The Routledge Companion to

Sociolinguistics

Edited by
Carmen Llamas, Louise Mullany and Peter Stockwell

THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Have you ever noticed an accent or puzzled over a dialect phrase? Language can be a powerful tool with which one can create a persona; it can be a common ground between people or can be used as a divide between social groups. This *Companion* is for anyone who is interested in how and why people speak and write with such diversity.

The Routledge Companion to Sociolinguistics includes articles by leading scholars in the field on:

* Methods of observation and analysis
* Social correlates
* Socio-psychological factors
* Socio-political factors
* Language change.

They are followed by a glossary of terms with references and an index. *The Routledge Companion to Sociolinguistics* opens up the discipline to the newcomer and provides a useful reference guide for the more advanced sociolinguist.

Dr Carmen Llamas lectures at the University of Aberdeen. She is co-editing with Dominic Watt and Judy Dyer an edited collection, *Language and Identity* (forthcoming 2007). **Dr Louise Mullany** is a lecturer and academic at the University of Nottingham. She has published *Gendered Discourse in the Professional Workplace* (2007). **Professor Peter Stockwell** lectures at the University of Nottingham and has published *Sociolinguistics* (Routledge, 2002) and *Language in Theory* (Routledge, 2005).

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

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Notes on the contributors

Peter Auer holds a Chair in German linguistics at the University of Freiburg, Germany. He has done extensive research on bilingualism and sociolinguistics, on phonology and dialectology, and on interaction and spoken syntax. He has authored and co-edited a number of books and has published widely in linguistic journals and edited volumes.

Allan Bell is Professor of Language and Communication and Director of the Centre for Communication Research at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. He has published many papers, and authored or co-edited five books. He is co-founder and editor of the international *Journal of Sociolinguistics*.

Jennifer Coates is Professor of English Language and Linguistics at Roehampton University, UK. Her published work includes *Women, Men and Language* (third edition 2004), *Women Talk* (1996), *Language and Gender: A Reader* (1998) and *Men Talk* (2003). She was made a Fellow of the English Association in 2002.

Judy Dyer is a Lecturer at the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, USA. Her main areas of research are identity and dialect acquisition, bidialectalism and dialect contact, and she has published widely in these areas.

Barbara A. Fennell is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Aberdeen, UK. Recent books include *A History of English: A Sociolinguistic Approach* (2001) and *Language, Literature and the Negotiation of Identity: Foreign Worker German in the Federal Republic of Germany* (1997). She has written numerous papers on these research topics and is working on a book on *Language and Colonialism*.

Susan Gal is the Mae and Sidney G. Metzl Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology and Linguistics, University of Chicago, USA. She is the author of *Language Shift* (1979), co-author of *Politics of Gender after Socialism* (2000) and co-editor of *Languages and Publics: The Making of Authority* (2001). Her research focuses on multilingualism, the political economy of language, linguistic nationalism, and political rhetoric, especially in the transformation of contemporary Europe.

Mark Garner has taught foreign languages, English and applied linguistics at universities in Australia, Britain and Indonesia. His current appointment is at the University of Aberdeen, UK. His research interests are in discourse analysis and language ecology, and he has worked on a number of research contracts for the police and other emergency services. His most recent book is *Language: An Ecological View* (2004), and he is co-writing a book on operational communication.

Peter Garrett is a Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Language and Communication Research, Cardiff University, UK. He teaches sociolinguistics, language attitudes and persuasive communication. His main research field is in evaluative and attitudinal aspects of language and communication, including language attitudes and intergenerational communication. He is editor of the journal *Language Awareness*.

Matthew J. Gordon teaches at the University of Missouri, Columbia, USA. His research explores phonological variation in American English. He is the author of *Small-Town Values, Big-City Vowels* (2001) and co-author with Lesley Milroy of *Sociolinguistics: Method and Interpretation* (2003).

Sandra Harris is now Professor Emeritus and was formerly Head of the Department of English and Media Studies at Nottingham Trent University, UK. She has a long-standing interest in institutional and strategic discourse, is the author with Francesca Bargiela of *Managing Language* (1997), and has contributed a large number of articles in this field to a wide range of international journals and edited collections.

Paul Kerswill is Professor of Sociolinguistics at Lancaster University, UK and specializes in social dialectology. He has conducted research on dialect levelling in Norway and England, where he has investigated speech in Durham, Milton Keynes, Reading and, most recently, London. His publications include *Dialects Converging* (1994) and a co-edited volume on *Dialect Change* (2005), as well as extensive research articles.

Carmen Llamas is a Lecturer at the University of Aberdeen, UK. Her main research interests are in phonological variation and change, topics in language and identity, and fieldwork methodology. She is currently researching linguistic variation and change in border localities.

Janet Maybin trained as a social anthropologist, and is now a Senior Lecturer in Language and Communication at the Open University, UK. She has written extensively for Open University courses on language, literacy and learning and also researches and writes on children's and adults' informal language and literacy practices.

James Milroy is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the University of Sheffield, UK, and was formerly at Queen's University Belfast. His publications include

The Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins (1977), *Linguistic Variation and Change* (1992) and, with Lesley Milroy, *Authority in Language* (third edition 1999). His interests are in language history, language standardization and linguistic ideologies.

Salikoko S. Mufwene is the Frank J. McLoraine Distinguished Service Professor of Linguistics at the University of Chicago, USA. His research is on language evolution, including the development of creoles. His books include *The Ecology of Language Evolution* (2001) and *Créoles, écologie sociale, evolution linguistique* (2005). He is also the series editor of the *Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact* series.

Louise Mullany is Lecturer in sociolinguistics at the University of Nottingham, UK. She has published in a range of international journals and edited collections on the topics of language and gender, professional discourse and politeness, and she is finalizing a monograph, *Gendered Discourse in the Professional Workplace*.

Diane Nelson teaches linguistics at the University of Leeds, UK. Her research interests include theoretical syntax, Case Theory, psych predicates, language evolution, endangered languages and syntactic language disorders. She works on Finnish and other Finnic languages, Icelandic and Khalkh Mongolian.

Jennifer Smith teaches at the University of Glasgow, UK, and works on the morphosyntax of non-standard varieties of English. She has written a number of papers on transatlantic connections between British and North American dialects and is investigating the acquisition of dialect forms in pre-school children.

Peter Stockwell is Professor at the University of Nottingham, UK. He has published extensively in the areas of sociolinguistics, literary linguistics and cognitive poetics. His recent publications include *Sociolinguistics* (2002), *Cognitive Poetics* (2002) and, with Mark Robson, *Language in Theory* (2005). He edits the *Routledge English Language Introductions* series.

Jane Stuart-Smith is a Reader in English Language at the University of Glasgow, UK. Her research interests include social aspects of phonetics/phonology; language variation and change, particularly in Scottish English; media and language change; and bilingualism, especially British Asian languages.

Donald N. Tuten is Associate Professor of Spanish and Director of the Program in Linguistics at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. His research has focused on how dialect contact/mixing and learning affect language change. He is the author of *Koineization in Medieval Spanish* (2003).

Dominic Watt lectures in phonetics and sociolinguistics at the University of Aberdeen, UK. His research interests are in phonological variation and change, phonological acquisition, forensic phonetics, and topics in language

and identity. He is researching linguistic variation in the Scottish/English border region.

Walt Wolfram is William C. Friday Distinguished Professor at North Carolina State University, USA, and Director of the North Carolina Language and Life Project. In addition to research publications of more than twenty books and 250 articles, he has co-produced a series of dialect documentaries for public television.

Sue Wright is Professor of Language and Politics at the University of Portsmouth, UK, and the author of a number of books and articles on the role of language in group formation. Her research is an investigation of how the internet may be encouraging new linguistic communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

CARMEN LLAMAS, LOUISE MULLANY AND PETER STOCKWELL

SOCIOLINGUISTICS

This *Companion to Sociolinguistics* has been collected together for anyone who is interested in how and why diverse people speak and write differently: in other words, it is aimed at everyone. Anyone who has ever noticed an accent, or puzzled over a dialect phrase, or wondered why road signs are in several languages; anyone who adjusts their speech or writing in different situations, or cannot imitate the way that older people or younger people talk, or feels excluded by the way another group speaks; anyone who has ever tried to create an impression of themselves in an interview or e-mail, anyone who has ever made a snap decision on the basis of someone's voice, anyone who has ever been in an argument – in all these situations, you have been involved in the field of *sociolinguistics*. This book opens up this area for newcomers to the study of language, and provides a useful reference guide and resource for more advanced sociolinguists.

The field of sociolinguistics in the early twenty-first century is a mature, confident and vibrant discipline. At its core is a concern for the observable facts of language variation and principled thinking about the reasons and consequences of this variation and change. The fact that language changes is indisputable and inevitable, and it is this fact of change, spread unevenly across time and space, that leads to linguistic variation. Sociolinguistic interest in variation and change can be drawn in a straight line back to the earlier traditional concerns of *dialectology* and *philology*, which described the different varieties that make up a language and traced the historical development of particular features of vocabulary and grammar.

Though traditional dialectology was inevitably also interested in differences in pronunciation, it was largely the invention of portable recording equipment in the form of the desk-sized tape-recorder that marked the birth of sociolinguistics. This allowed researchers to compare accent variation reliably and allowed them to investigate speech directly, rather than by inference from written documents and extrapolations of sound-change rules into the past. Provided with the means of hearing and replaying speech precisely, sociolinguists could focus on individual sounds and explore correlations not just with the geographical location of speakers, but also with their age, gender, class, education, outlook, politics, and so on. In the urban settings in which most people in industrialized nations live, new sociolinguistic techniques illuminated the processes of human society and language.

Over time, sociolinguistics has developed this dialectological core interest and expanded its field of interest. In the social sciences, rigorous awareness of the principles underlying exploration and explanation led to a highly developed critical theory which sociolinguistics has also drawn on. This has resulted in macro-sociolinguistic work in the consequences for language of globalization and the multinational economy: politics, ideology and education policy have become key areas for sociolinguists. The principles of language variation and change determine the patterns of multilingualism and the shape of new language varieties, helping to define ethnicity and identity in general. Language is the means by which groups of people articulate themselves, and delineate themselves from others.

Sociolinguistics has also been enriched by developments in discourse analysis, pragmatics and ethnography. There are social and cultural dimensions to the psychological choices people make: factors of linguistic behaviour like politeness and the performance of gender, age and class connect the individual with the social in ways which are principled and explainable. The dynamics of conversations and dialogic discourse can be analysed to reveal both cultural conventions and individual speech strategies. The negotiation and manipulation of power and power-lessness, status and stigma, consensus and conflict are all matters for analysis within sociolinguistics.

Even though finer gradations can be made between core sociolinguistics and *social linguistics* and the *sociology of language*, this *Companion* reflects the international and interdisciplinary diversity of the field in representing the broad view of sociolinguistics. Together with second language research and teaching (which itself owes much to sociolinguistic work), sociolinguistics is the central discipline of applied linguistics. It has practical outcomes for education policy, government spending, social affairs, constitutional arrangements, international relations and debates on ethnicity, nationalism, multiculturalism and cultural value. This book sets out many of these key areas, and offers the reader a rapid means of exploring for yourself the rich field of sociolinguistics.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The *Companion* consists of two main parts: five broad sections of articles in sociolinguistics, followed by a Glossary of terms with References and an Index. The chapters in the first part are by major figures in the field, most of whom are recognized as the leading scholars in their particular areas. We asked all the contributors to produce chapters with a very precise and full set of features, usually surveying the topic in focus from the classic studies to new work. Several of our contributors used the occasion of this *Companion* to present their most recent research findings. We also asked them to be descriptive of the topic so that new sociolinguist readers would be able to assimilate the key concepts rapidly in a way that was accessible and readable. At the same time, we wanted an argumentative dimension so that it was clear that sociolinguistic exploration is an on-going dialogue and debate rather than simply being a set of facts. Our contributors have

managed to set out their own fields in precise and plain terms, and have also made it clear where the main arguments are and what their own positions entail. The combination of these two dimensions makes the contributed chapters useful for working sociolinguists as well as new students.

By arranging the chapters under broad headings, we have tried to allow quick and systematic access to the key sub-areas of sociolinguistics. It is important to realize, of course, that any sort of classification implies an ideological choice in how we have carved up the field, despite this analytical convenience. It is worth remembering that almost any extended sample of language could in principle be explored from just about every angle as articulated in every chapter. Many of our contributors have recognized the fact that aspects of language are continuous, not discrete, by pointing towards other subdisciplines. We regard these overlaps between chapters as positive and necessary for a complete picture of socio-linguistics. Where there are particularly strong and salient connections to be made, we have included cross-references from one chapter to another.

Part I sets out methods of observation and analysis in sociolinguistics. The chapters in this part serve as a mini-handbook for linguistic fieldwork. The fundamental concept of the *linguistic variable* is presented first (Chapter 1), followed in Chapter 2 by an overview of the toolkit of field methods available to the sociolinguist. The rest of Part I sets out specific techniques of sociolinguistic analysis, organized into aspects of phonological patterning (Chapter 3), morpho-syntactic variation (Chapter 4) and the analysis of discourse (Chapter 5). While this does not exhaust the areas available for a thorough sociolinguistic exploration, it provides the essential tools for the majority of sociolinguistic work which has been undertaken to date.

Part II consists of aspects of the social correlates of language. The major social dimensions of class (Chapter 6), gender (Chapter 7), age (Chapter 8), ethnicity (Chapter 9) and speech communities across these dimensions (Chapter 10) are presented and discussed. This part largely maintains an emphasis on the hard linkage between the social factor and the variation in a language feature. To complement this approach, Part III explores the socio-psychological factors of language patterning. Individual motivation in the social context (Chapter 11), the nature of the relationship between language and identity (Chapter 12), how speakers adjust to each other's speech styles (Chapter 13), how individuals' outlooks and attitudes affect language behaviour (Chapter 14) and how individuals negotiate their way through politeness and power relationships (Chapter 15) are all addressed.

In Part IV we shift to more macro-sociolinguistic matters in considering socio-political factors of language. Standardization and the ideology which promotes and sustains it are the topics of Chapter 16. This theme is elaborated in relation to media discourse (Chapter 17), and the position of multilingual societies (Chapter 18). The consequences for education policy and practice and the overarching frame of language policy and planning are addressed in Chapters 19 and 20 respectively.

Where the *Companion* begins directly with language variation, it ends with language change in Part V. The sociolinguistics of pidgins, creoles and other new varieties are explored in Chapters 21 and 22, and set into the historical context of colonialism in Chapter 23. Lastly, the disappearance and demise of language varieties (Chapter 24) closes the contributors' part of the book.

Each of these chapters ends with a suggestion for a few directions in further reading. This is where the newcomer should go next if you are interested in developing greater depth of knowledge of the topic in focus. Of course, each chapter is also rigorously referenced to the list of original books and articles given at the end of the *Companion*, so that advanced readers can check sources to trace observations and interpretations, and get into the detail of the topic.

Where technical terms are first used in each chapter, they are presented in **bold**, and a short definition is given in the Glossary. Often the criterial definition in the Glossary is placed into a richer context, with examples and discussion, in the relevant chapter. To assist your understanding, we have also cross-referenced these Glossary items back to the chapter(s) in which they are used. Additionally, the Glossary contains words that do not originate precisely in the chapters, but which are useful sociolinguistic terms or which form part of the basic technical register used by our contributors in general.

In deciding on the extent of the Glossary, we were also aware of drawing the boundaries of the discipline. We were guided by the practical principle of trying to provide the key vocabulary that any sociolinguist would be likely to come across in the first year or two of your studies. Most terms in the Glossary have their origins firmly in core sociolinguistic work in this way. However, the basic fields of linguistics in general also provide many technical terms which sociolinguists use as part of our 'shorthand' jargon. It would have been unwieldy to have included all these terms. In any case, if you are studying sociolinguistics now, you have probably had a grounding in general linguistics or language study; and of course there are numerous excellent dictionaries, book-length glossaries and volumes of key concepts in language and linguistics that will provide this level of detail. Where a term in general linguistic use has been especially significant in sociolinguistics, though, we have included it in our Glossary. In particular, you will find many terms from the fields of phonetics and phonology, since these are used extensively in sociolinguistics and several of our contributors use these expressions in context. Throughout, we have used the International Phonetic Alphabet to indicate sounds in pronunciations.

Finally, the Index lists all the Glossary terms with page numbers for every occurrence of the item. The Glossary does not include names and biographies of famous sociolinguists, as we decided that we wanted to present the field as a set of ideas rather than personalities. Of course, the Index does include these major figures, and we recognize that sociolinguistics is a humane discipline concerned with people's lives and dependent on the intellectual and empathetic skills of sociolinguistic researchers: for this reason, we are grateful to all our contributors for their work here and in the field, and we hope their example and enthusiasm will create more sociolinguists in our readership.

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Post alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	N		
Trill	ʙ			r					R		
Tap or Flap		ⱱ		ɾ		ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant		ʋ		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	L			

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

CONSONANTS (NON-PULMONIC)

Clicks		Voiced implosives		Ejectives	
ʘ	Bilabial	ɓ	Bilabial	ʼ	Examples:
ǀ	Dental	ɗ	Dental/alveolar	pʼ	Bilabial
ǃ	(Post)alveolar	ʄ	Palatal	tʼ	Dental/alveolar
ǂ	Palatoalveolar	ɠ	Velar	kʼ	Velar
ǁ	Alveolar lateral	ʛ	Uvular	sʼ	Alveolar fricative

OTHER SYMBOLS

ʍ Voiceless labial-velar fricative

w Voiced labial-velar approximant

ɥ Voiced labial-palatal approximant

H Voiceless epiglottal fricative

ʕ Voiced epiglottal fricative

ʡ Epiglottal plosive

ɕ ʑ Alveolo-palatal fricatives

ɺ Voiced alveolar lateral flap

ɧ Simultaneous ʃ and x

Affricates and double articulations can be represented by two symbols joined by a tie bar if necessary. k͡p t͡s

VOWELS

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

SUPRASEGMENTALS

ˈ	Primary stress	
ˌ	Secondary stress	ˌfoʊnəˈtɪʃən
ː	Long	eː
ˑ	Half-long	eˑ
˘	Extra-short	ĕ
|	Minor (foot) group	
‖	Major (intonation) group	
.	Syllable break	ɹi.ækt
‿	Linking (absence of a break)	

DIACRITICS   Diacritics may be placed above a symbol with a descender, e.g. ŋ̊

̥	Voiceless	n̥ d̥	̤	Breathy voiced	b̤ a̤	̪	Dental	t̪ d̪
̬	Voiced	s̬ t̬	̰	Creaky voiced	b̰ a̰	̺	Apical	t̺ d̺
ʰ	Aspirated	tʰ dʰ	̼	Linguolabial	t̼ d̼	̻	Laminal	t̻ d̻
̹	More rounded	ɔ̹	ʷ	Labialized	tʷ dʷ	̃	Nasalized	ẽ
̜	Less rounded	ɔ̜	ʲ	Palatalized	tʲ dʲ	ⁿ	Nasal release	dⁿ
̟	Advanced	u̟	ˠ	Velarized	tˠ dˠ	ˡ	Lateral release	dˡ
̠	Retracted	e̠	ˤ	Pharyngealized	tˤ dˤ	̚	No audible release	d̚
̈	Centralized	ë	̴	Velarized or pharyngealized	ɫ			
̽	Mid-centralized	e̽	̝	Raised	e̝	(ɹ̝ = voiced alveolar fricative)		
̩	Syllabic	n̩	̞	Lowered	e̞	(β̞ = voiced bilabial approximant)		
̯	Non-syllabic	e̯	̘	Advanced Tongue Root	e̘			
˞	Rhoticity	ɚ a˞	̙	Retracted Tongue Root	e̙			

TONES AND WORD ACCENTS

LEVEL				CONTOUR		
e̋ or	˥	Extra high	ě or	ˇ	Rising	
é	˦	High	ê	ˆ	Falling	
ē	˧	Mid	e᷄	ˈ	High rising	
è	˨	Low	e᷅	ˌ	Low rising	
e̖	˩	Extra low	e᷈	˜	Rising-falling	
↓	Downstep		↗	Global rise		
↑	Upstep		↘	Global fall		

The International Phonetic Alphabet (revised to 2005) © International Phonetic Association

Part I
METHODS OF OBSERVATION
AND ANALYSIS

1

VARIATION AND THE VARIABLE

DOMINIC WATT

DEFINITION AND EXAMPLES

In all human languages, spoken and signed, we can find examples of cases in which speakers have multiple ways of saying the same thing. Some variation is accidental and transitory; it may arise from the mechanical limitations of the speech organs, for instance, and may not be fully under the speaker's control. Other, more systematic variations represent options speakers may consciously or unconsciously choose (Coulmas 2005). A choice between two or more distinct but linguistically equivalent **variants** represents the existence of a **linguistic variable**. Speakers in Aberdeen, north-east Scotland, for instance, may choose between the terms *boy*, *loon*, *loonie*, *lad* or *laddie* when referring to a young male person, or between *quine*, *quinie*, *lass*, *lassie*, or *girl* in reference to a young female. These sets exemplify lexical variables, and, following the convention of labelling variables in parentheses, we might refer to them as (boy) and (girl), respectively.

Variables are also found at all other levels of linguistic structure. Speakers may exploit **phonological** variables by choosing from different pronunciations of the same word or phrase. For example, Aberdonians may pronounce *what* using either the Scottish standard [ʍ] or the (stereotyped) local form [f] (thus [fɪtsa̱ʔ] *what's that?*). Though alternation in (wh) is typically treated as binary, other pronunciations such as [w] can also be heard in the **accent**. As discussed in Chapter 3, phonological variables may additionally be continuous rather than having discrete, clearly distinguishable variants.

Discourse variables are used as a means of structuring discourse, such as when organizing conversational **turns**. Markers in English such as *you know*, *you see*, *like* and *I mean*, **tags** (e.g. *or something*, *and that*), or **tag questions** (*innit*, *right*, *know what I mean*, etc.) have, however, been under-researched compared with lexical and, in particular, phonological variables. The study of discourse variation is still at an early stage, and while it presents challenging problems – in what sense, for example, is an utterance ending in the tag *you know* 'equivalent' to the same utterance which lacks the tag? – the fact that such variation has been found to be systematic indicates that a full understanding of how speakers construct conversations will necessitate a good deal of further research to establish more explicitly the forms, functions and uses of discourse variables (see Schiffrin 1987, 1994; Ochs *et al*. 1996; Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2001; Macaulay 2002a; Cheshire 2005a, b; and Chapter 5).

Grammatical (morphological and syntactic) variables have, on the other hand, received much more attention in the sociolinguistics literature over the last four decades, focusing on the notion of the **variable rule** (Cedergren and Sankoff 1974; Sankoff 1978, 1988; Sankoff and Labov 1979; Wolfram 1991). Lack of space prevents fuller discussion of the hotly debated issue of the extent to which syntactic forms claimed to be functionally equivalent are in fact (or even can be) exactly synonymous; see instead Lavandera (1978), Labov (1972b, 1978); Romaine (1982); Cheshire (1987, 2005a); Cheshire *et al*. (2005); and Chapter 4. Unambiguous synonymy can none the less be found. While, for instance, Aberdonian speakers very frequently use the distal demonstrative *that* with plural noun phrases – as in example (1) – they can also use standard *those* alongside the other **non-standard** alternatives given in (3)–(6) without any difference in linguistic meaning intended or implied (McRae 2004; Beal 1997; Smith 2005).

(1)   This is enough to feed all that rabbits.
(2)   This is enough to feed all those rabbits.
(3)   This is enough to feed all them rabbits.
(4)   This is enough to feed all thae rabbits.
(5)   This is enough to feed all thon rabbits.
(6)   This is enough to feed all yon rabbits.

It is of course not true that all Aberdeen speakers would necessarily use *all* the forms at (1)–(6): only (2) is likely if Scottish Standard English is being used, and forms like (1) and (3) might be avoided in 'polite' speech owing to their perception as 'bad English'. To this extent a speaker's choice of variant may be constrained by non-linguistic, 'external' factors such as the social situation (an interview in a doctor's surgery, say, versus an argument at home), or the speaker's educational and economic background, age, etc., these being powerful predictors of non-standard variant usage. Alternatively, a variant's use may be constrained by an internal, linguistic factor: in Aberdeen (wh), lexical distributional constraints favour [f] in function words like *what*, *why*, *where* and *who* more highly than in content words like *white*, *whittle* or *whale* (see further Jones 1997: 331; Johnston 1997: 507; Smith 2005). In certain infrequent words such as *whippet*, *whimsical*, *wherewithal*, etc., [f] appears never to occur. When investigating alternations the domain of variability is circumscribed by eliminating those contexts in which variability is absent. Structural factors may assist. If, for example, a London English speaker uses the **labiodental approximant** [ʋ] as a pronunciation of (r), s/he will obviously only do so where phonological constraints allow (r) to occur, namely in pre-vocalic or **intervocalic** positions in words like *red*, *brown*, *string*, *around*, *marry*, *soaring* and *sawing*, across word boundaries in sequences like *soar above* and *saw it up*, and, as a consequence of ʜ-**dropping** in the **variety**, also *sore head* and *saw himself* (Wells 1982; Foulkes and Docherty 2000, 2001; Altendorf and Watt 2005; Hughes *et al*. 2005). Whether the constraints are linguistic or non-linguistic, the fundamental premise is the same: that the distribution of the different surface forms

of a **dependent variable** (the linguistic feature under scrutiny) can be correlated with bi- or multivalent **independent variables** (speaker characteristics, speech style, linguistic context, and so forth).

Identifying the social and linguistic constraints that prevent or disfavour a particular form from occurring in a given language variety and that license the use of another form instead is the central empirical preoccupation of **variationist sociolinguistics**. In this way, the social meaning of each of a variable's variants can be deduced, and their distribution within the system circumscribed. This is done by correlating patterns of variation in a community's language with the social and demographic characteristics of its speakers and the **social networks** and/or more generic categories to which they can be assigned (**social class**, **gender**, **ethnicity**, etc.), and by noting those linguistic contexts in which certain variants are always, frequently, seldom or never found. It should be emphasized that the distribution of variants is not held to be 'either/or', but rather probabilistic. Categorical distribution of linguistic forms is clearly of secondary interest to researchers aiming to account for patterns of variation in language data.

THE HISTORY AND UTILITY OF THE (SOCIO)LINGUISTIC VARIABLE

The **sociolinguistic variable** was first systematically used for quantification of language variation in Labov's Martha's Vineyard study (1963). While in this guise it is a relatively new addition to the toolkit used by linguists for describing, analysing and modelling language structure and use, the (at least tacit) notion of the linguistic variable is as old as language study itself. Pāṇini's grammar of Sanskrit (?350 BC) incorporates variable rules that allow for differing outputs (Kiparsky 1979), and in the **dialect** geography and historical linguistics of more recent centuries the establishment of sets of 'equivalent' dialect terms and historical cognates entails identifying direct lexical and structural correspondences within and between languages. This is not at all surprising if, instead of assuming – as many modern linguists do – that variation is of only marginal significance to 'language proper', we take a more socially and historically realistic view of language structure, development and function. It hardly needs to be said that knowing that there are different ways of expressing the same idea in a given language is a fundamental element of people's everyday linguistic awareness – as Sapir (1921: 147) remarked, 'everyone knows that language is variable'. Despite this, and the fact that modern linguistics has its roots in the work of scholars who sought to provide a model of language structure and evolution to account for historical and contemporary intra- and interlinguistic differences, variability was generally marginalized or ignored by practitioners of the dominant schools of linguistics during the twentieth century, not least those working in the Chomskyan generativist tradition which continues to hold sway over large areas of the discipline. Intralinguistic variation is seen by many of the more conservative researchers in the generativist tradition to be irrelevant to an understanding of the nature of

language beyond the most trivial level because, they argue, variability of the sort that interests sociolinguists is an epiphenomenon arising from the vagaries of language in use rather than a property of grammars at a deeper level (Chomsky 1986; Guy 1997; Henry 2002, 2005; Chambers 2003). But assuming, as seems reasonable, that one of the primary purposes of language acquisition is to permit social interaction, developing an awareness of the social meanings of linguistic variants and an ability to adapt one's use of variant forms according to situation and the perceived social characteristics of one's conversational partner(s) is as essential as any other aspect of language competence (Hymes 1971; Roberts and Labov 1995; Roberts 2002; Foulkes *et al*. 2005).

As suggested above, much of the value of the sociolinguistic variable in language research lies in its potential for quantifying patterns of variation: we can, that is, count how often a particular form occurs and express that frequency as a proportion of the total number of occasions on which the form *could have* occurred, even if it did not. And by comparing samples drawn from different age groups or from the same speakers at different times, we can get a sense of how the language or dialect is changing over time. The variable permits us to make statements of the sort: 'for two variants *x* and *y* of a variable (*z*), we find that *x* is used twice as much as *y* by older working-class men, but for young middle-class women the reverse is true.' The sociolinguistic variable thus allows us to observe changes in progress in a way that was once thought impossible (Labov 1994, 2001; Labov *et al*. 1972; Milroy 1991; McMahon 1994). Differences in the distribution of variants between casual, spontaneous speech and more closely monitored 'style-shifted' speech can likewise be captured, thereby allowing insight into speakers' attitudes towards and perceptions of the variant forms in their repertoires. This is an especially useful technique, as the researcher can thereby elicit attitudinal and perceptual information that the speaker may be unaware of, or is unable to articulate.

INDICATORS, MARKERS AND STEREOTYPES

By alluding to differing levels of 'salience' among variables and their variants, Labov (1972b) distinguishes between **indicators** (variables of which speakers other than linguists are unaware, and which are not subject to style-shifting), **markers** (variables close to speakers' level of conscious awareness which may have a role in class stratification, and which are subject to style-shifting), and **stereotypes** (forms of which speakers and the wider community are aware, but which, like other stereotyped expectations of social groups, are often archaic, misreported and misperceived). Of these, it is markers that have received, and continue to receive, the most attention from sociolinguists. These have tended to be phonological variables. This is no accident: their variants are usually more frequent than those of other sorts of variables, allowing the researcher to collect and analyse hundreds or thousands of tokens with relative ease; they can be elicited from informants without much effort; they lend themselves to **instrumental**

analysis; and they are functionally equivalent in a much less ambiguous way than are other sorts of variables. The remainder of this chapter will focus on a phonological variable that has been the object of much attention in the literature to date: (r) in English.

PHONOLOGICAL VARIATION: (r) IN BERWICK ENGLISH

Until the formalization of the sociolinguistic variable in Labov's early work, much of the surface variation in speech and writing had been treated by the majority of linguists as random, unpredictable 'free variation' that did not seem systematically to pattern with other factors. As an example, consider the use of **postvocalic (r)** in US English (the use of a **rhotic** consonant following the **vowel** in words like *car*, *turn* and *floors*). Hubbell (1950), for instance, concluded that:

> The pronunciation of a very large number of New Yorkers exhibits a pattern [. . .] that might most accurately be described as the complete absence of any pattern. Such speakers sometimes pronounce /r/ before a consonant or a pause and sometimes omit it, in a thoroughly haphazard pattern [. . .] The speaker hears both types of pronunciation about him all the time, both seem equally natural to him, and it is a matter of pure chance which one comes first to his lips.
>
> (Hubbell 1950: 48)

Such claims were made in spite of deeply held beliefs among the public that speech features of this sort were indexical of social status, ethnic group, and so forth. It is hard to see why else features such as non-rhoticity in US English would be stigmatized at the time for their perceived incorrectness, even among non-rhotic speakers themselves, as Labov's New York City studies would later demonstrate (Labov 1966).

Rhoticity works differently in the English of England. **Received Pronunciation**, which continues to enjoy the highest overall **prestige**, is a non-rhotic accent. Speakers from the few rhotic areas that remain in north-western and south-western England are not accorded much prestige, and (r)-ful pronunciations of words like *bird* and *short* are often considered amusingly rustic and old-fashioned. Rhoticity is becoming scarce in England, even in remote northern areas such as Northumberland, the accents of which were until quite recently fully rhotic and characterized by the long-standing and stereotyped 'Northumbrian burr' (**uvular fricative** or **approximant** [ʁ]; see Påhlsson 1972; Wells 1982). The accents of Scotland, lying immediately to the north, have on the other hand retained rhoticity almost universally. It is of great interest therefore to examine the interface between the two areas: since a robust **isogloss** is implausible given the plentiful cross-border interaction between Scots and Northumbrians, there is presumably a transitional area in which rhoticity is variable. Berwick upon Tweed, a town on the Northumberland coast three miles (5 km) south of the Scottish border, is cited as just such a transitional zone (Glauser 1991, 2000), and is for other historical and

sociolinguistic reasons a prime site for investigating phonological variability in the region. Most intriguing is the finding of Kiely *et al*. (2000) that informants from nearby Alnwick report that they perceive Berwickers to sound Scottish; if so, rhoticity seems a good candidate as a cue to this perception. (Other possible cues are listed in Watt and Ingham 2000.)

(r) is a complex variable, as we must consider not just the presence or absence of rhoticity, we must also describe those tokens which do occur in terms of their **phonetic** identity. Berwick speakers can pronounce the word *bars* as [bɑːz] or [bɑɹz], but they also have a choice of which kind of postvocalic (r) to use should they use a rhotic pronunciation. In the present analysis, we coded for the variants [ɹ], [ʁ], [ɾ], [ʋ] and [ɹ̝], and the zero variant [∅] to indicate non-rhoticity in postvocalic positions (we have actually simplified the analysis somewhat for present purposes; for fuller results see Watt and Pichler 2004). [ɹ] is the 'mainstream' British English variant; the **alveolar tap** [ɾ] is a traditionally Scottish form but is also found widely in northern England; [ʋ], the labiodental approximant, mentioned earlier, was until recently associated with infantile or defective speech, since when it has become extremely frequent in the English of southern England (Foulkes and Docherty 2000); [ɹ̝] differs from [ɹ] in that friction is audible.

In order first to try to establish whether or not Berwick English is undergoing a loss of rhoticity, we compared auditory **transcriptions** of spontaneous speech taken from recorded interviews with twenty male and female Berwick English-speakers ranging in age from 14 to 78 years (*n* = 1,973; average 98.7 tokens per speaker; Pichler 2005 gives further information on her fieldwork procedure). **Linking** /r/ (e.g. *sore arm*) and **intrusive** /r/ (e.g. *saw it*) contexts were of course excluded from this data set, the results for which are plotted against speaker age (Figure 1.1). Non-rhoticity appears to be (near-)categorical for all speakers. Even the eldest speaker uses non-rhotic pronunciations almost 90 per cent of the time. These data suggest, then, that Berwick English is now effectively established as a non-rhotic variety, and has thereby converged on mainstream **English English**. If Alnwick listeners hear Berwick English as 'Scottish', the perception is presumably triggered by cues other than postvocalic rhoticity.

What, then, of (r) in pre- and intervocalic positions? Figure 1.2 summarizes the pooled findings by speaker in descending order of age (*n* = 1,550; average 77.5 tokens per speaker). These results again suggest a pattern characterized by loss of traditional features. Use of [ɹ̝] and the traditional [ʁ] by all twenty speakers is negligible, and they are therefore omitted from the chart. What is most striking is the virtual loss of [ɾ] from old to young, and a corresponding upward trend (albeit a rather peaky one) in [ɹ]. Part of the reason for the peakiness lies in the modest – but perhaps growing – popularity of the innovative [ʋ] among the younger speakers, suggesting that it is finding favour among Berwick's teenage population. At any rate, it occurs at least as frequently as [ɾ] for five of the six teenage speakers.

Bringing other demographic factors (**sex**, place of residence) into the analysis as independent variables reveals additional distributional patterns that show
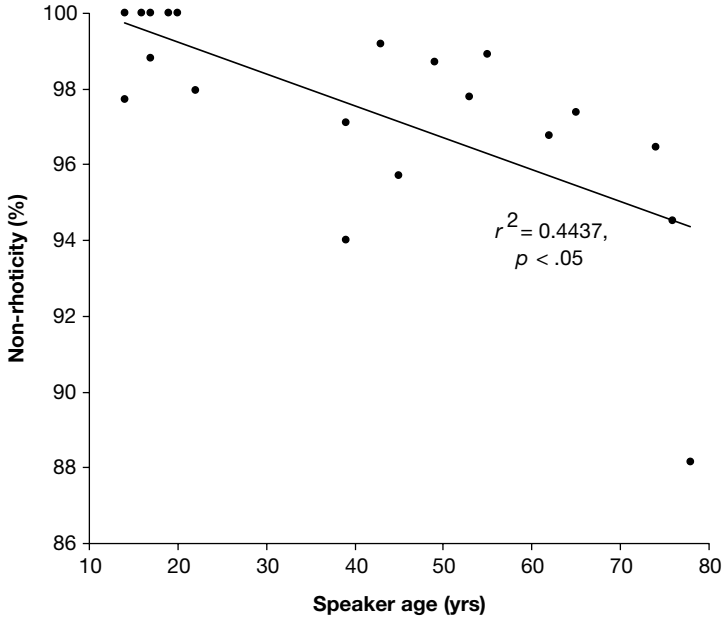
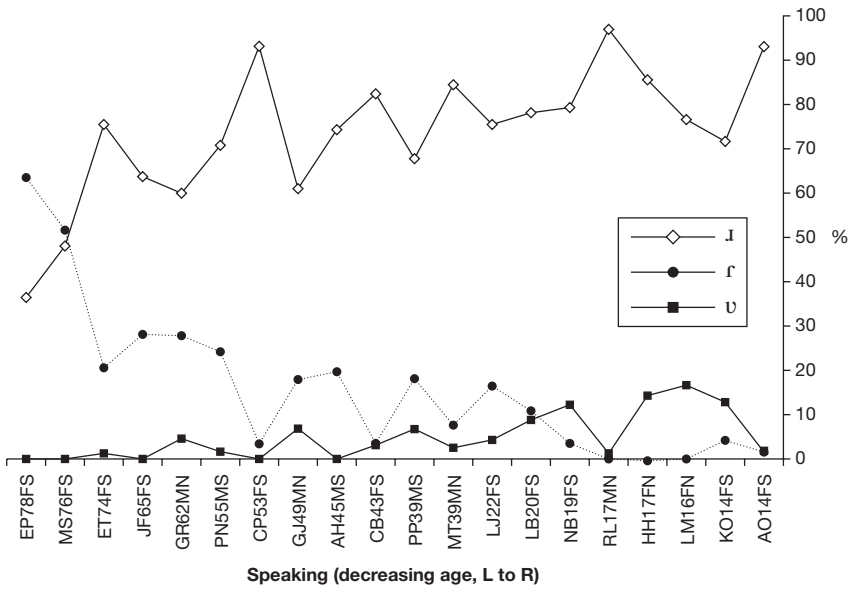*Figure 1.1* Non-rhoticity among twenty Berwick English-speakers (%)

Figure 1.2 Phonetic variants of (r) in pre- and intervocalic positions (pooled) in Berwick English, by speaker (%). The speaker labels give the speaker's initials, age, sex (M/F) and place of residence (N/S, i.e. north or south of the river Tweed)