Social Class

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Introduction

This chapter aims to explore how social class has figured as a concept in linguistic ethnography. Specifically, it will focus on the ways scholars have used linguistic ethnographic micro-analyses to 'capture the meaningful social experience or projection of class … through language' (Coupland 2007: 48). 'Class' is a multi-dimensional construct. While it has its origins in economic relations and material-based inequalities (Marx e.g. 1867/1976), this chapter foregrounds the notion that it also operates symbolically and culturally (Bourdieu 1984; Savage at al. 2013; Skeggs 2004), in and through language.

The chapter begins with the early variationist work of William Labov (1966), which brought class to the fore in sociolinguistics. Work in the Labovian tradition assigned speakers to objective class categories using indices such as income and occupation, and examined large-scale correlations between speakers' resulting class position and their use of regional phonological and grammatical features. While influential, these studies largely ignored the cultural dimensions of class that many sociologists (following Bourdieu) now regard as central to class analysis. The chapter moves on to consider how the introduction of ethnography into variationist research addressed this omission by opening up our understanding of how class culture is constituted through the day-to-day practices (including linguistic practices) that individuals engage in (Eckert 2000).

The main body of the chapter describes how linguistic ethnographers have built on this work, combining ethnographic observations with slow and intensive analysis of language and communication in order to uncover 'the linguistic display of class consciousness in everyday interaction' (Rampton 2003: 54). The chapter ends by reflecting on the practical implications of linguistic ethnographic approaches to class and some of the challenges that lie ahead for future research.

Historical perspectives: The emergence of class in variationist sociolinguistics

Labov's (1966) seminal New York City study made class a major focus of interest in work on language variation. His large-scale survey of the pronunciation patterns of residents of the Lower East Side of New York City established that language use correlates with social

factors such as class and gender. The sociolinguistic surveys conducted and inspired by Labov assigned participants to objective positions in a class hierarchy (e.g. ‘working-class’, ‘middle-class’) using indices of socioeconomic status. Some prioritised occupation (e.g. Macaulay 1977), while others used a combined index taking into account factors such as income, housing and educational level, as well as occupation (e.g. Labov 1966, 2001; Trudgill 1974). The speech of the resulting social class groups was typically sampled through extended one-to-one interviews designed to elicit speech styles situated at various points along a continuum of formality, from the speakers’ most informal and ‘casual’ style, to their most formal self-conscious speech (the latter elicited through reading set passages and word lists, activities that require maximum attention to speech).

The patterns of social and stylistic stratification that emerged from early survey studies were remarkably consistent. These studies demonstrated that for stable sociolinguistic variables (that is, variables not undergoing language change, such as the pronunciation of ING in words like *running*) middle-class speakers used more so-called ‘standard’ variants than their working-class counterparts (e.g. Labov 1966; Macaulay 1977; Trudgill 1974; Reid 1978; Wolfram 1969; for a general overview see Dodsworth 2010). In addition, all speakers followed the same general pattern with regards to stylistic variation: speakers systematically increased their use of ‘standard’ variants (and decreased their use of ‘non-standard’ or ‘vernacular’ variants) as their perception of the formality of the situation increased. This intra-speaker stylistic variation was theorised as being linked to inter-group variation, such that speakers modelled their most formal style on the speech behaviour of the group who ranked slightly higher in the social scale (Bell 1984: 151). Class stratification in society was thus replicated within speakers’ own stylistic behaviour, lending testimony to Bourdieu’s (1977, 1991) point that speakers’ mundane actions bear the traces of wider social structure.

The variationist studies inspired by Labov have highlighted important general patterns regarding the sociolinguistic stratification of speech communities. These studies were also crucial in advancing theories of language change (indeed the primary motivation for Labov’s New York City study was to obtain insights into the mechanisms of linguistic change, as documented in Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968). Nevertheless, the Labovian approach to language and social class has been widely criticised as lacking in explanatory power (e.g. Cameron 1990; Coupland 2007; Eckert 2012; Rickford 1986; Romaine 1984; for a review see Block 2014). Survey studies have highlighted widespread correlations of linguistic usage

with class stratification, but they have not been able to explain the meaning of these correlations. Consequently, there has been a gradual movement in the field towards using ethnography to 'get closer to the meaningful activity in which participants deploy linguistic resources' (Eckert 2009: 137). Rather than beginning with pre-defined social categories, as in survey research, ethnographic research involves going into a community to find out which social categories are relevant, in what way, why, and for whom. The benefits of this approach to the study of language variation and social class have been demonstrated most extensively in Eckert's (1989, 2000) ethnography in a Detroit High School, which I outline below. It is important to note, however, that Eckert's work builds on earlier research that used ethnography to uncover locally-meaningful categorisations, in particular, Lesley and James Milroy's pioneering work on social networks (e.g. Milroy 1980; Milroy and Milroy 1992; see also Cheshire 1982).

Eckert spent two years as a participant observer at 'Belten High' (see Eckert 1989 for a full account of the ethnography). She identified two oppositional 'communities of practice' (CoPs) (Lave and Wenger 1991) – the 'jocks' and 'burnouts' – which constituted middle-class and working-class cultures within the adolescent context. The jocks and burnouts were predominantly (though not exclusively) from middle-class and working-class homes respectively, but Eckert's ethnography makes clear that where they were going was as important to their classed sensibilities as where they came from. Jocks engaged with the corporate life of the school by taking part in extra-curricular activities (e.g. varsity sports, school government and the school newspaper). These forms of participation prepared them for college and for their place in adult middle-class culture. The burnouts, on the other hand, were alienated from the school culture. They maintained strong neighbourhood ties and oriented their practices to the urban area. As a result, their social trajectory was geared towards gaining employment post-high school in the local urban area and participating in adult working-class culture.

The oppositional status of the jocks and burnouts was constructed via a range of symbolic practices, including territory, clothing and substance use. The two CoPs were also opposed at the level of language, with jocks orienting to the 'standard' linguistic market and the burnouts to the local, urban, vernacular market. Eckert's linguistic analysis focused on one syntactic variable, negative concord, and six phonological variables. As with earlier variationist studies, she considered how the adolescents' use of these variables correlated with macro-

level social categories, such as class and gender, but she then opened out her analysis to investigate the implications of the adolescents' membership in the jock/burnout CoPs. Only negative concord showed significant correlation with social class (measured here in terms of the socioeconomic characteristics of speakers' parents). Adolescents from working-class backgrounds used the 'non-standard' variant more frequently than their middle-class peers (as we might expect given that 'non-standard' negation is highly stigmatised). Even here, however, the stronger statistical correlation was with CoP affiliation – burnouts used 'non-standard' negation more frequently than jocks, and this was the case even where there was cross-over between social class and CoP membership (i.e. for working-class jocks and middle-class burnouts). There was no correlation between the adolescents' use of the vocalic variables and their parents' socioeconomic class. These variables were involved in the Northern Cities Chain Shift (a series of changes affecting the vowels of the English spoken in the urban centres of the northern US states). The sound changes were ongoing in Detroit but were more advanced in the urban area than in the suburbs and thus contributed an 'urban' sound to speech. Eckert argues that the burnouts led the jocks in the use of the advanced variants of these changes because they saw themselves as part of the developing urban landscape and were engaged in it.

In Eckert's work (and other CoP studies, e.g. Moore 2010) we see the importance of using ethnography to uncover the social categories that make sense for participants, rather than seeking out participants to fit pre-determined class categories. These studies aim to move beyond the structural model of class evident in early variationist work by applying a more fluid notion of class as constituted through the day-to-day practices that individuals engage in. As in early variationist work, however, the linguistic analysis is primarily quantitative, focusing on statistical correlations between linguistic variables and social categories, and thus not well-tuned to capturing 'the linguistic display of class consciousness in everyday interaction' (Rampton 2003: 54). Nik Coupland and Ben Rampton have therefore argued that this kind of analysis can usefully be complemented by more detailed interactional analyses of the way classed language is used in everyday communication (e.g. Coupland 2007, Rampton 2003, 2010a). In what follows I show how this approach has been taken up in recent linguistic ethnographic work and consider what ethnographically informed 'micro-analysis' of interaction can add to our understanding of social class.

Main research methods

An ethnographic approach gives a local perspective, opening up access to participants' understandings of the processes, activities or behaviours being studied. Linguistic ethnographers combine these 'emic' perspectives with slow and intensive analysis of language and communication in order to shed light on other, more tacit, aspects of social practice, extending the ethnography into smaller and more focused spaces and drawing analytic attention to fine detail (Snell, Shaw and Copland 2015). This typically involves long, slow immersion in transcripts and audio- and/or video-recorded data, analysing interaction turn-by-turn, asking at each moment, e.g., 'What is the speaker doing?' 'Why that, now?' 'What else might have been done here but wasn't?' 'What next?' (see Rampton 2006: 395-398 for an extended description of this 'micro-analytic' approach). At the same time, linguistic ethnographers also draw upon their ethnographic knowledge of events outside of the immediate speaking context, taking into account that speakers may be drawing upon past actions and experiences as well as reacting to preceding talk (Gumperz 1999: 461).

Current contributions and research areas

In studies of language and social class, analytic attention has regularly turned to stylisations and other forms of spontaneous speaker creativity, alongside the more routine linguistic practice that has been privileged in variationist sociolinguistic work. In Coupland's (2001: 345) terms, stylisation involves 'the knowing deployment of culturally familiar styles and identities that are marked as deviating from those predictably associated with the current speaking context'. These fleeting performances mark a 'momentary disengagement from the routine flow of unexceptional business' and invite interlocutors to 'use their broader understandings of society to figure out exactly what "image of another's language" this is actually supposed to be' (Rampton 2006: 225). Stylisations have become a focus of analytic attention in work on class because they often occur in moments of transition across social and interactional boundaries, and as a consequence, foreground (albeit fleetingly) speakers' critical reflexive awareness of the conditions shaping their lives (Rampton 2006, 2011a). Ben Rampton makes this point convincingly in his ethnography of 'Central High', a multi-ethnic secondary school in London. The concept of social class takes centre stage in this work. Rampton (2006) draws upon a range of scholars (most notably E.P. Thompson, Michel Foucault and Raymond Williams) to make a broad distinction between two levels at which class works (and can be researched): the 'material conditions [… and] practical activity that are experienced differently by different people in different times, places and networks' on the

one hand, and ‘secondary or “meta-level” representations … about social groups … and about their different experiences of material conditions and practical activity’ on the other (2006: 222-223). The adolescents who participated in his study did not talk about class explicitly (i.e. at the level of secondary representations) – indeed in discussion it appeared to be much less of an issue for them than other kinds of social differentiation such as ethnicity and gender – but Rampton’s detailed analyses of their day-to-day interactions demonstrates that an ingrained sense of class hierarchy structured their lives. He focuses in particular on the adolescents’ stylisations of ‘posh’ and ‘cockney’, which he argues can be seen as ‘small pieces of secondary representation inserted into the flow of practical activity’ (p218) and which thus generate a dialogue across the two levels at which class is a phenomenon (p224-225). (‘Posh’ refers to a marked RP style associated with British upper class and ‘Cockney’ to the London vernacular traditionally associated with the working classes.)

Rampton (2006) recorded pupils at Central High both inside and outside of the classroom using a radio-microphone. A small-scale quantitative sociolinguistic analysis of the recorded speech revealed conventional patterns of sociolinguistic stratification. Speakers became more ‘standard’ in their accent in more formal situations (that is, they moved towards Received Pronunciation and away from their London vernacular e.g. pronouncing word-initial <h> and avoiding the use of glottal stop for word-medial intervocalic <t>). This routinized style shifting indicated that these speakers (who were from both white and ethnic-minority backgrounds) had been socialised into wider patterns of British social stratification in speech. Rampton argues that this points to enduring processes of class reproduction. But when the adolescents spontaneously performed exaggerated ‘posh’ and ‘Cockney’ voices, there were glimpses of speaker agency too. These ‘stylisations’ occurred on average around once every 45 minutes in the data set. Rampton argues that they point to an active class consciousness among the young people, where ‘class’ is ‘a sensed social difference that people and groups produce in interaction, and there is struggle and negotiation around exactly who’s up, who’s down, who’s in, who’s out, and where the lines are drawn’ (Rampton 2006: 274). He summarises the main meanings of stylised posh and Cockney as follows:

> A pattern emerges, then, in which vigour, passion and bodily laxity appear to be associated with Cockney, while physical weakness, distance, constraints and sexual inhibition are linked to posh. In fact, at an abstract level, this can easily be

> accommodated with a more general set of contrasts between mind and body, reason and emotion, high and low.
>
> (Rampton 2006: 342)

This high-low 'cultural semantic' (Stallybrass and White 1996, in Rampton 2006: 343) circulated as meaning potential for the adolescents to make use of in response to their every-day concerns. When they felt a sense of injustice in their treatment at school, pupils used stylised posh to caricature their teachers as upper class snobs. When negotiating the transition between school work and peer sociability, pupils used stylised posh or cockney to construct a non-serious stance, and thus downplay their commitment to classroom tasks. Outside of teacher-pupil relations, the contrast between the class-inflected styles became useful when playing with risqué sexual topics or managing changing and uncertain heterosexual relationships.

Rampton admits that there was little evidence that the adolescents were trying to liberate themselves from the social structuring of their everyday lives, but in their stylisations they did make this structure 'more conspicuous, exaggerating and elaborating evaluative differentiations that were otherwise normally treated as non-problematic in practical activity', and in doing so, they 'denaturalised' class stratification (Rampton 2006: 363-354; 2011a: 1239, 1245-1246). On occasions they went further, demonstrating critical agency by actively disrupting the cultural semantic that links posh with high/mind/reason and Cockney with low/body/emotion. For example, when Hanif used stylised Cockney to 'vernacularise' school knowledge for his friends in order to encourage their participation in a curriculum task, he momentarily reworked the conventional equation of posh with high and Cockney with low by linking Cockney to a school orientation (Rampton 2006: 298-301, 306-308). Hanif also used 'quasi-Caribbean' for the same type of speech act, showing that 'rather than allowing ethnicity to *replace* class as an axis of social differentiation in everyday activity, in their stylisations these youngsters could […] display their [functional] equivalence' (2006: 319; see also Rampton 2010b, 2011a, 2011b).

Rampton has used his analyses of stylised posh and Cockney to challenge claims about "the decline of class awareness" (Bradley 1996: 77, in Rampton 2006: 216) in late modernity. He has further intensified this challenge by drawing upon his previous research on 'language crossing' in the speech of adolescents in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood in the south Midlands

of England. Here, as at Central High, he finds evidence of sensitivity to the traditional dynamics of British social class (Rampton 2010b). Adolescents in both settings, he argues, used stylisation and crossing to position themselves in a multi-ethnic class society.

Lian Madsen (2016a, b) reports a similar convergence in the indexical values of traditional class and migrant ethnic styles in a linguistic ethnographic study of language use among youth in Denmark. Madsen's analyses draw upon a diverse data set collected during a team ethnography in a Copenhagen school (including ethnographic fieldnotes, interviews, participants' self-recordings, school essays, and media representations). Initial interviews drew the researchers' attention to a way of speaking that participating adolescents termed 'integrated'. This term has traditionally been used in Danish public discourse to describe minorities adapting to mainstream cultural practices. While the adolescents were aware of this meaning, they also used 'integrated' to describe a particular way of speaking that was associated not just with ethnic 'Danishness' but also with respect, politeness and a positive orientation to education, values that previous sociolinguistic research had linked to 'conservative' (i.e. 'standard') Copenhagen speech. Taking the participants' lead, 'integrated' speech became a focus for analysis. Micro-analyses of participants' self-recordings revealed fleeting stylised performances in which integrated speech was associated with stereotypical upper-class cultural practices, ritualised politeness and exaggerated enthusiasm for schooling. These stylisations typically occurred 'in contexts in which institutional inequalities were spotlighted' (2016a: 165), and were often marked by a high-pitched voice and laughter, which served to distance the speaker from the stylised voice. Madsen claims that the adolescents' stylised performances, together with their metalinguistic reflections (as evidenced in interviews and language essays), indicate the emergence of a 'register' (Agha 2007) labelled 'integrated' which links conservative Copenhagen speech, academic vocabulary and ritual politeness with higher-class culture, wealth and education. This register was opposed to the 'slang' or 'street language' (what linguists would refer to as contemporary urban vernacular, in the sense of Rampton 2011c) that the adolescents identified as their 'own' way of speaking.

While there is nothing new about the link between 'standard' linguistic practice and higher social class, Madsen argues that the use of the term 'integrated' for the high-cultural register, and its opposition to the youth vernacular, reflects an awareness among the young people 'of the social inequalities embedded in dominant understandings of cultural differences and of

minority cultural (speech) practices as worthless in relation to schooling and societal power' (2016b: 135). Following Rampton, Madsen uses her analyses to challenge assertions that social class relations have relatively little contemporary significance (especially in multi-ethnic contexts) by demonstrating that linguistic styles once associated with minorities have been actively mapped into more traditional understandings of social stratification and status (2016a: 166). Madsen's findings align with linguistic ethnographic studies of language, class and ethnicity elsewhere in Europe. For example, Jaspers (2011) describes how multi-ethnic teenagers in Antwerp, Belgium stylised traditional Antwerp dialect as a means of positioning themselves in relation to ideologies of class stratification as well as local hierarchies of nativeness vs. non-nativeness (see Jaspers and van Hoof, this volume; see also Kirkham [2015] for an analysis of the way social class and ethnicity intersect in structuring local social practices amongst adolescents in Sheffield, UK).

My own work on language variation and social class contrasts with the work of Rampton and Madsen in that the 9 to 10 year old children who participated in the research lived in one of the least ethnically diverse areas of the UK. In 2005-2006, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in two social class-differentiated primary schools in the urban conurbation of Teesside, north-east England. At the time of the fieldwork, 'Murrayfield Primary' served a predominantly lower-middle class area, with the school community described as 'made up of children from a predominantly white European heritage' (OFSTED 2003a: 3). 'Ironstone Primary' served a white working-class area, with 181 of the 184 pupils enrolled categorised as 'White British' (OFSTED 2003b: 22). The comparison between these two groups of children, who were ethnically homogeneous but differentiated along class lines[1], raised interesting questions about how language use (specifically local dialect) might be linked with classed subjectivities.

As part of my analysis, I examined the children's use of possessive *me* (e.g. 'Me [mi] pencil's up me [mi] jumper') (Snell 2010). This is a salient feature of the local dialect, prominent within local consciousness and common in folk-linguistic representations of working-class Teesside speakers (where it is represented orthographically as 'me'), but often stigmatised as 'incorrect' usage, including by the teachers participating in the study (perhaps because the [mi] pronunciation blurs the distinction between the possessive and objective pronoun case; see Wales 1996: 88). Quantitative analysis of 50 hours of radio-microphone recordings (25 hours from each school) revealed that the [mi] variant was relatively infrequent (33 instances

out of 670 tokens of the possessive singular) and was used most often by children at Ironstone Primary (30 out of 33 occurrences). This social class difference in frequency of use of possessive *me* aligns with previous findings from quantitative studies of language variation and social class, and is thus unsurprising (especially as possessive *me* is often overtly stigmatised). More interesting is the way this form was used in interaction. Micro-analyses of all 33 occurrences of possessive *me* revealed that this form was consistently used by the children to construct a stance of stylised negative affect or transgression, often tempered by playfulness or a lack of commitment to the utterance. So while quantitative analysis pointed to a correlation between possessive *me* and class position, ethnographically informed micro-analysis demonstrated that, for the children at Ironstone Primary at least, it was associated with affective intensity and a sense of transgressing boundaries, and it was used to fulfil interactional goals over and above its referential content (making it very different to the other available variants of the possessive singular, such as 'my' [mai] or the reduced form 'ma' [ma]).

This analysis raises two considerations for the study of language and social class. First, the possibility emerges that the difference in frequency of use of possessive *me* between the two groups of children might be explained, not simply in relation to generalised class preferences for either 'standard' or 'vernacular' speech, but by consideration of the different social goals, acts and stances in which they are engaged. In relation to class identities, I have therefore raised the following question: 'Does habitual use of a particular kind of interactional stance … cumulatively construct a particular kind of working-class identity (e.g. characterised by humour, playfulness, the policing of social boundaries), or at least an aspect of that identity, which can be contrasted with [a] middle-class identity?' (Snell 2010: 649). Block (2015: 9) picks up on this point, drawing the conclusion that 'working-class speech and culture may be seen, not just as an alternative to middle-class speech, but as embodying fundamentally different ways of being and communicating … embedded in very real cultural differences arising from very different material conditions, which working-class people share among themselves but not with middle- or upper-class people' (see also Moore 2012 and Moore & Snell 2011).

Second, the analyses of working-class children's language presented in this article (see also Snell 2013) show the young children to be sociolinguistically savvy in the way they strategically select linguistic resources according to interactional goals, and thus very far

from the image of the impoverished working-class language user often presented in the media and in some educational policy documents (e.g. Gross 2010; Harris 2012). This point highlights the potential for linguistic ethnographic work on social class to have practical implications, which I take up in the next section.

Critical debates and implications for practice

I have made modest attempts to use findings from the Teesside research to challenge deficit accounts of working-class children's speech[2]. This line of advocacy is part of a long tradition in sociolinguistics that dates back to Labov's (1969) defence of Black English Vernacular. Drawing upon a linguistic ethnographic perspective, I have attempted to move beyond the 'different but equal' argument that is usually advanced in this work, focusing instead on linguistic repertoire and the interactional and social value of dialect forms (e.g. Snell 2013, 2015). There remains a gap, however, between the kind of robust and convincing analyses that can be reported in academic publications and significant impact in the areas being researched. It is by no means easy to do justice to the subtlety of linguistic ethnographic analyses in reports to those outside of academia. For example, in 2013 the Head Teacher of a Teesside Primary school made the bold move not only to ban the use of certain dialect words, phrases and pronunciations at school but also to write a letter to pupils' parents encouraging them to do the same at home. Several other schools followed this example and their actions were widely reported in the national media. The letter sent home to parents in Teesside was premised on a number of erroneous assumptions about language. I wrote a response in a national newspaper (Snell 2013b) in which I attempted to challenge these assumptions and highlight the unintended negative consequences the school's action might have on the children involved. However, I was limited by the constraints of the genre, in particular the need to condense my argument into less than 600 words of news copy, which inevitably involved oversimplification. This led to some criticisms, as in the following comment that was posted online:

> This article is, to use the author's words, unhelpful and damaging, and is typical of an academic's view. So you are a native of Teesside and still use the 'problem' words and phrases? Well that's all well and good, but not everyone can be a lecturer at King's College. Teesside is amongst the most deprived areas in the UK and as such most of the kids in school here today will find their lives defined by trying to get and hold onto jobs. You may find the words 'Gizit' and 'Yous' to be perfectly acceptable

> but few employers will agree with you. I can assure you that the historic use of 'you' as a plural of 'thou' will be utterly lost on the small business owner who just wants to find decent staff for the shop floor. I can only pray that the Carol Walkers [the head teacher of the focal school] of the world are given heed and that the Russell Group academics poke their heads into the real world from time to time.

(Tom Carney, comment posted to *The Independent* website on 10th February 2013)

Moreover, even where we have the space to share linguistic ethnographic analyses in full, we must recognise that the primary concerns of practitioners and members of the public (such as Tom Carney, quoted above) may be quite different to our own. In the Teesside case, the head teacher had been motivated by her desire to empower her working-class pupils, helping them to meet the demands of the National Curriculum (which stresses the importance of acquiring 'Spoken Standard English') in order to facilitate their educational and (later) employment success. This perceived link between language and future employment is echoed in Tom Carney's comment. From these perspectives, the linguistic ethnographic view of language as a social practice that is intimately connected with the negotiation of social position, relationships and identities may seem unhelpful at best (and counterproductive at worst). One challenge going forward, then, is to 'adapt, complement and mediate linguistic ethnography in ways that are constructive, have integrity, and are recognised as helpful by practitioners' (Lefstein and Israeli 2015: 205).

A second challenge is to confront the limits of this kind of work. Tom Carney's comment raises the issue of whether and to what extent this kind of research can hope to tackle the material deprivation that defines the lives of many working-class children. This resonates with David Block's (2014, 2015) recent critiques of sociolinguistic advocacy. For Block, this kind of research can have only minimal impact because 'advocacy on behalf of working-class forms of speech […] shifts the reader away from a redistribution agenda, which goes to the economic base and the heart of the socioeconomic inequalities generated by capitalism, to a recognition agenda dealing with superstructural linguistic prejudice' (2014: 104). He continues with a question and a challenge for those working in this tradition:

> [A] question arises as to what would happen if we could convince the dominant class to respect working class dialects and not vilify or denigrate them. The question is: What would this achieve as regards the material-based deprivation and poverty which

> serves as the base-line shaper, not only of ways of speaking and communicating in general, but also of every other index of social class in socioeconomically stratified societies? […] Sometimes respect is not enough.
>
> (Block 2014: 104)

I agree with Block that 'respect is not enough' and that work must be done to enable working-class children to access the material and cultural resources that are crucial to educational success (Reay 2017). Nevertheless, I do think there is scope for linguistic ethnographic research to have impact in educational contexts. If we can make our research relevant to educational practitioners, use it to encourage them to see working-class pupils' speech in new ways and discourage attempts to ban so-called 'non-standard' ways of speaking, then the result could be a more positive and productive educational experience for some working-class children, who feel empowered (through validation of their ways of speaking) to contribute to classroom discussion and thus to participate in the dialogue crucial to learning. To the extent that increased participation improves educational outcomes for working-class children (see e.g. Alexander 2017), it will also play a role in disrupting the reproduction of class inequalities. And if linguistic prejudice could be tackled in other gate keeping encounters too, such as job interviews, opportunities might open up for these working-class children to exchange educational success for prestigious occupations, and thus for economic capital.

Future directions

It is worth emphasising Block's (2015: 10) wider point (following Nancy Fraser [e.g. Fraser 1995; Fraser and Honeth 2003]) that 'social class is a phenomenon and lived experience inherent to inequality in capitalism and is therefore related to maldistribution rather than misrecognition or simply a lack of respect for cultural difference'. Future linguistic ethnographic research might further consider the extent to which social class inequalities (based, fundamentally, on unequal access to economic resources) should be treated differently to inequalities based on misrecognition and misrepresentation (which involve identity categories, like ethnicity, gender and sexuality) (Block and Corona 2014). It should also consider the ways in which these different types of inequality may overlap. As Rampton and Madsen's research makes clear, an 'intersectional approach' (Crenshaw 1991) is crucial to understanding how young people are positioned in multi-ethnic communities.

Summary

This chapter has tracked a transition in sociolinguistic work on language and social class: from research that has focused on language as an index of class position to research that has investigated how meanings related to class manifest themselves in and through language. Central to this transition has been the introduction of ethnography. This has enabled researchers to pick up on the multiple ways that class reveals itself in the day-to-day lives of ordinary people (Rampton 2010b). Linguistic ethnographers have used micro-analyses of interaction to extend the ethnography into smaller and more focused spaces, drawing analytic attention to small (but consequential) aspects of social practice. In particular, this kind of analysis has shed light on speakers' stylisations, which, like other elements of performance, put the act of speaking on display, opening it up for public scrutiny (Bauman and Briggs 2009; Coupland 2009). The children's stylisations in Teesside put on display important elements of local working-class class culture (and potentially of working-class culture more generally). The adolescents' stylisations in Rampton and Madsen's studies spotlighted evaluative differences that would normally go unnoticed in everyday activity, and in doing so, drew attention to social inequalities embedded in the intersection between class and ethnicity. This chapter has suggested that linguistic ethnographic work on class may have practical relevance, especially in tackling social disadvantage and discrimination, but challenges lie ahead if we are to convince practitioners, members of the public, and even other researchers that the findings and analyses of linguistic ethnography have currency in the real world (see Rampton et al. 2015: 37-44 for more on the contestation that often arises in interactions between linguistic ethnography and non-academic professions).

Further Reading:

Block, D. 2014. *Social Class in Applied Linguistics*. Abingdon: Routledge. (This book begins with an in-depth theoretical discussion of how class as a construct has evolved from the classic work of Karl Marx and Max Weber to more recent accounts by sociologists such as Mike Savage. It goes on to explore the extent to which class has been a central construct in applied- and socio-linguistics, multilingualism and second language learning research.)

Rampton, B. 2006. *Language in Late Modernity: Interaction in an Urban School*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (It is impossible to do justice to Rampton's theoretical position on social class or to his meticulous interactional analyses in this short

chapter. Readers are directed to the monograph where both are treated in much more detail (see also Rampton 1995).)

Snell, J. (2015). Linguistic ethnographic perspectives on working-class children's speech: challenging discourses of deficit. In J. Snell, J., F. Copland, & S. Shaw (eds). *Linguistic Ethnography: Interdisciplinary Explorations*. London: Palgrave, 225-245. (This chapter gives a more detailed account of what a linguistic ethnographic approach might be able to add to the long tradition of sociolinguistic advocacy in educational contexts.)

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Endnotes

1 These class designations were based primarily on Government census data and indices of deprivation (2001), which highlighted clear differences between the school's catchment areas across a number of key criteria such as education, employment, and housing (see Snell 2009 for detail). These differences were reflected in the schools' Ofsted inspection reports (Office

for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills 2003). For example, the report for Murrayfield Primary highlighted the stable nature of the local community and stated that the level of attainment of pupils when they enter the school 'meets expectations'. The report for Ironstone Primary, on the other hand, drew attention to the 'social and economic challenges' endemic in the surrounding area and found pupil attainment on entry to be 'well below expectations'. It also reported that the percentage of children entitled to free school meals at Ironstone Primary was over three times the national average, a figure indicative of the 'economic challenges' faced by local residents (while at Murrayfield Primary entitlement was below the national average).

2 Outside of work on language and social class, linguistic ethnographers have made much more serious attempts at practical intervention (see e.g. Atkins et al. 2016; Bezemer 2015; Bezemer et al. 2016; Lefstein and Snell 2011, 2014; Roberts et al. 2000; Swinglehurst et al. 2011).