation of the most influential early prescriptivist, Thomas Sheridan. Sheridan advocated standards of correct pronunciation in a number of works published over the next two decades.[16] In the *Dissertation* of 1761 Sheridan had declared the intent to devise a phonetic notation, for use in a standard dictionary, in order 'to fix…a standard of pronunciation, by means of visible marks' (p. 29). The dictionary that appeared 19 years later contained many of the conventions used in lexical entries today, e.g. phonetic re-spelling of every word, marks for syllable boundaries, symbols for consonant and vowel quality.

The development of this phonetic notation and its increasing use in dictionaries of the period led to a rise in public awareness of difference between norms of pronunciation and norms of ordinary spelling. John Walker's *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* (London, 1791), which employed a more elaborate version of this notation, was to go through over a hundred editions in the course of the next century. Yet such a phonetic notation made 'visible' one half of the social

---

[16] The titles of these works provide a sense of Sheridan's concerns: *British Education* (1756); *A Dissertation on the Causes of the Difficulties Which Occur in Learning the English Tongue* (1761); *Lectures on Elocution* (1762); *A Plan of Education for the Young Nobility* (1769); *Lectures on the Art of Reading* (1762); *A General Dictionary of the English Language* (1780). In addition to writing treatises, Sheridan, who was a noted actor, brought these ideas to the theatre as well (Benzie, 1972). He also gave lectures on elocution that popularized the view that particular 'tones, looks and gestures constitute a natural language of the passions' (Mohrmann, 1969, p. iv), arguing that education and cultivation are best evidenced in the overall delivery of an utterance. Such a 'culture of performance' was soon transported to the United States and proved influential in early American politics (Fliegelman, 1993; Gustafson, 1992).

phenomenon of accent, namely sound. The other half, namely the social personae linked to sound, were made 'visible' through other means. These included a series of characterological figures linking differences of accent to matters of social identity.

One construct that recurs in Sheridan's writings invokes a trans-European framework of *national* identities: Sheridan ascribes social essences such as 'cultivation' and 'barbarism' to specific nations on the basis of the development of institutions regulating forms of oral discourse. The British, he argues, are a barbarous nation since they lack 'proper grammars and dictionaries,' as well as schools and academies where the correct pronunciation might be taught. In these respects, they differ from the 'cultivated' nations of the South (especially Italy, France and Spain), who 'affix the term of barbarism to this country, in the same manner as the Greeks did to the rest of the world; and on the same principle, on account of the neglect of regulating and polishing our speech' (Sheridan, 1761, p. 1).

A second construct is the contrast between 'provincialism' and 'politeness' within Britain itself. The term 'provincial' marks a geosocial trope: 'By Provincials is here meant all British subjects, whether inhabitants of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, the several counties of England, or the city of London, who speak a corrupt dialect of the English tongue' (Sheridan, 1761, p. 2). Only speakers of the prestige London sociolect are 'polite'; all other Britons—whether urban or rural—are 'provincial.' To remedy this problem, Sheridan proposes to write a Grammar and Dictionary of English for

> use by all schools professing to teach English. The consequence of teaching children by one method, and one uniform system of rules, would be an uniformity of pronunciation in all so instructed. Thus might the rising generation, born and bred in different countries, and counties, no longer have a variety of dialects, but as subjects of one King, like sons of one father, have one common tongue. All natives of these realms, would be restored to their birthright in commonage of language, which has been too long fenced in, and made the property of a few. (Sheridan, 1761, p. 36).

Sheridan thus proposes that forms of speech that are prestige commodities in his time ('the property of a few') can be redistributed across the nation *through* the use of his Dictionary and Grammar, and so come to serve as emblems, on the one hand, of unity and egalitarianism *within* the nation; and, on the other, of the cultivation of the Briton in the contrast *among* nations. Yet these sentiments imply contradictory views about the social value of accent. The notion that certain nations are 'cultivated' or 'civilized' because they regulate their speech appeals to a framework of hierarchical social differences among nations. And the goal of trying to fuse the social orders within Britain into a harmonious whole through the regulation of speech implies the obliteration of social distinction.

These contradictions were eventually to reconfigure the values of accent, transforming a system of dialect differences into a system of status-differentiating registers.

Differences of pronunciation—to say nothing of lexis, and idiom–were hardly obliterated. The total effect of the prescriptivist discourse was to re-configure the values of accent from its earlier role as an index of geographic affiliation to its role as an index of social status, thus transforming a system of dialect differences into a system of status-differentiating registers. For highly educated speakers, a greater similarity of speech did come to prevail; but for every other demographic group, the result was a growing sense of class identification across the space of the nation.

But these effects cannot be attributed directly to the work of Sheridan and his associates in the late 18th century, for their works were known initially only within a small discourse community, consisting largely of the upper classes, the educated intelligentsia, and specialists on speech and education. The social transformation was mediated rather by other genres of metadiscourse that were linked to early prescriptivist works by a speech chain structure, but themselves had a much larger circulation.[17]

5.2. Popular handbooks

By the mid-19th century a genre of popular works on speech and accent—including etiquette manuals, handbooks on pronunciation, elocution and 'grammar'—had become well established. The authors of these works read the more scholarly, technical works discussed earlier, yet wrote in a non-technical style for a much larger audience, seeking to popularize the message which these works had earlier propounded. These works also paved the way for new markets for accent amelioration. As anxieties about accent grew during the 19th century growing numbers of orthoëpists and elocution masters appeared as purveyors of semiotic refinement, offering their services for money.

In their efforts to make proper speech the business of the common man these works transformed the metadiscursive constructs linking speech to social identity in substantial ways. Rather than relying on a framework of social difference among nations, as Sheridan had done the century before, these works describe the effects of utterance in everyday conversation, focusing on the pragmatic order internal to the speech event itself.

---

[17] In other words, the mere articulation of ideas is irrelevant to the social transformation with which we are here concerned. In order for such ideas to have social consequences, metadiscursive standards—such as 'cultivated' and 'barbarous' forms of speech—must become available to language users as criteria deployable in everyday events of utterance evaluation. If the accent in a particular utterance differs from the prestige form, a hearer can formulate judgments about the lack of 'cultivation' of current speaker. But the hearer can employ the prestige accent as a criterion only if he or she is acquainted with—has heard, or heard about—the forms and values of the prestige accent itself. Indeed, the social replicability of patterns of accent evaluation presupposes the widespread circulation of comparable metadiscursive standards. Yet the early prescriptive metadiscourses were known initially only within a small discourse community. Hence the effects of this metadiscourse had to reach a much larger audience before the transformation of regional-dialect values into status-register values could effectively occur.

No saying was ever truer than that good breeding and good education are sooner discovered from the style of speaking…than from any other means. (*Composition, Literary and Rhetorical, Simplified*, London, 1850; cited in Mugglestone, 1995, p. 1)[18]

Many of these works directly address themselves to members of the expanding middle classes. They formulate speech and accent as 'passports,' as means of gaining access to 'good circles':

Accent and pronunciation must be diligently studied by the conversationalist. A person who uses vulgarisms will make but little way in good circles…A proper accent gives importance to what you say, engages the respectful attention of your hearer, and is your passport to new circles of acquaintance. (*Talking and Debating*, London, 1856; cited in Mugglestone, 1995, p. 1)

In observing that 'a proper accent' is causally linked to interpersonal effects such metapragmatic statements motivate speaker indexicality in relation to other pragmatic variables within speech-events: an accent not only indexes attributes of *speaker*, it also 'gives importance' to *message content* and 'engages the respectful attention' of the *hearer*, thus transforming social relations between interlocutors.

A single utterance is now a diagram that permits the calculation of many aspects of its pragmatic context. Observe that all of the components thus typified—speaker, hearer, message form, message content—co-occur within speech-events. The texts typify these components in relation to each other, explicitly relating attributes of one component to attributes of another, viz., the speaker's persona, reflected in forms of proper speech, commanding the respect of the hearer, etc. Such accounts motivate indexical icons, or diagrams, for construing the effects of speech.[19] Indexical effects that are in principle distinct are motivated in relation to each other—i.e. are taken to presuppose or imply each other—so that the none of the individual effects now appear arbitrary. Each indexical effect is now a motivated part of an icon that grounds the relations between

---

[18] I am greatly indebted to Lynda Mugglestone's historical research in the sections that follow. I have consulted many of the sources she cites and have offered a slightly distinct reading of some of them; my conclusions build on her own work, though I extend the argument in rather different directions. In quoting sources cited by her that are unavailable to me I cite the page number from her text.

[19] In the Peircean terminology employed here (see Peirce, 1931–1958), any sign is iconic insofar as the properties of the sign convey something about the properties of the object. Diagrams are complex icons 'which represent the relations…of the parts of one thing by analogous relations in their own parts' (vol. 2, §277). Peirce argued that geometric figures, algebraic formulae, and even literary fictions are diagrammatic constructs that allow the mind to perceive things in experience as complex wholes, with parts having non-arbitrary relations and affinities to each other: 'The work of the poet or novelist is not so utterly different from that of the scientific man. The artist introduces a fiction; but it is not an arbitrary one; it exhibits affinities to which the mind accords a certain approval in pronouncing them beautiful… The geometer draws a diagram…and by means of observation of that diagram he is able to synthesize and show relations between elements which before seemed to have no necessary connection' (vol. 1, §383). The diagrams I discuss here motivate relations among variables of speech events, forging non-arbitrary connections between elements co-occurring within the interaction order.

parts. Such icons are inherently compelling. They allow the languages user to justify or rationalize one type of effect by appeal to another in folk reflection.

A different type of iconic motivation is achieved by popular handbooks that explicitly anchor proper speech to images of class. Etiquette guides were a particularly important source—and resource—for the dissemination of such constructs:

> There are certain arbitrary peculiarities of manner, speech, language, taste, &c. which mark the high-born and high-bred. These should be observed and had. They are the signs-manual of good-breeding by which gentlemen recognize each other wherever they meet. (*Advice to a Young Gentleman on Entering Society*, 1839, p. 138)

Though it describes familiarity with such habits as an implicit 'signs-manual'— allegedly part of the semiotic competence of the gentleman—the text's own expository work renders the construct accessible to any reader and, especially, to the would-be gentleman addressed by the work. Hence the text transforms both the explicitness and circulation of the construct. Though the signs bearing these values may have seemed 'arbitrary' to the author in 1839, their codification and dissemination through popular genres made them appear 'natural' to many by century's end.

A characteristic feature of etiquette guides is that they link accent to a range of other signs of proper demeanor. The codification of proper demeanor links habits of pronunciation to habits of dress, carriage, gesture, grooming, cosmetics, and numerous other behavioral displays. These texts seek to train the *senses* of gentlemen and ladies, not just their behavior. Learning to read the demeanor of one's interactant is a prerequisite to 'proper' (i.e. interactionally appropriate) behavior. One cannot carry the same 'system of manners' into relations with people of every rank since those of elevated rank have a greater 'delicacy of perception' than the lower ranks.

> For example, in a refined circle, the pronunciation of 'beard' according to the analogy of 'feard' would be deemed an evidence of high education: persons of inferior delicacy and knowledge would consider it a mark of low breeding. (*Advice to a Young Gentleman on Entering Society*, 1839, p. 140)

Thus there are some occasions in life 'in which it is necessary not to be a gentleman' (p. 139). A semiotic reading of the current interactional scenario—and particularly the interactant's rank—is a prerequisite to performing one's own status and rank in a way readable by the interactant.

As signs of demeanor became more explicitly linked to class, the lexicographic definitions of terms like *gentleman* and *lady* shifted from an exclusive focus on inalienable attributes, such as lineage, property and rank, to include behavioral and interactional criteria. As Mugglestone observes (1995, p. 86), Walker's *Dictionary* of 1791 had defined *gentleman* as 'a man of birth, a man of extraction' and *lady* as 'a woman of rank.' But Ogilvie's *Dictionary* of 1870 defines *gentleman* as '...in the highest sense...a man of strict integrity and honour, of self-respect, and intellectual refinement, as well as refined manners and good breeding'; and *lady* as 'a term of

complaisance; applied to almost any well dressed woman, but appropriately to one of refined manners and education.' Lexical entries such as these clearly anchor names for social positions to features of performed demeanor. They also bespeak an anxiety about degrees of social worth and its misrecognition (cf. a gentleman 'in the highest sense'; lady as 'a term of complaisance'), an anxiety created partly by the fact that the 'signs-manual' of social worth had now become a publicly circulating document, and explicit metasemiotic instruction in the management of such signs was now available to all who could afford it.[20]

5.3. Literary works

Novels and other literary works comprise a third genre of metadiscourse about accent. In this case we have direct biographical evidence of speech-chain linkages: many of the most famous novelists were avid readers of works belonging to the first two genres.[21] The general form that metadiscursive activity took within this genre was to foreground selected correlations between speech and social identity through devices such as narrated dialogue and dependent tropes of personification. Narrated dialogue formulates a robust structure of 'voicing' contrasts within the literary work (Bakhtin, 1981), a juxtaposition of speech forms from different registers highlighting contrasts of characterological types.

But novelistic depictions of accent do not merely represent the realities of social life, they amplify and transform them into more memorable, figuratively rendered forms. Consider for example the case of /h/-dropping, the most famous index of

---

[20] What, we might ask, is the relevance of these public texts to our understanding of culture? Neither the notion that dictionaries create new ideas, nor the notion that they transparently reflect common usage stand up to much scrutiny, cherished though they may be as chestnuts of folk-wisdom. Even the physical existence of dictionaries and handbooks (viewed purely as physical artifacts) has no direct consequence to social life. For such artifacts have *social consequences* mainly by virtue of being linked to a 'reader' in an event of reading, and through subsequent events, where the erstwhile reader, linked now to other social beings in further communicative activity, produces utterances constrained in some way by that event of reading (e.g. through the use of a pronunciation given in a dictionary entry, the performance of a speech style described in an etiquette guide). Hence the artifacts that disseminate these normative discourses have a social life only through the mediation of speech chains linking persons to each other. The artifacts disseminate social classifications, which are inhabited by social actors, whose interactions transform those classifications, leading to new artifacts. It is only by considering the movement of such discourses through people and things that we can understand the spread of this culture of language, not by observing some element—such as a mediating artifact, a lexical entry, a precipitated habit or belief—that exists as a fragment or partial of the total process.

[21] As Lynda Mugglestone observes: 'George Gissing read Thomas Kingston-Oliphant's *The Sources of Standard English*, as well as George Craik's *Manual of English Language and Literature*, eagerly absorbing their dictates on the shibboleths and social markers in the spoken English of the late nineteenth century. George Bernard Shaw, "a social downstart", devoted himself to works on elocution in the British Museum, as well as to *The Manners and Tone of Good Society* with its subtitle *Solecisms to be Avoided*, and its advice that "the mispronunciation of certain surnames falls unpleasantly upon the educated ear, and argues unfavourably as to the social position of the offender". Thomas Hardy purchased a copy of Nuttall's *Standard Pronouncing Dictionary*, as well as *Mixing in Society: A Complete Manual of Manners* with its assertion that "the best accent is undoubtedly that taught at Eton and Oxford. One may be as awkward with the mouth as with the arms or legs." ' (Mugglestone, 1995, pp. 1–2)

stigmatized speech. The literary character universally associated with this feature is Dicken's Uriah Heep. Yet, although Uriah Heep is stereotypically linked to /h/-dropping, he does not actually drop most of his /h/'s! In the following exchange from Dickens' *David Copperfield* the italicized tokens exhibit /h/-dropping, words in boldface preserve /h/:

'I suppose you are quite a great lawyer?' I said, after looking at him for some time.
'Me, Master Copperfield?' said Uriah. 'Oh, no! I'm a very *umble* person.'
It was no fancy of mine about his hands, I observed; for he frequently ground the palms against each other as if to squeeze them dry and warm, besides often wiping them, in a stealthy way, on his pocket-handkerchief.
'I am well aware that I am the *umblest* person going,' said Uriah Heep, modestly; 'let the other be where **he** may. My mother is likewise a very *umble* person. We live in a *numble* abode, Master Copperfield, but **have** much to be thankful for. My father's former calling was *umble*. **He** was a sexton.'
'What is he now?' I asked.
'**He** is a partaker of glory at present, Master Copperfield,' said Uriah Heep. 'But we **have** much to be thankful for. **How** much **have** I to be thankful for, in living with Mr. Wickfield!'
I asked Uriah if he had been with Mr. Wickfield long?
'I **have** been with **him**, going on four year, Master Copperfield,' said Uriah; shutting up his book, after carefully marking the place where had left off. 'Since a year after my father's death. **How** much **have** I to be thankful for, in that! **How** much **have** I to be thankful for in Mr. Wickfield's kind intention…'

Most words in Uriah's speech preserve /h/. Uriah Heep is the literary avatar of /h/-dropping—a folk-icon famously linked to dicta such as 'always be 'umble'—but not consistently a practitioner of it. The actual cases of /h/-dropping occur here in tokens of the word '[h]umble'. The word implements a reflexive trope: it semantically denotes the interactional effect indexed by its phonological shape! The trope links an image of social personhood neatly to a single word, one that is repeatable, humorous, memorable, and hence capable of widespread circulation.

A general effect of literary metadiscourses was to create a memorable cast of fictional characters, whose popularity made the link between accent and social character more widely known. These links were foregrounded—even caricatured— through a range of literary tropes. Characters like Dickens' Mr. Micawber and Mr. Pecksniff use the standard language, but with a tendency towards excessive circumlocution and euphemism ('pecuniary difficulties' for 'debt'), which yield what is at times a slightly parodic representation of genteel speech; in the case of Pecksniff we see 'a pseudo-dramatic manner of delivery which, although redolent of the oratorical register, is mainly applied with few exceptions, by Pecksniff throughout his private life, even to those closest to him' (Golding, 1985, p. 118). Similarly, the humility avowed by Uriah Heep and foregrounded through tropic depictions of /h/-dropping stand in sharp contrast to his insolence and desire for respect from

others. In such cases, the very inconsistency between different layers of pragmatic function (in Heep's case between his 'umble-ness and the content of what he says to others; in Pecksniff's case, the overextension of public styles to private contexts) constitutes an implicit metapragmatic commentary on the pragmatics of speech style, foregrounding and making visible selected forms of speech, as well as the performed demeanors which count as their effects.

To a reader of the novel there is a message here, of course, a message that links accent to social persona. Yet such works do not describe the value of accent, they dramatize its uses. They depict icons of personhood linked to speech that invite forms of role alignment on the part of the reader. In contrast to the metadiscursive genres discussed earlier, the message has become more implicit in certain ways. Yet it has also become more concrete and palpable to the reader.

Consider now issues of circulation. Though readers of such novels no doubt sought to 'improve themselves,' few would have read them to improve their accent. Novelistic works thus brought the message that speech choices index characterological figures before a much larger segment of society than before, including not only those who read treatises or handbooks on accent, but also those avowing no interest in speech or elocution per se. The recirculation of stock characters in derived genres—such as music, drama, and the like—further expanded social awareness of the cultural form. The 'receivers' of the message also differed in sociological terms. They now included not only the upper classes and the educated intelligentsia but also members of the expanding middle classes.

5.4. Penny weeklies

Popular periodicals soon responded to the increasing demand for instruction in matters of speech and lifestyle. Mitchell (1977) argues that the penny weekly journal is perhaps the most significant form of mass literature in 19th century Britain. The first notable journal in this genre is the *Penny Magazine*, launched in 1832; others include the *Penny Satirist* and its successor the *London Pioneer*. By the mid-1850s this popular market was dominated entirely by two penny journals, the *Family Herald* and the *London Journal*, whose combined circulation of three quarters of a million far exceeded that of the most famous novels.[22]

These works transformed the circulation of accent metadiscourse in several new directions. For instance, their lower price brought metadiscourse of accent before an even wider readership, including segments of the lower middle and upper working classes (instrument-makers, merchant's clerks, bookkeepers, navvies, land surveyors, and a host of other professions). This demographic segment grew with the expansion of the railways after the 1840s. Mitchell (1977) argues that many of these magazines were read not by working men but by their housewives; the values gleaned from

---

[22] Sally Mitchell, on whose work I rely here, provides the following estimates: 'If most of the issues were read aloud in the family or passed along to friends, one of the two magazines must have reached nearly one person in three among the literate population. (By way of comparison, the Dickens novel with the greatest immediate sale was *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41) at 100,000 per part).' (Mitchell, 1977, p. 31).

their pages were very likely passed on to their children in the course of everyday socialization.

The dialogic form (used in novels in depictions of *fictional* characters) is extended in this genre to dialogue involving *real* people, e.g. in letters of advice written by readers to columnists. The readers of these works are aware of the prospect of social mobility. They seek to acquire the manners and forms of etiquette that bespeak a higher status:

> The readers of the *London Journal* and the *Family Herald* actively sought information about the values, standards, and mechanical details of living in a milieu that was new to them. Their letters to the correspondence column reveal their conscious mobility. They want to eradicate the traces of their origin that linger in their grammar and pronunciation. They ask the kinds of questions about etiquette and general knowledge that would be impossible for anyone with a polite background and more than a rudimentary education. The advertisers urge them to buy textbooks, life assurance, and fashion magazines, to learn elocution, French, Italian, and music. (Mitchell, 1977, p. 34)

The capacity of accent to index social distinction is a matter of everyday concern to readers. The recirculation of letters of advice in correspondence columns carries the message that a speech standard exists and is of common concern to others in their position. Moreover, accent is now incorporated into a larger set of prestige commodities that are advertised by sellers and discussed by columnists in overtly characterological terms. Accent thus remains an object of metasemiotic scrutiny and characterization, but not in isolation; it is syncretized with other signs of demeanor to form an array of performable indices sought by those with social aspirations.

The reader's desire to attain these indices of distinction is reinforced by more implicit forms of characterological work; and, in particular, by depictions that invite a form of role alignment between reader and narrated persona. The magazines contain popular short stories that depict characters of somewhat higher social standing than the readers themselves, thus furnishing models for the reader concerned with social mobility:

> The 'realistic' short stories usually feature characters of a slightly higher social class than the reader; the tradesman's daughter read about the merchant's daughter to learn how she behaved. Another extremely common heroine is the officer's orphan working as governess. She need not be a bridge into the social elite; her employer is sometimes a grocer instead of a lord. She is an attractive model, for she demonstrates to the woman of narrow means that ladyhood is not dependent on income, nor destroyed by the necessity of working, but lies in manners and bearing. (Mitchell, 1977, p. 40)

The primary producers of this genre—editors, journalists, columnists, short story writers—belong to the educated middle class; they employ many of the texts

discussed earlier—such as pronouncing dictionaries, etiquette manuals—as instruments of their own professional work; they read the novels and other literary works of the period. They are thus linked to earlier genres by a speech chain structure. Yet they expand the circulation of accent metadiscourses in entirely new directions through their own work. The receivers of its messages include the working classes; the messages themselves contain characterological images that are models of behavior to which readers are drawn by their own group-relative interest, their concern for upward mobility. Accent continues to be typified by these discourses, though it is not treated in splendid isolation from other indices of distinction. It is syncretically coupled with other indexicals by the forms of metasemiotic treatment most common to this genre.

5.5. Speech chain linkages among accent metadiscourses, ca. 1750–1870

In transmitting particular messages about the social value of accent, the above genres served to create, within an increasingly larger public, a greater awareness of the importance of accent. Table 4 summarizes some features of the circulation of the genres discussed earlier.

I have argued also that particular texts within these genres were linked together by connections between writers and readers of these texts, thus comprising a speech chain structure over historical time. The larger circulation of the later genres greatly expanded the reach of accent metadiscourses. The prescriptivist works discussed earlier (treatises, pamphlets, dictionaries) were produced largely in the period 1750–1800; they promulgated accent standards to the aristocracy and intelligentsia. The popular handbooks (etiquette guides, sixpenny manuals) comprised a genre that expanded after the 1830s, and catered to those who aspired to—but did not necessarily belong to—such select social circles. These works were also of interest to novelists who, in turn, brought depictions of accent before the rising middle classes. The penny weeklies combined forms of accent depiction with advice on manners and etiquette, and with advertisements for a variety of products linked to social advancement. Let me now summarize the various kinds of evidence for the speech chain linkages described in the text.

One kind of evidence consists of attestations in the biographical record. In some cases we know that particular historical figures who authored works in one genre employed works in other genres as metasemiotic resources (e.g. that George Bernard

Table 4
Rough estimates of genre circulation

Genre	Immediate circulation	Demographics: circulation extends to
(a) Early prescriptivist works	Small	(a) aristocracy & intelligentsia
(b) Popular handbooks	Larger	+ (b) upper middle classes
(c) Novels & literary works	Large	+ (c) middle classes
(d) Penny Weeklies	Very large	+ (d) lower middle & upper working classes

Shaw, author of *Pygmalion* read popular handbooks on elocution and manners, as well as more technical works; see footnote 21).

A second type of evidence is attested within the texts themselves. There are numerous cases where authors of one genre explicitly cite authors of another, thus explicitly preserving an earlier layer of the metadiscourse in the recirculation of messages across genres. For example, authors of etiquette manuals and novels appeal to the authority of earlier lexicographers such as John Walker. Henry Alford, the author of *A Plea for The Queen's English*, inveighs against the practice of /h/-dropping by citing the speech of Uriah Heep '"I am well aware that I am the umblest person going," said Uriah Heep, modestly' etc.; the full passage is quoted in Section 5.3), adding that 'It is difficult to believe that this pronunciation can long survive the satire of Dickens' (Alford, 1866, p. 41). Such patterns of recirculation indicate the prior discursive experiences of the writer. They also ground the epistemic force of the message in a prior authority—in the scholarly or literary acumen of the author cited—thus inviting the reader to align his or her own self-image with a more complex, internally laminated role model, i.e. with a characterological figure now backed through *a chain of authentication* (Putnam 1975, pp. 227–228; Irvine, 1996, pp. 270–273) in another authority, understood now as the 'principal' in the sense of Goffman (1979).

A third kind of link is inferable from the presuppositions of messages. For example the authors of the 19th century popular handbooks discussed above *presuppose the existence*, without further argument, of the formal and characterological norms of speech whose reality the 18th prescriptivists had *hoped to establish* (e.g. that oral speech exhibits phonetic regularities; that accent can mark cultivation; that supra-local standards ought to be imitated no matter where you live). The existence of a pronunciation standard was an ideal-to-be-achieved for the early prescriptivists; for the popularists it is a 'real' baseline against which deviation can be measured in everyday interactions, and linked to a space of minutely differentiated characterological figures, e.g. 'gentlemen' vs. 'the vulgar' vs. 'the vulgar rich'.

6. The transformation of habits of utterance

What can we say about the net effect of the genres considered so far? The genres that had wide public circulation—etiquette manuals, literary works and popular periodicals—created a widespread awareness in the reading public of the social value of accent, including an awareness of the social value of the most prestigious accent, RP. These works typically discussed only a few, highly stigmatized features of non-RP speech, such as /h/ dropping. They were neither sufficiently precise in their treatment of accent nor sufficiently comprehensive so as to allow members of the reading public to transform their habits of pronunciation in any systematic way. We might say that these genres replicate the *competence to recognize* accent contrasts and associated values across the space of the nation without replicating the *competence to speak* the most prestigious accent. This latter task required a social institution of an entirely different kind.

6.1. The transformation of schooling

There are some obvious ways in which schools are uniquely suited to the replication of speech habits. They are sites of overt metadiscursive activity to which students are exposed for prolonged periods of time. By the early 20th century, the British public school had become so centrally linked to the acquisition of RP that the phonetician Daniel Jones proposed the term *Public School Pronunciation* as a name for the accent. But how did schools become institutions fit for the replication of an élite accent?

When the first of these schools were founded—schools such as Winchester (in 1382), Eton (1440), Westminster (1560), Harrow (1571)—their curricula were focused not on English but on the classical languages, and their students drawn from the 'poor and needy' of the local parish. In contrast, the children of the upper classes studied with private tutors, traditionally at home. Yet by the late 19th century, these schools had been transformed—both in terms of curricula and student demographics—into an altogether distinct type of institution. These transformations—leading eventually to a 'public school' system designed for the education of elites—have their roots in the metadiscourses and speech-chain structures discussed earlier.

A critical step in the transformation of schooling was the introduction of English into the curriculum; the change was motivated or made plausible by the genres discussed in Section 5. We have seen that Sheridan, Walker, and their followers had sought programmatically to transform public perceptions of the vernacular tongue. The prescriptivist argument that English had its own rules of 'proper' pronunciation and grammar sought to displace the view that English was—in comparison to Latin and Greek—an inherently vulgar and inconstant tongue. The popular genres discussed above linked the emerging phonetic standard to canons of politeness and etiquette, and to images of class. Hence, by the mid-19th century, Sheridan's proposal (of 1756) that instruction in spoken English be part of a gentleman's education began to seem more natural and self-evident than it had a century ago.

The student body and duration of study were also to change. By 1860, the number of boarders (as opposed to day-students) was on the rise. Yet the typical boarder came from local, often poor, families, and stayed only a year or two. After 1870, both trends had been reversed: schools sought to lower the enrollment of local students and, increasingly, to cater to upper and aspiring middle class families; children from these families were sent to boarding schools for longer periods, thus permitting more extended isolation from the discursive milieu from which they came, a more elaborate renovation of speech habits. These changes were partly the result of technological and socioeconomic developments that were independent of perceptions of speech: the expansion of the railways made it possible for more children to attend non-local schools; the expansion of surplus incomes made boarding schools affordable to a larger segment of the population, despite growth in tuition and boarding fees.

Yet metadiscursive representations played a role here as well. For instance, the recirculation of images of schooling in literary works made the public school accent recognizable to a segment of the population larger than those having direct exposure to it:

> Because of the amazing popularity of a newly invented literary genre, the school story—read by millions of pupils who themselves had no access to real-life experience of a public school—similar institutions, expectations, and some of the language of public school life, were imported into many other different types of school. (Honey, 1989a, p. 28).

Here the recirculation of one genre by another changes its effects. The public school story is a literary genre of discursive interaction (between authors and readers) which presupposes the existence of the various genres of discursive interaction that occur within the public school (between teacher and student, among students) but which it now recirculates—albeit in idealized, literary representations—before a much larger segment of the population, thus creating a greater awareness of accent as an emblem of distinction.

The Education Reform Act of 1870 resulted in a sharp increase in the total number of schools, a state of affairs that led to the creation of emblems of self-differentiation on the part of the older, more established, public schools:

> Public schools invented distinctive ties for their Old Boys to wear, developed Old Boy Associations and published registers of members' names, but for many purposes these only worked when checking out the products of the better known schools. The most easily manageable, if superficial index of public school status was accent. By the end of the nineteenth century a non-standard accent in a young Englishman signalled non-attendance at a public school, whereas if he spoke RP he was either a genuine member of the new caste of public school men or he had gone to some trouble to adjust his accent elsewhere, thus advertising the fact that he identified with that caste and its values. (Honey, 1989a, p. 28)

After 1870, a public school education became an important means for establishing the social credentials of those who aspired to polite society. Men of political power and national eminence who received a privileged education before 1870 had tended to retain traces of their regional accents. But this tendency was to abate in the years to come.

6.2. Classroom instruction

With the expansion of schooling itself an increasing number of children were exposed to a common genre of metadiscursive practice, namely classroom instruction. This genre was highly dialogic in one sense: the teacher and students moved across the role of speaker of utterances, the students often reproducing the teacher's utterances within their own speaking turns. But from the point of view of prescriptive metadiscourses of accent, it was the teacher who was, in the relevant sense, the speaker of the metadiscourse, the student its hearer.

The speakers of this metadiscourse were already 'hearers' of the metadiscursive genres discussed earlier simply by virtue of exposure to newspapers and novels. They

were exposed to profession-specific metadiscourses as well, especially those which they encountered in the course of their own training as teachers. The establishment of institutions like teacher's colleges and school boards gave rise to textbooks and pedagogic manuals through which teachers and headmasters were exposed to pre-scriptive dicta such as the following:

> ...there is no security that the pupils acquire correct pronunciation, unless the teacher be able to give the example. Accordingly the teacher who is anxious to be in this, as in all things, a model, should strive during his preparatory training to acquire a thorough knowledge of English pronunciation. This can only be done by careful observation of good speakers, or, if need be, by a course of lessons with an accomplished and trust-worthy teacher. (Morrison, *Manual of School Management*, London, 1863, p. 126)

The pronunciation of the teacher is itself built on the model of exemplary speakers and, once formed, is a model to be replicated in the student. Yet in order to accomplish this within the classroom, the teacher has to learn about the organs of replication.

> The teacher has to train the vocal organs to produce sounds distinctly and correctly. To do this, he will have to acquaint himself with the functions of the various organs concerned in the production of speech. He will have to be able to detect and correct bad habits and defects of utterance, and show the children how to use tongue, teeth, lips, and palate, in order to articulate distinctly. (Livesey, *Moffat's How to Teach Reading*, London, 1882; cited in Mugglestone, p. 299)

An elementary knowledge of articulatory phonetics is now provided to the teacher as a kind of social technology, allowing him not only to monitor his own organs during speech production but to bring the movement of his student's organs into conformity with his own. Thus, the effort to replicate a phonetic standard across the space of the nation literally requires control over the movement of bodily organs. Such control is to be exercised with sufficient regularity within the classroom so as to become internalized in the student as self-control and, eventually, as habit.

But given the variety of regional accents each locale is in a sense uniquely defective when measured against the standard. Hence the teacher receives an elementary training in ethnographic methods of a kind, methods of participant observation that allow him to hunt out the phonetic 'defects' peculiar to each locale and, once identified, to eliminate them within the classroom.

> Without waiting to point out all the peculiarities of pronunciation which characterize various districts, we advise the teacher, whenever he finds himself located in a particular parish, to observe carefully the prevalent peculiarities; and, when he has done so, vigorously to set himself to correct them among his pupils. (Morrison, *Manual of School Management*, London, 1863, p. 127)

The activities through which this is to be achieved in the classroom are made explicit in pedagogic manuals and schoolbooks of the time. These works are highly explicit in their attempt to isolate features of accent, seeking to train the ear to perceive sounds and the vocal organs to produce them. A textbook of the period (*The First Part of the Progressive Parsing Lesson*, 1833; cited in Mugglestone, 1995, p. 302) presents the repetitive drilling of vowel sounds as follows:

TEACHER	Tell me the vowels sounds in *barn yard*
PUPIL	*Barn* middle *a*, *Yard* middle *a*
T.	Bee-hive.
P.	*Bee* long *e*, *hive* long *i*.
T.	Blue-Bell.
P.	*Blue* long *u, bell* short *e*.

This particular genre of the metadiscourse—then a relatively new genre employing classroom drills in Greek and Latin declension as models for drills in English pronunciation—is highly explicit in its attempt to isolate features of accent, seeking to train the ear to perceive sounds and the vocal organs to produce them. The printed text describe the structure of the discursive interaction which it regiments, detailing both the pattern of turn taking and the messages to be produced in each turn. By replicating such speech events within the classroom, the teacher can, over time, replicate in the student precisely those habits of pronunciation which the metadiscourse defines as the standard.

Observe that whereas genres replicating awareness of the register had already existed for a hundred years (Section 5), the transformation of schooling after 1870 expanded the social domain of persons having competence to speak it. The demographic domain of replication remained restricted, however, albeit along a different boundary. Fluency in RP was eventually to become an attribute of a group correspondingly larger than the group of persons born into RP speaking families in each generation. Yet mechanisms of gatekeeping continued to restrict access to the 'best' accents only to students of the élite public schools, contributing to latter-day asymmetries in competence over socially distinct 'speech-levels' of RP.

6.3. Asymmetries of competence and differences of circulation

I noted in Section 2.2 above that the competence to *recognize* the prestige form of RP has a wider social distribution in British society than the competence to *speak* it. It is readily seen that competence of the first kind makes competence of the second kind a socially valued commodity in its own right. Since RP has from the outset been linked to positively valued social personae (as opposed to slang, for example, which is negatively valorized), its speakers inhabit a statusful persona through the act of utterance. Since the effect is recognized by a group of people larger than those capable of performing it, the forms of RP become objects of value—indeed, scarce goods—that many individuals seek to acquire. Hence the asymmetric distribution of types of linguistic competence itself functions as a principle of value maintenance in society, giving a system of register values a measure of stability in time.

The discussion in Sections 5 and 6 shows, however, that such synchronic asymmetries are by no means *sui generis* phenomena. They derive from historical differences in the circulation of genres of metadiscourse within the language community, differences that influence the demographic scale of patterns of language socialization. More people recognize the positive value of the register than speak it because the genres that reproduce the first type of competence have the wider demographic reach.

I have suggested moreover that asymmetries of competence also serve as a principle of value *maintenance*. But the wider recognition of the prestige register maintains its value, qua commodity form, only by virtue of the *positive* characterological figures linked to the accent. The pattern of 'equilibrium' can be reset in various ways, e.g. by changes in the space of characterological contrasts, in the specific personae linked to the RP accent, due to changing social relations among its speakers and other social categories of persons. It can be reset, in fact, by any change that alters the conditions under which responses to accent metadiscourses—and, especially, strategies of role alignment—occur.

Let us consider some issues pertaining to recent changes of this kind.

7. Changes in exemplary speaker

I have been concerned here with the expansionist phase of the enregisterment of RP (ca. 1760–1900), a period in which the register grew in popular recognition and acclaim. I have not discussed the 20th century fortunes of RP very much, a period in which it dominated public life in Britain and exercised an influence elsewhere in the English speaking world as well. More recently RP has begun to give ground to other vernacular accents within England, particularly Cockney, yielding hybrid forms such as Estuary English;[23] this is sometimes depicted as a period of relative decline, what we might call a recessive phase. It is on this phase of enregisterment that I wish to comment briefly here.

For any register, changes of many kind—of phonetic form, pragmatic values, social domain of users—are almost continuously in progress. Change is cheap, in one sense. I want to suggest, however, that in the case of changes in a prestige standard, *changes in exemplary speaker* carry a distinctive weight in the public imagination.

There is plenty of evidence that the 20th century history of RP has involved several changes in the way the exemplary speaker is characterized or depicted. In the early 1900s Daniel Jones regarded graduates of élite public schools as a reference standard for RP; in the 1930s J. C. Wyld accorded the same status to British Army

---

[23] Estuary English is an accent that hybridizes Cockney and RP features. Its speakers exhibit a greater tendency towards traditional Cockney patterns—such as /t/ glottalization and affrication, the loss or coalescence of /j/, neutralization of high vowels, and the substitution of /w/ for /l/ in criterial environments—superimposed on General RP patterns. The accent is prevalent in the region of the Thames estuary in Southeastern England. From the standpoint of pure RP loyalists, the accent is viewed as a corruption bespeaking a lowering of general standards and values. However younger speakers from traditionally RP speaking families find themselves increasingly drawn to it.

Officers; in the 1970s A.C. Gimson cited BBC announcers as exemplary speakers. Although these linguist did not have explicitly prescriptivist agendas (though the case of Wyld is ambiguous), the absence of prescriptivist intent is hardly relevant. We have seen that prescriptivism in the narrow sense is not the primary engine of enregisterment. Once formulated, characterological figures often acquire a social life of their own, trickling down into popular stereotypes through further patterns of recirculation. Public School Pronunciation continued to be regarded as an exemplary norm, whatever Jones' intent may have been in coining the term.

Consider now the case of the BBC. BBC broadcasts have themselves played a substantial role in replicating images of exemplary speakers, though different ones at different times. The accents performed in BBC radio broadcasts in 1920s and 1930s were closer to conservative accents ('U RP') than later forms. Many BBC announcers of the 1970s and 1980s displayed the accent of educated professionals, the variety sometimes called 'Mainstream RP'; its mainstreaming was doubtless a result of this process as well. In this case, larger social changes—such as the rise and expansion of the professional middle classes—played a role in shaping the choices of BBC producers. However, once such choice are made, pattern of exemplification in the mass media themselves amplify the processes of which they are a part, e.g. by furnishing the same model of exemplary speech to very large audiences, thus homogenizing the conditions for subsequent response behaviors and role alignments across a wide social domain. However particular audiences may respond, more of them are responding to the same thing.

Changes in exemplary speaker are the subject of extended commentary in public sphere discourses in Britain today and elsewhere. On 21 December, 2000, the British paper *The Independent* published an article whose headline declared that 'Even the Queen no longer speaks the Queen's English.' Here are some excerpts:

> *Cor blimey! Even the Queen no longer speaks the Queen's English*
> Givin' it large Ma'am! Her Majesty may not be so amused to find that a team of linguists has found her guilty of no longer speaking the Queen's English. A group of Australian researchers analysed every Christmas message made by the Queen since 1952 and discovered that she now speaks with an intonation more Chelmsford than Windsor... [T]he scientists found that Elizabeth II has dumbed down—albeit unwittingly—to fit in with the classless zeitgeist of New Labour's Britain...[They] reported yesterday in the journal Nature that even the Queen is not immune to the rise of the estuarine English spoken by southerners. The researchers said: 'The pronunciation of all languages change subtly over time...Our analysis reveals that the Queen's pronunciation of some vowels has been influenced by the standard southern British acccent of the 1980s which is more typically associated with speakers who are younger and lower in the social hierarchy.' David Abercrombie, the distinguished phonetician, remarked in 1963 about the importance of accent as a mark of class. 'One either speaks the received pronunciation or one does not, and if the opportunity to learn it in youth has not arisen, it is almost impossible to learn it in later life,' he said. Although the Queen has resisted the more vulgar aspects of cockney English,

such as aitch-dropping, she has been influenced by it. For example, there is now a tendency to pronounce the 'l' in 'milk' as a vowel…A palace spokesman said: 'We have been made aware of the research and we leave it for others to assess it.'

The news was recirculated in intense media activity over the next few weeks both in Britain and overseas. Just 3 days later, for example, the Boston Globe (24 December 2000) published the following version of the story:

The Queen no longer speaks the Queen's English Commonness creeps into royal accent
LONDON—Blimey, 'er royal 'ighnes is a right oul' one of us. A team of Australian researchers has listened to four decades' worth of Queen Elizabeth's annual Christmas Day addresses and concluded that the queen is starting to sound more like her subjects. It's not as if she's gone cockney or mockney…but neither is she speaking in the clipped, cut-glass accent that first greeted Britons nearly a half century ago. Writing in Nature magazine, Jonathan Harrington and two of his colleagues at Macquarie University in Sydney conclude that the demise of the Queen's English is part of the process that continues to blur class distinctions in what was once a class-bound society. The queen, they say, has not started dropping her H's like a cockney, but she is starting to pronounce her words like most other English people. They detected significant differences in 10 out of 11 vowel sounds. When she used to say 'had' it rhymed with 'bed,' now it rhymes with 'bad.' She, it seems, is slowly acquiring the flattened vowels and glottal stops of 'Estuary English,' which is peculiar to southeastearn England…
In order to understand the nature of this change it is important to see, first, that the Queen has never spoken 'the Queen's English' in one sense: Historically, the term itself has functioned not as a label *describing* the actual speech of any particular Queen, but a label *prescribing* a standard of speech to the Queen's subjects, i.e. to commoners.[24] Royals and aristocrats have traditionally distanced themselves from this standard-for-commoners in various ways, e.g. in Victorian times through the phenomenon of aristocratic disfluency, forms of restricted upper-class slang, and a preference for distinctive diction and accent (Philips, 1984, pp. 35-51).
What has changed, then, is the pattern of role alignment: the speech of aristocrats now tends toward the speech of commoners, not away from it, i.e. 'the Queen's pronunciation…has been influenced by the… acccent…more typically associated with speakers who are younger and lower in the social hierarchy.'

---

[24] Henry Alford, in his *A Plea for the Queen's English* (1866) is quite explicit on this point. Just as the Queen's Highway is not owned by the Queen, he argues, but 'open to all of common right,' the Queen's English is named after the Sovereign because she is 'the person around whom all *our* common interests gather, the source of *our* civil duties and centre of *our* civil rights.' The various tokens of the pronoun *our* (emphases added) refer to commoners. Hence, he argues, 'the *Queen's English* is not an unmeaning phrase, but one which may serve to teach *us* [i.e., ordinary persons] some profitable lessons with regard to our language, and its use and abuse' (pp. 1–2).

Such changes do not occur all at once. They involve a progressive spread of a phonetic pattern, both within a single speaker's habits and across social categories of speakers. Thus David Rosewarne, who coined the term 'Estuary English' (Rosewarne, 1984), describes a slightly different picture of attested usage in the early 1990s. At this time, the Queen herself did not exhibit this pattern, apparently, though the Archbishop of Canterbury and Princess Diana definitely 'did it':

> John Major is slightly too old to do it. Despite his age, Lord Tebbit still does it, but he says radio and television presenters do it much more than he ever did. Ken Livingstone M.P. and Tony Banks M.P. are proud they both do it. It's so common nowadays that even Dr. Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, does it, both in public as well as in private. Mrs. Thatcher certainly has never done it and nor has the Queen, though one of her son's wives flirts with it. As Princess Diana was once heard saying: 'There's a lo(?) of i(?) abou(?)' (Rosewarne, 1994, p. 3)

Those who take up this pattern evidently do so through the logic of role alignment sketched earlier. The strategies involved are conceptualized differently in different contexts, but are readily described by members of these groups, and by observers:

> To paraphrase the words of Stanley Kalms, founder and chairman of the Dixons Group, R. P. speakers in business accommodate towards Estuary English 'to become more consumer friendly'. An example of this was the leadership context which followed Mrs. Thatcher's resignation. One journalist attributed Mr. Major's success to the 'Prolier than thou' image he created for himself. (Rosewarne, 1994, p. 3)

Reformulating one's persona as more 'more consumer friendly' or 'Prolier' (i.e. more prole[tarian]) are interactional tropes that seek strategically to align the performed image of speaker with that of target audiences and addressees. They belong to the long tradition of characterological tropes that I have discussed in the preceding sections. Such transformations occur one speech-event, one interaction at a time; they respond to local conditions of enregisterment under which highly specific tropes become conceivable means of accomplishing particular goals. But some among them are taken up by institutionalized patterns of recirculation that promote the forms used in these tropes as stable, normalized targets for future generations.

Rosewarne suggests that Estuary English may be tomorrow's RP. This is certainly possible, though in more than sense. At present, 'Mainstream' RP and Estuary English are centered in very different institutional loci. The demographic profiles of their speakers are also different, despite some overlap. But RP itself is a register that has changed internally in numerous ways over the period discussed earlier. These changes are, moreover, changes of different *kinds*, involving different *dimensions* of register organization. These include changes in phonetic patterns, exemplary speakers,

register names, characterological discourses, as well as changes in the demographic profile of those who recognize the register as a standard to be emulated, versus those able to speak some form of it (whether exemplary or not). RP and Estuary English may well come to approximate one another in one or more of these respects as well; but whether or not they do, their mode of co-existence at any given point in their history is linked to their modes of dissemination and the logic of socially anchored role alignment between speakers and hearers of utterances, linked to each other through them.

8. The sedimentation of habits

I have been arguing that process of enregisterment involves a gradual sedi-mentaion of habits of speech perception and production across particular social domains of persons. These processes unfold one communicative event at time, though certain features of them (such as the possibility of mass circulation of mes-sages) have the consequence that some events within such processes set the initial conditions for very large-scale forms of response. In some cases forms of mass cir-culation are linked to institutional mechanisms of authority as well, mechanisms that align the characterological figures they depict with *transcendent constructs* (such as the 'unity of the nation,' an essence called 'cultivation') that may prove irresis-table (even unrecognizable as historically specific constructs); or, mechanisms that anchor the characterological figures they depict in *a chain of authentication* groun-ded in the authority of others (as in the case of appeals to prior authority; Section 5.5). In other cases, the appeal is not to the authority of the 'principal' at all, but to the *desire and interests of the 'receiver' of the message*; thus images of speech are frequently syncretized with images linked to other desirable commodities, and thus propagated without seeming to be of any special interest in themselves.

This account contrasts sharply with any 'top-down' approach to the formation of a standard language. Consider, for example, the version of this approach associated with the writings of Pierre Bourdieu. For Bourdieu 'the legitimate language' is imposed by the institutions of the state upon the socialized habits—or *habitus*—of the individual. The *habitus* in turn is the experientially sedimented set of dispositions to act, itself formed by factors 'transmitted without passing through language and consciousness' (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 51), and once formed, comprising a set of con-straints towards future action continually renewed by the operations of power upon the individual: '…a given agent's practical relation to the future…is defined in the relationship between his *habitus*…and …a certain state of the chances offered to him by the social world. The relation to what is possible is a relation to power…The *habitus* is the principle of selective perception of the indices tending to confirm and reinforce it rather than transform it…' (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 64). The approach has certain well known problems of 'agency' associated with it. These derive partly from the inertial continuity of the habitus (its tendency selectively to attend to indices that reinforce it) and partly because a 'recognition of the legitimate language' is 'inscribed' upon individual dispositions 'by the sanctions of the linguistic market' (Bourdieu,

1994, p. 51). On this picture, the individual is the patient or recipient of institutions of power (the state, the market) that act ineluctably upon it.

I have shown, however, that the linguistic habitus simply lacks many of the properties that Bourdieu ascribes to it. First, far from being 'transmitted without passing through language' the social life of the habitus is mediated by discursive interactions. The linguistic habitus is mediated largely by metalinguistic processes, i.e. by discursive events that typify and assign values to speech, though sometimes in ways that are highly implicit; in this type of case, the effects produced may be shaped entirely through discursive activity, and be highly concrete and palpable in the event at hand, but difficult to report out of context. They are therefore non-transparent to the kind of decontextualized reasoning characteristic of Bourdieu's work.

Second, the habitus is not a unitary formation. Indeed the genres that disseminate habits of speech perception and recognition are quite distinct from genres that transmit habits of speech production; they differ both in the metadiscursive operations they employ and in their scales of circulation. Once we understand these differences, some of the principles of 'market value' that appear synchronically to maintain the value of specific goods are better understood as effects precipitated by historical differences of circulation (see Section 6.3), and maintained only insofar as these patterns persist.

Finally, each moment of this process is formed by operations of role alignment which have an irreducibly agentive character, even though the individuals involved differ in their degree of effective freedom. Some among these are moments where the products of prior events of valorization are transformed, yielding novel formations; their novelty may be subjectively grasped (intended, desired, or even recognized) by current participants to varying degrees. In other cases, a scheme of prior valorization is simply reproduced without much alteration in future interactions, yielding the *special case* of inertial continuity (the case where habits are 'confirm[ed] and reinforce[d]') with which Bourdieu is so preoccupied.

Although different socially positioned individuals differ in the degrees of freedom they recognize themselves as having, their *responses* to messages received in the indexical here and now of each encounter are unavoidably agentive acts that require a semiotic reading of the current message and result in a 'next' message. As the characterological voices of the past speak to the one engaged in this reading, the next turn (or larger chain segment) is always up for grabs, always potentially a branch point in the social life of the register. Decontextualized reflections on this process focus only on widespread stereotypes. But only some among the trajectories subsequently taken are artifactualized into forms that allow them to be encountered as messages by mass audiences; and only some among the ones encountered frequently are backed by *hegemonic* voices of authority or desire. While it is true that institutions like schools, states and markets play a critical role in processes of enregisterment, such institutions are themselves arrangements reconfigured periodically by external discourses (as in the case of schooling, Section 6.1), even though, in local phases of the process, the perception of their own inviolability and autonomy is a form of misrecognition they invite, and upon which their continuance so often depends.

Acknowledgements

References

Agha, A., 1994. Honorification. Annual Review of Anthropology 23, 277–302.

Agha, A., 1998. Stereotypes and registers of honorific language. Language in Society 27 (2), 151–193.

Agha, A., 2002. Honorific registers. In: Ide, S., Kataoka, K. (Eds.), Culture, Interaction and Language. Hituzisyobo, Tokyo, pp. 21–63.

Agha, A. In press. Registers of language. In: Duranti, A. (Ed.), A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Alford, H., 1866. A Plea for The Queen's English. Alexander Strahan Publisher, London and New York.

Anonymous, 1839. Advice to a Young Gentleman on Entering Society. By the Author of 'The Laws of Etiquette'. Lea and Blanchard (Published concurrently in London, 1839, with slightly different pagination), Philadelphia.

Appadurai, A. (Ed.), 1986. The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspectives. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Bakhtin, M.M., 1981. Discourse in the novel. In: Holquist, M. (Ed.), The Dialogic Imagination. University of Texas Press, Austin, pp. 259–422.

Beeman, W.O., 1986. Language, Status and Power in Iran. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

Benzie, W., 1972. The Dublin Orator: Thomas Sheridan's Influence on Eighteenth Century Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. The University of Leeds Press, Yorkshire.

Bourdieu, P., 1980. The Logic of Practice. Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Bourdieu, P., 1994. Language and Symbolic Power. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Brown, R., Gilman, A., 1960. The pronouns of power and solidarity. In: Sebeok, T.A. (Ed.), Style in Language. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 253–276.

Dobson, E.J., 1968. English Pronunciation: 1500–1700. Clarendon, Oxford.

Errington, J.J., 1988. Structure and Style in Javanese: A Semiotic View of Linguistic Etiquette. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Errington, J.J., 1998. Shifting Languages: Interaction and Identity in Javanese Indonesia. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Fliegelman, J., 1993. Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language & the Culture of Performance. Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Giles, H., 1970. Evaluative reactions to accents. Educational Review 23, 211–227.

Giles, H., 1971. Patterns of evaluation in reaction to RP, South Welsh and Somerset accented speech. British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology 10 (3), 280–281.

Giles, H., Powesland, P., 1975. Speech Style and Social Evaluation. Academic Press, London and New York.

Goffman, E., 1974. Frame Analysis. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Goffman, E., 1979. Footing. Semiotica 25, 1–29.

Golding, R., 1985. Idiolects in Dickens. Macmillan, London.

Gustafson, T., 1992. Representative Words: Politics, Literature, and the American Language, 1776–1865. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Hanks, W.F., 1996. Exorcism and the description of participant roles. In: Silverstein, M., Urban, G. (Eds.), Natural Histories of Discourse. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, pp. 160–200.

Hill, J., 1998. 'Today there is no respect': nostalgia, 'respect,' and oppositional discourse in Mexicano (Nahuatl) language ideology. In: Schieffelin, B.B., Woolard, K.A., Kroskrity, P. (Eds.), Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory. Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 68–86.

Honey, J., 1989a. Does Accent Matter? Faber and Faber, London.

Honey, J., 1989b. Acrolect and hyperlect: Education and class as foci of linguistic identity. In: Ammon, U. (Ed.), Status and Function of Languages and Language Varieties. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 581–591.

Hope, J., 2000. Rats, bats, sparrows and dogs: biology, linguistics, and the nature of Standard English. In: Wright, L. (Ed.), The Development of Standard English. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 49–56.

Hughes, A., Trudgill, P., 1987. English Accents and Dialects: An Introduction to the Social and Regional Varieties of English. Edward Arnold, London.

Irvine, J.T., 1996. Shadow conversations: The indeterminacy of participant roles. In: Silverstein, M., Urban, G. (Eds.), Natural Histories of Discourse. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, pp. 131–159.

Irvine, J.T., 1998. Ideologies of honorific language. In: Schieffelin, B.B., Woolard, K.A., Kroskrity, P. (Eds.), Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory. Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 51–67.

Kingston-Oliphant, T., 1873. The Sources of Standard English. Macmillan, London.

Kripke, Saul., 1972. Naming and Necessity. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Lyons, J., 1995. Linguistic Semantics. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Macaulay, R.K.S., 1977. Language, Social Class and Education: A Glasgow Study. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Milroy, J., Milroy, L., 1999. Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English. Routledge, London.

Mitchell, S., 1977. The forgotten woman of the period: Penny Weekly family magazines of the 1840's and 1850's. In: Vicinus, M. (Ed.), A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 29–51.

Mitford, N. (Ed.), 1956. Noblesse Oblige. Hamish Hamilton, London.

Mohrmann, G. P., 1969. Introduction. In: A Discourse Being Introductory To His Course of Lectures on Elocution and the English Language, by Thomas Sheridan, 1759. The Augustan Reprint Society, Publication no. 136, University of California, Los Angeles, pp. i–vii.

Morrison, T., 1863. Manual of School Management, London.

Mugglestone, L., 1995. Talking Proper: The Rise of Accent as a Social Symbol. Clarendon, Oxford.

Newbrook, M., 1999. West Wirral: norms, self-reports and usage. In: Foulkes, P., Docherty, G.J. (Eds.), Urban Voices: Accent Studies in the British Isles. Arnold, London, pp. 90–106.

Peirce, C. S., 1931–1958. The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, 8 vols. Hartshorne, C., Weiss, P. (Eds.) vols. 1–6; Burks, A. (Ed.) vols. 7–8. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Phillipps, K.C., 1984. Language and Class in Victorian England. Blackwell, Oxford.

Putnam, H. 1975. The meaning of meaning. In: Mind, Language and Reality: Selected Papers, vol. 2. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 215–271.

Puttenham, G. 1589. The Arte of English Poesie. London.

Poedjosoedarmo, S., 1968. Javanese speech levels. Indonesia 7, 165–190.

Reid, I., 1977. Social Class Differences in Britain. Open Books, London.

Rossewarne, D. 1984. Estuary English. The Times Educational Supplement, 19 October.

Rosewarne, D., 1994. Estuary English: tomorrow's RP? English Today 37 (10), 1–3-8.

Ross, A.S.C., 1954. Linguistic class indicators in present-day English. Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 55, 20–56.

Sapir, E., 1949. Communication. In: Mandelbaum, D.G. (Ed.), Selected Writings of Edward Sapir. University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 104–109.

Sheridan, T. 1761. A Dissertation on the Causes of the Difficulties Which Occur in Learning the English

Tongue. With a Scheme for Publishing an English Grammar and Dictionary Upon a Plan Entirely New. The Object of Which Shall be, to Facilitate the Attainment of the English Tongue, and establish a Perpetual Standard of Pronunciation. Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, London.

Silverstein, M. 1981. The limits of awareness. Working Papers in Sociolinguistics, no. 84. Southwestern Educational Development Library.

Silverstein, M., 1996. Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life. In: Ide, R. et al. (Eds.), SALSA. Department of Linguistics, University of Texas, Austin, pp. 266–295.

Trudgill, P., 1999. Standard English: What it isn't. In: Bex, T., Watts, R.J. (Eds.), Standard English: The Widening Debate. Routledge, London, pp. 117–128.

Urban, G., 1996. Metaphysical Community: The Interplay of the Senses and the Intellect. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Watts, R.J., 1999. The social construction of Standard English: Grammar writers as a discourse community. In: Bex, T., Watts, R.J. (Eds.), Standard English: The Widening Debate. Routledge, London, pp. 40–68.

Wells, J.C., 1982. Accents of English. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Asif Agha is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology, and the Graduate Groups in Linguistics, Folklore and South Asia Regional Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.