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Responses to Language Varieties

Variability, processes and outcomes

EDITED BY

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Responses to Language Varieties

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Volume 39

Responses to Language Varieties. Variability, processes and outcomes
Edited by Alexei Prikhodkine and Dennis R. Preston

Introduction*

Alexei Prikhodkine & Dennis R. Preston

This is a book about the responses people have to language varieties, about the variability of those responses, about the shape and content of the responses themselves, and about the variable cognitive and neural repositories and pathways they use in the development of those responses.

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* The themes and issues of this book were explored at a symposium at the University of Lausanne entitled "Variation of Language Attitudes: Mechanisms and Stakes" on April 20, 2012. The presentations made there included

The cognitive foundations of Language Regard, *Dennis R. Preston (Oklahoma State University, USA)*

Listener judgment theory, *Christoph Purschke (Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany)*

Which standard in French-speaking Switzerland? Form of the stimuli as a factor of language attitude variation, *Alexei Prikhodkine (University of Lausanne, Switzerland)*

Where is Dutch really heading? On the use of attitude measurements to determine the limits of standard languages, *Stefan Grondelaers (Radboud University Nijmegen, Holland)*

Attitudes and awareness we're unaware of, *Nancy Niedzielski (Rice University, USA)*

Construction of valid attitudinal data in investigations of linguistic variation and change, *Tore Kristiansen (University of Copenhagen, Denmark)*

Implicit Social Cognition and language attitudes research, *Andrew J. Pantos (Metropolitan State University of Denver, USA)*

I trust you implicitly... but not explicitly! How to get language attitudes without asking, *Laura Staum Casasanto (Stony Brook University, USA)*

Social information and speech perception: Scope and limits of proper names, *David Correia Saavedra & Alexei Prikhodkine (University of Lausanne, Switzerland).*

At that symposium, the participants decided to revise these presentations for publication and invite others for a section ("Sociocognitive Aspects of Language Attitude Variation") at the International Congress of Linguists in Geneva, July 23, 2013. The program there included the following:

The cycle of attitude and language change, *Dennis R. Preston (Oklahoma State University, USA)*

The cultural grounding of language attitudes, *Christoph Purschke (Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany)*

What Houstonians don't know they know about language and race, *Nancy Niedzielski (Rice University, USA)*

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It is about variability in several senses. First, and surely best known, different linguistic stimuli elicit different responses. Second, people from different areas, of different ages, sexes, ethnicities, and social statuses, and from different communities of practice have different responses to the same language performances. Third, and less well studied perhaps, is the variability *within* the individual, one that rests on the fact that the beliefs about the speaker varieties that underlie responses are not simple, certainly not monolithic. Varying, even contradictory beliefs about such matters are a part of every person's makeup, and different settings, tasks, and even respondent moods may trigger first one then another response to the same stimulus.

The chapters in this volume explore the access to, the processing of, and the outcomes of that complexity, namely how responses to language are triggered, processed, and surface. This volume also looks at the internal detail of the responses themselves because they are a key to the complex variability of the beliefs that lie behind them. But it is also important to examine the specific content of such responses for their *own* value. How may a variety of responses be grouped together, for example, so that one may come to a better understanding of the dominating ideologies within speech communities while still taking into consideration individual variability?

This book investigates as well responses to language that are not necessarily attitudinal in the strict sense (i.e., "evaluative," e.g., Eagly & Chaiken 2005), and a great deal of attention is paid to the beliefs and cognitive structures that underlie responses (e.g., Bassili and Brown 2005) as well as to their organization

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Attitudes, variation, and language detail: Effects of specifying linguistic stimuli, *Alexei Prikhodkine (University of Lausanne, Switzerland)*

Construction of valid attitudinal data in investigations of linguistic variation and change, *Tore Kristiansen (University of Copenhagen, Denmark)*

Where is Dutch really heading? On the use of attitude measurements to determine the limits of standard languages, *Roeland van Hout (Radboud University Nijmegen, Holland)*

Perception of speaker dialect and the Implicit Association Test: An ERP study, *Brandon C. Loudermilk (University of California at Davis, USA)*

Applying the Implicit Association Test to language attitudes research, *Andrew J. Pantos (Metropolitan State College of Denver, USA)*

Speaker evaluation as a speech event: A social constructionist recast of experimental research on 'language attitudes' and its implications, *Barbara Soukup (University of Vienna, Austria)*

Informal discussions among the participants in Lausanne and round table discussions in Geneva enhanced these presentations and eventually led to this collection.

into ideological systems.[1] More than a few traditions are represented here: from social psychology come classic, traditional experimental methods (e.g., matched guise, Lambert et al. 1960) as well as more current discourse-based analyses (e.g., Potter & Wetherell 1987); anthropological studies have introduced considerations of indexicality (Silverstein 2003), iconization, recursivity, and erasure (Irvine 2001), enregisterment (Agha 2003), and the construction of culturally based ideologies (Schieffelin et al. 1998); sociolinguists often focus on the specific rather than global elements of a variety that trigger responses (e.g., Graff et al. 1986) as well as on connected attitudinal and belief systems similar to the anthropological notion of ideology, as expressed in Eckert's notion of the "indexical field" (2008).

The chapters in this volume address a variety of questions concerning attitude, belief, and ideology in responses to language variety, in some cases singly, in others with a more general focus, including attempts to relate one style of research to another. In doing so they reflect the scholarly variability outlined above. If we accept the fact that even individuals house great variability in the underlying structures that inform responses, it follows that no single way of eliciting and studying those responses will do. These chapters provide a tour of the tools that have been productive in such investigations.

The first three chapters look at general problems and propose various solutions. In Chapter 1 Preston focuses on the variation that lies in wait in the underlying structures (the "attitudinal cognitorium") of the individual and on how such structures are activated and processed. This chapter pays particular attention to the variation that arises from the triggering of conscious versus nonconscious processing of stimuli, a theme further touched on in Chapters 4 (Kristiansen), 5 (Pantos), and 6 (Loudermilk) of this volume, although the problem of variation in the individual based on other factors is explored here as well. Also addressed in Chapter 1 is the role of all "language regard" factors, (i.e., beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies) in more general considerations of language variation and change.

Purschke's approach to the awakening and development of responses to language variety in Chapter 2 is grounded in the philosophically-oriented social psychological outline "REACT" (*Relevance, Evaluation, Activation, Construction,* and *Targeting*), and many of the themes treated are similar to those dealt with

1. The classic definition of attitudes is extended here. *Affect* or "feelings" (Berkowitz 2000) are not limited to those that have an evaluative dimension nor are the *beliefs* (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975) that lie behind the triggering and expression of a response. Behaviors are not limited to "overt actions," particularly in light of recent experimental work that measures implicit responses.

in Chapter 1, but from a different perspective. Within this framework, Purschke provides the details of the characteristics involved in attitude attraction, formation, persistence, availability, and cultural continuity under the labels *routinization*, *sedimentation*, *synchronization*, *fixation*, *tradition*, and *hierarchization*. The chapter carefully differentiates between the strategies involved in *salience* ("...the perception of conspicuous phenomena...") as opposed to *pertinence* ("...the evaluation of the subjective life-world relevance of such phenomena...." It concludes with practical advice about how attention to the details of this social constructivist critique of the traditional approach to attitude study may be made use of through the employment of real-world settings.

The social constructionist view of attitudes is most directly addressed in Chapter 3, where Soukup discusses mixed methods research (MMR). Finding that such MMR has been hampered by an epistemological stand-off, Soukup proposes an account of language regard that aims to put qualitative and quantitative research epistemologically on an equal footing. The basis for this is the conceptualization of reponses to language variety as 'human epistemological constructs', within the logic of 'critical realism' (Scollon 2003). Soukup then puts this proposal into practice regarding standard and dialectal Austrian German. Her study backs up the findings from a qualitative (interactional sociolinguistic) analysis of conversational data from a TV discussion with findings from a quantitative speaker evaluation experiment that uses the 'open guise' technique to elicit responses. Thus, the chapter both theorizes and illustrates what an integrated social constructionist approach may look like, and how it does justice to the variability of research outcomes.

The next several chapters look in greater detail at the importance of using or distinguishing between data that are acquired through means that elicit conscious or nonconscious responses. Kristiansen examines in Chapter 4 the importance of conscious versus nonconscious elicitation in a study in Denmark that is now being replicated widely in a pan-European research program known as SLICE (Standard Languages in Continental Europe). The Danish findings showed that when asked to characterize their preference for a Danish speech style, the respondents from all regions identified their local variety as preferable; when given a matched-guise sample, however, they preferred the modern Copenhagen variety, the variety that has been shown to be the most influential in the entire country. Kristiansen argues, therefore, that the results from nonconscious modes of enquiry are those that are essential to the study of language variation and change, since, at least in the Danish work, those responses were the ones that corresponded to the proven direction of linguistic change. He goes on in this chapter to illustrate this distinction from studies in other areas.

In Chapter 5 Pantos introduces a detailed example of the implicit attitude test (IAT) research model in one of the first studies within linguistics to be conducted

in that format. As Soukup pointed out in Chapter 3, even the matched-guise format runs the risk of respondents' being aware of the socially-charged nature of their linguistic evaluations and may not, therefore, be as "nonconscious" as one might hope. Pantos follows the social psychological model meticulously in a test designed to evaluate Korean-accented and non-foreign accented American English and compares, as Kristiansen does in the previous chapter, the results from that more *nonconscious* elicitation method with results from the same respondents who were given time to make a fully *conscious* response. The explicit or conscious findings showed a preference for the accented speaker but the IAT showed a clear preference for the unaccented samples. The chapter also shows correlation findings for the two studies and suggests that a sort of social hypercorrection may be influencing the explicit results.

In Chapter 6 Loudermilk looks into the underlying neurology of responses by means of the ERP (Event Related Potential) effects of a language variety stimulus. ERP data are derived from EEG studies of brain activity, which show that certain areas of the brain respond directly to specific linguistic domains (phonological, syntactic, etc...). The N400 signal has been shown to be an indicator of the ease or difficulty of semantic processing, and Loudermilk's study attempts to determine if standard and nonstandard versions of the -ing morpheme (-ING and IN') influence this pattern. He further sophisticates the study by presenting the same sort of variable -ing data to his respondents in an IAT study of the sort described in detail in Chapter 5. He then divides the respondents into high- and low-sensitivity responders and investigates the correlation between the type of IAT respondent and the ERP findings, demonstrating an interesting combination of neural patterning and implicit responses with regard to a well-studied sociolinguistic variable.

In Chapter 7, the focus changes from implicit and neurosociolinguistic studies of attitudes and attitude variability to demographic and linguistic features, although the value of implicit and explicit data elicitation is by no means ignored. Staum Casasanto et al. look at the role of social status or "class" in responses with reference to four phonetic variables in Dutch (two vocalic and two consonantal), and they carry out their research by using a detailed operationalization of the notion of status. They hope to awaken responses to status without focusing awareness on it, much as the matched guise technique intended to focus on the influence of linguistic variety while masking other factors of speaker identity. Their status variable was invoked by means of visual priming (automobiles, clothing, workplace surroundings, given names, and occupation) and were made part of a IAT-like experiment. The results show a complex pattern of ratings and interactions, some of which suggest new evaluations of traditionally lower-prestige variants.

Chapter 8 continues the use of visual primes in Campbell-Kibler and McCullough's study of the match between perceived foreign accentedness in

English and characteristic faces. Fifteen male faces reflecting European-American, East Asian, and Southeast Asian types were selected from those rated in a prestudy along continua for three dimensions: educatedness, accentedness, and masculinity. In a second prestudy English words pronounced by a variety of speakers were then rated for their degree of accentedness, and the highest and lowest scores for these were selected for the final experiment in which the respondents rated the quality of the match between face and voice when presented with a variety of the above matching possibilities (native speaker vs. foreign accented combined with the three face types). The results show not only the interrelationship of degree of accentedness and face type but also a role for type of accent (i.e., the perceived first language of the samples). Some data also suggest that radical mismatches between visual face priming and the data sample might need to be taken into consideration in further studies of this style of research.

In Chapter 9 another approach is taken to foreign accentedness. Grondelaers et al. ask if Moroccan-influenced Dutch might be considered one of the newer socially and regionally distinct varieties of the language that are gaining prestige, a movement in standard language definitions in Europe that has attracted considerable research effort (viz the reference to SLICE in the introduction to Chapter 4 above). Standard Dutch and Moroccan-influenced samples were played for respondents who rated them along twelve dimensions that fit into five previously determined effective general categories for Dutch language evaluation, namely *Status, Dynamism, Personal Integrity, Solidarity* and *Accent Norm*. In addition, each respondent was asked how "beautiful" each sample was. Their answer to the main question is overwhelmingly no – indicating that status and regional varieties of native speaker Dutch may participate in the broadening of boundaries for what may be considered standard, but foreign accented varieties, at least Moroccan Dutch, cannot. This chapter also includes some surprising statistical results in the factor analytic study of the differential pairs and a thorough review of the emergence of the newer, standardizing Dutch varieties.

In the last chapter (10), Prikhodkine goes where few studies of responses to language variety have gone before – to the lexicon, but his work focuses more generally on different levels of language detail in the presentation of stimuli (global or specific) and the variability in the expression of responses that arise from such different stimuli. In gathering his lexical data (from the French-speaking area in Western Switzerland) he employs several different strategies: he asked his respondents to (1) qualify the global category name "words for local French," (2) assess local words for their local typicality, (3) respond to a dictionary definition with a lexical item, (4) evaluate local items (and their counterparts from the French of France) on scales of correctness and friendliness, and (5) discuss with respondents

their preferences for and ratings of local and other items. Results show that global category names tend to elicit attitudes for stigmatized *patois* features, while such general labels do not trigger attitudinal responses for Swiss prestigious features. This chapter also employs an interesting correlation variable for the findings, namely the origin of the lexical items themselves: local dialectal, German, archaic French, or local innovative French.

These chapters, taken together and singly, illustrate current turns in studies of responses to language variety – ranging from the strictly experimental to the discoursal. Most, however, illustrate the variability of individual as well as group responses, although the latter are amply measured and discussed. They show how that variability may be generated by different approaches to data elicitation, how it is stored and processed, and what different values the various response types may have for our general interests as well as for its role in the study of language variation and change.

Not all themes of this general enterprise could be explored in one setting – applied study (e.g., unemployability of accented speakers or attempts to change negative stereotypes), the acquisition of beliefs in the youngest members of a speech community, and numerous other topics remain to be addressed. We hope, however, that these areas and research in other areas of interest will be enhanced by the theoretical and methodological considerations outlined and exemplified here. Most importantly, we hope that the variety of approaches taken here will encourage multiple and new ways to elicit and analyze data, since no one of them will reveal the "true" response preference of a speech community to a specific variety. Such responses are but one aspect of the total ethnographic picture of a speech community, and we believe along with Hymes that "[i]f the community's own theory of linguistic repertoire and speech is considered (as it must be in any serious ethnographic account), matters become all the more complex and interesting" (1972: 39). The complexity of responses to and beliefs about language varieties is surely a part of any community's theory.

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PART I

Theoretical Backgrounds