

Stylistic Models in Sociolinguistics and Social Philosophy

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Abstract

The emergence of new theoretical paradigms along the history of scientific revolutions always occurs in tune with the social philosophy of their time. Historical periods or schools of thought cannot be treated as discrete entities, since they are built upon the immediately preceding stage from which they start and which they normally react against. Stylistic models in Sociolinguistics have not been unaware of the social philosophy of their time. While everybody would agree that intra-speaker variation is a phenomenon conditioned by extralinguistic factors, the resources and mechanisms for reflecting its presence in language production and effective social meaning have been associated with different linguistic constructs and theories trying to account for its nature and functioning. The aim of this paper is to explore and illustrate the main different theoretical models developed to account for the nature, motivations and mechanisms for the use and effect of style-shifting in social interaction: Audio-monitoring, Audience Design, Script Design, Register Model and Speaker Design.

Keywords: *sociolinguistics, style-shifting, intra-speaker and inter-speaker variation, reactive/proactive speakers*

1 Scientific Revolutions

Historical periods or schools of thought cannot be treated as discrete entities, with a monolithic nature and abrupt boundaries, since they are built upon the immediately preceding stage, from which they start and which they normally react against (see Kuhn 1962). The crisis of a current paradigm, because of the dissatisfaction with its accounts accepted until then, and its replacement with another is what gives way to scientific revolutions. But scientific revolutions are accumulative in their theory of knowledge. As Lass (1984:8) suggested: “the history of any discipline involves a lot of old wine in new bottles (as well as new wine in old bottles, new wine in new bottles, and some old wine left in the old bottles).”

As we will see below, the emergence of new paradigms with new the philosophical foundations has been conditioning the development of Linguistic Science and any of its branches, such as Sociolinguistics. Likewise, stylistic models within Sociolinguistics have not been unaware of the social philosophy of their time. While everybody would agree that intra-speaker variation is a phenomenon conditioned by extralinguistic factors, the mechanisms and motivations for reflecting its presence in language production and effective social meaning have been associated with different linguistic constructs and theories trying to account for its nature and functioning.

2 Linguistics

Linguistic theory, as Williams (1992:40) asserted, “has not emerged separately from the social philosophy of its time. Rather, it must be seen as a manifestation of the ongoing debate on the nature and the social world”. To simplify somewhat, the nineteenth-century philologist’s historicist and comparative urge was in overt opposition to the humanism and classicism of the Renaissance and seventeenth-century rationalism; however, the structuralism of the beginning of the twentieth century was an alternative to nineteenth-century historicism and comparativism, as exemplified by Alcaraz (1990). Even within the same period, different theoretical trends have followed one another in linguistics –structuralism, functionalism,

generativism, variationism, cognitivism, etc.– throughout the course of the twentieth-century (see also Figueroa 1994; Markova 1982). Linguistic studies, therefore, cannot be judged disregarding those of other periods, or even the same period, in order to contrast ontological, epistemological or axiological aspects. In this way, similarities and differences can be established between theories –and this is in fact the function of a metatheory– whereby they can be characterized, classified, and explained in terms of the criteria and relative to the conditions under which the scholar can meaningfully choose between alternative theories and/or their parts (Oyelaran 1970:430-431).

3 Sociolinguistics

The origins of Sociolinguistics also reflect rebellion as well as epistemological hybridisation. I have always underlined four main motivations for the development of Sociolinguistics (see Hernández-Campoy/Almeida 2005; Hernández-Campoy 2014): i) the dissatisfaction among many linguists in the 1960s with and reaction against previous paradigms: Chomsky, Saussure and Bloomfield; ii) the redefinition and reformulation of *Traditional Dialectology*; iii) the growing interest among linguists in *Sociology* and its scope: poverty and disadvantage as political issues in Western World; and iv) the advent of the Quantitative Revolution. That is: new wine in old bottles, old wine in new bottles, new wine in new bottles, and the new bottles (see also Tucker 1997).

Sociolinguistics, therefore, did not emerge separately from the social philosophy of its time either. It was mostly after the Second World War that the crisis of historicist conceptions began and that a solid neopositivist trend (or even school of thought) arose in science in general, which became the ‘quantitative revolution’. There is a confrontation between qualitative and quantitative approaches, also affecting theories, methods and techniques, and, above all, two radically different conceptions of scientific research and the growth of knowledge (truth/reality vs. beliefs/intuitions). In order to express accurately and plainly the results of their analysis, the language of mathematics and logic, conceived as the authentic syntax of science, must be used, for which validity and verifiability are the fundamental criteria and in which coincidence is conceived in terms of probability (Hernández-Campoy/Almeida 2005:10-11). This will lead to the rejection of intuitions and introspective knowledge, which now began to be seen as inferior due to its subjective nature. The new researcher has to be a fieldworker mainly, rather than an armchair one, in order to avoid losing contact with reality.

Within Sociolinguistics, the philosophical foundations of Variation Theory specifically are also broadly anchored to Determinism and Neopositivism, understanding that the only valid knowledge comes from scientific knowledge through empirical evidence –rather than intuitional and introspective (see Hernández-Campoy 2016). In this way, society and social systems are organic models of social structure (Mackenzie 1890/2006; Olssen 2010) that operate according to their own quasi-absolute laws, like those that operate in the physical world because of cause-effect absolute laws of nature and that regard individual behaviour as easily predictable. Additionally, assuming that everything is caused by something in a predictable way, the universe is viewed as a deterministic place where the laws of nature would allow us to easily describe, explain, and predict its state. This causal determinism is a reductionist (and even essentialist) idea that explains the world in terms of a few narrowly defined factors. From a sociological perspective, its application to societal systems means that human behaviour is entirely governed by causal laws, where physiology, environment, population pressures and even genetics determine the organisation of societies; that is, “the attributes and behaviour of socially defined groups can be determined and explained by reference to cultural and/or biological characteristics believed to be inherent to the group” (Bucholtz 2003:400). This position amounts to a probabilistic model of macroscopic analysis where, although people are

not molecules, they can be regarded as predictable in their aggregate behaviour on the basis of mathematical probability (Jones 1990:189). As a result, categorical patterns are derived from probabilistic tendencies.

Similarly, in Sociolinguistics, speech behaviour is thought to reflect social structure simply because it is social structure that determines speech behaviour. It is like a Catch-22 circular logic rule: "... you can't get a job as a banker unless you can talk the way a banker is supposed to talk, and you won't talk like a banker is supposed to talk unless you've grown up in a part of the speech community that is made up of bankers and people like them" (Meyerhoff 2006:147). The study of the relationship between language and society through the correlation of extralinguistic factors (socio-demographic and/or context variables) with intralinguistic elements allowed sociolinguistics to decipher linguistic variation and social meaning, and thus to account for variability in language quantitatively. With their rigorous adoption of scientific methods, assuming Determinism and the mechanistic nature of human behaviour, linguists' explicit neo-positivist desire is to develop a quantified social dialectology where extralinguistic (mostly social) factors are capable of explaining the establishment of laws, relationships, and processes. In this way, the sociolinguistic behaviour was conceived as predictable in terms of diatopic/geographical variation, diastratic/social variation and diaphasic/stylistic variation. The speaker's social provenance, or age, sex, ethnicity, etc. determine the characterisation of their speech to such an extent that it is accurately predictable, providing us with the speaker's sociolinguistic profile/portrait according to their geographic and socio-demographic features, and even their stylistic characterisation through the verbal practices used in their linguistic production (see Hernández-Campoy/Almeida 2005). The so widely-known patterns of sociolinguistic behaviour have been developed in the industrialised Western world from the point of view of social class, age, gender, race, ethnicity, social networks, etc., like functions or equations:

- The higher the speaker's social class, the higher the frequency of overt prestige (standard) features in their speech, and vice versa;
- Female speakers exhibit higher frequencies of overt prestige features than male ones;
- Younger speakers have higher use of non-standard features than middle-aged;
- Older speakers use more conservative features than younger ones;
- Speakers with weaker social ties and high mobility make more use of prestige standard features and less use of local features than those with strong social ties and less mobility.

4 Style in Sociolinguistics

Given the singularly central position of style in the correlation of *linguistic*, *social* and *diaphasic* elements, intra-speaker variation is undoubtedly seen as consubstantial to sociolinguistic studies now and becoming a major focus of research within the field. While everybody would agree that stylistic variation is a phenomenon conditioned by extralinguistic factors, its presence in language production and effective social meaning has been associated with different linguistic constructs and theories trying to account for its nature and functioning.

Historically, the debate on *responsive-initiative* motivations in stylistic variation constitutes a central issue of the traditional pendulum-oscillating dilemma in social theory about the relationship between *structure* and *agency*, i.e. between sociolinguistic limitations and creativity, and also between speaker intention and listener understanding (Schilling 2013: 342-343; Bell 2014: 305-306): "[a]pproaches which treat speakers as untrammelled agents do not take enough account of the role of structure in interaction and life, just as approaches which

treat speakers as sociodemographic correlates did not take adequate account of individual agency” (Bell 2014: 305-306). Structure refers to the social norms that shape as well as constraint the way we live and sociolinguistically behave. Conversely, agency is our ability to customise that way we live and sociolinguistically behave according to our individual requirements and intentions –taking our own actions, following our own practices, and making our own way and with our own choices (Bell 2014: 305). It is in recent Sociolinguistics that the oscillation of the pendulum is swinging towards agentivity and creativity, and thus moving away from structural constraints and norms (see also Johnstone 2000, 2001).

Notions and concepts such as *ethos* and *pathos* in ancient Greek Rhetoric, *elocutio* and *pronunciatio* in Roman Oratory, *foregrounding*, *predictability* and *expectancy* in 20th-century Stylistics, or more recently, *enregisterment*, *stylisation*, *stance*, *authenticity*, *persona management*, and *crossing* in intra-speaker Sociolinguistics have all contributed to a greater understanding of the nature, functioning, and effectiveness of style-shifting processes in social interaction (see Hernández-Campoy 2016). In this evolution of language from the most baroque rhetorical resources to the most direct linguistic forms for economy reasons – though always searching a particular effect – stylistic and rhetorical devices to enhance speech or writing do not necessarily have to be complex figures of speech (*figurae verborum*) or figures of thought (*figurae sententiarum*), but rather mere linguistic variables or just the alternation between standard and non-standard uses in linguistic varieties (see Figure 1).

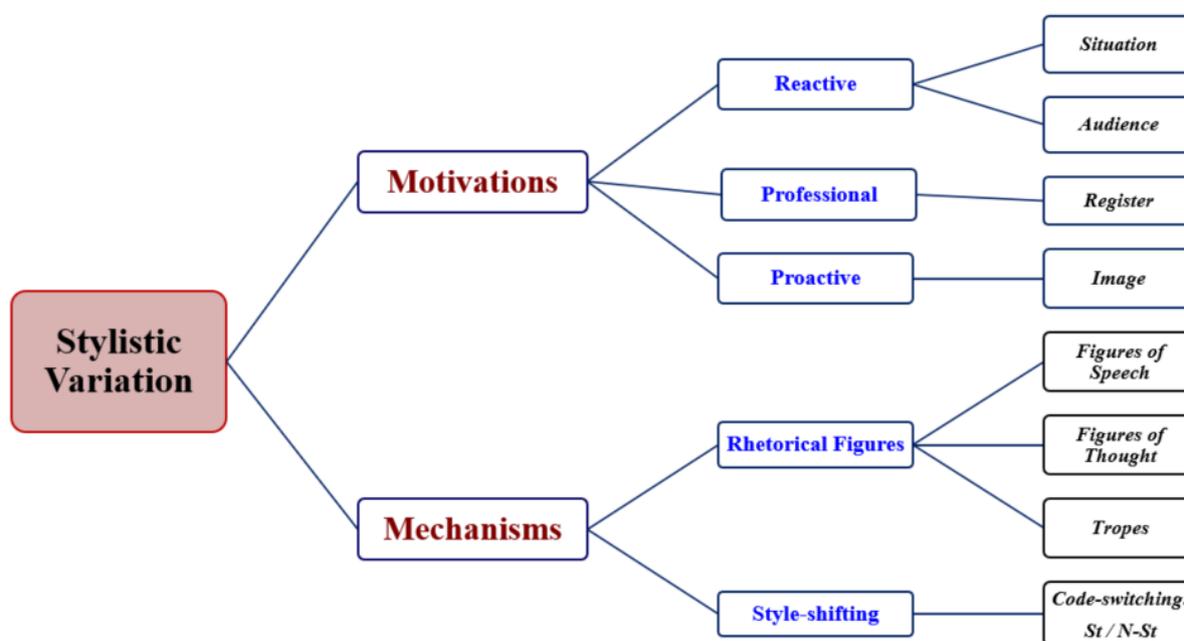


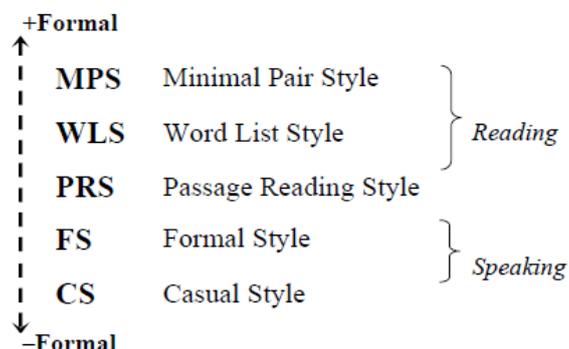
Figure 1: Motivations and mechanisms in stylistic variation

The following sections will explore the main different theoretical models developed to account for the nature, motivations and mechanisms for the use and effect of style-shifting in social interaction: Audio-monitoring, Audience Design, Script Design, Register Model, and Speaker Design.

4.1 Attention to speech model

The Labovian approach to stylistic variation (Labov 1966; 1972) was also inevitably inspired by that neopositivist determinism (see Hernández-Campoy 2016:65-94). Based on mechanistic foundations (considering speakers as androids), style-shifting is conceived as a conscious social

reaction (response) to a situation and appears scaled within a formality continuum –ranging from least to most formal¹.



Labov (1966) was able to quantify stylistic variation and to extract its indexical relationship with the individual’s social background and situation. He found that although the different social class groups have different levels of usage of a given variable, their evaluation of the different variants is exactly the same: speakers of all classes change their pronunciation in exactly the same direction –i.e. by increasing the percentage of prestige forms in their speech as stylistic context becomes more formal, and vice versa (see Figure 2).

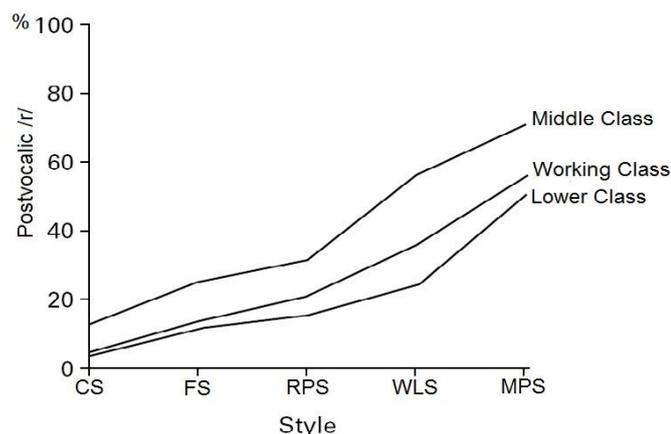


Figure 2: Postvocalic /r/, social class and styles in New York City (adapted from Labov 1966/2006: 141; Figure 7.1)

As a result, the same speaker uses different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes, and the totality of linguistic varieties so used by a particular community of speakers constitutes the *verbal repertoire* (Trudgill 1983:100). Shared patterns of style-shifting are thus one of the defining characteristics of membership in a particular speech community (Rickford/Eckert 2001:10). Intra-speaker (stylistic) variation is largely a function of inter-speaker variation, where some individuals exhibit a much wider range of stylistic variation than

¹ In the contrast between spoken and written language, Koch/Oesterreicher (1994; 2012) understand the relationship between the characteristics of oral and written dimensions as a more-or-less continuum rather than as an either-or dichotomy, beyond the phonic-graphic distinction. Within their orality-literacy model, oral language is seen as the ‘language of immediacy’ typically associated with private settings, a high degree of familiarity and low emotional distance between the interactants, as among family and friends. In contrast, written language is viewed as a ‘language of distance’ and typically associated with public/official settings, situations of distance and formality, as in legal texts. But a piece of writing can be medially written but conceptually oral, as in church sermons, and the reverse situation, as in postcards. Consequently, private correspondence belongs to the written level from a medial perspective, although conceptually closer to the immediacy end of the continuum.

others: the different social class groups have different levels of usage of sociolinguistic variables drawing a perfect symmetry, where the most formal style of the lowest social group is similar to the most informal style of the highest social class, as Trudgill (1974) was able to quantify (see Table 1).

Table 1: (ng) Indexes by social class and style in Norwich (Trudgill 1974). Usage of non-standard variants

Social Class	Style			
	WLS	PRS	FS	CS
Middle Middle Class	000	000	003	028
Lower Middle Class	000	010	015	042
Upper Working Class	005	015	074	087
Middle Working Class	023	044	088	095
Lower Working Class	029	066	098	100

It is in this intersection between the stylistic and the social dimensions that makes style be a crucial sociolinguistic concept: there is a point along the symmetrical axis where, as Labov (1972:240) illustrated, objectively and quantitatively, it would be difficult to distinguish “a casual salesman from a careful pipefitter”.

Style is then a reflection (or the product) of the awareness and attention paid by the speaker to their own speech, depending on external factors (such as topic, addressee, audience and situation) which ‘determine’ the level of formality and, thus, the linguistic variety to be employed –as well as the degree of self-monitoring in speech production: the more attention a speaker pays, the more formal their style will be, and vice versa.

The Attention to Speech Model (or Audio-monitoring) became ‘the universal factor’ with the status of a quasi-absolute law operating to cause style differences (Bell 2007b:96), and its basic principles are inherently related to the theoretical foundations of Variationist Sociolinguistics:

- i) *The Principle of Graded Style-shifting*: No single speaker is mono-stylistic, though some have a wider verbal repertoire than others;
- ii) *The Principle of Range of Variability*: The variation that any individual shows in their speech is never greater than the differences between the social groups that their style-shifting is derived from;
- iii) *The Principle of Socio-stylistic Differentiation*: The linguistic features involved in stylistic variation are mostly the same as those marking social variation; i.e. those features typically found at the high end of the social scale are equally high on the stylistic scale, and vice versa;
- iv) *The Principle of Sociolinguistic Stratification*: Variation originates in a hierarchy of evaluative judgments, where *indicators* denote social stratification only and *markers* show both social stratification and style-shifting;
- v) *The Principle of Stylistic Variation*: Different styles constitute different ways of saying the same thing;
- vi) *The Principle of Attention*: Styles can be classified unidimensionally according to the degree of attention paid to speech;
- vii) *The Vernacular Principle*: The vernacular is the most natural, spontaneous and requires the least attention to the way of speaking;

- viii) *The Principle of Formality* (The Observer's Paradox): Any systematic observation of the vernacular must minimise its effects on the informant's language production in order to guarantee the capture of the genuinely most natural and spontaneous speech.

However, this Labovian view of style-shifting as if speakers were automata, through its notion of attention paid to speech, and the formal-informal distinction on a linear scale of style-shifting, which had been the 'received wisdom' in the dominant variationist strand of Sociolinguistics until the late 1970s (Bell 1984:147; 2007a:91), began to be questioned in the early 1980s because of its mechanistic approach. The amount of attention paid to speech, or audio-monitoring, according to Bell (1984:150), is just a mechanism of response intervening between a situation and a style, but it is not intra-speaker variation in itself. Labov's axiom operated more as a kind of descriptive framework than an explanatory model, where style was not characterised in itself (Gadet 2005:1357). Also, as discovered in media language, and as we will see below, the effect of the present or absent audience on speech is also crucial in linguistic production, given that the same speaker can consciously shift into a different style not as a reaction to a topic or situation but to an addressee (Bell 1977/1979; 1984).

The Labovian axiom, as well as its sociolinguistic theory, conceived language as a mere reflection of social structures and norms for interpersonal communication, and speakers as androids that modify their speech production through style-shifting passively and as a response (or reaction) to an external situation, without considering any possible agency in choice and use of the stylistic resources proactively. The Labovian axiom became unable to explain all cases of stylistic variation in interpersonal communication. As Bell (2007a:91) states, "[w]hat happens when a speaker talks in any social situation involves many linguistic features almost simultaneously, at all levels of language, all contributing to the mosaic of the sociolinguistic presentation of self in everyday life." The androids in our speech communities are also able to think.

4.2 Audience design model

Factors such as "audienceship," "addressivity," "responsiveness" and "speaker agency" became crucial for new theories in the 1980s, putting the audience at the centre of intra-speaker variation. Founded on Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles 1979) and Linguistic Marketplace (Bourdieu/Boltanski 1975 or Sankoff/Laberge 1978), Bell's *audience design* theory (1984; 1991; 2001) conceived stylistic variation as an essentially responsive action to the characteristics of a present or absent audience, and introduced an initiative (proactive) dimension—in addition to the responsive (reactive) dimension. Intra-speaker variation appeared then as a response to interspeaker variation (Bell 1984, 158). All stylistic variation began to be explained through the audience. Largely rooted in Behaviourism and the Social Psychology, this model underlined the influence of external (audience) rather than internal stimuli (attention): the sources conditioning inner states and behaviour are external (in the environment, stimuli, responses, reinforcements, etc.) rather than internal (in the mind), and can be systematically observed. Crucial here is the Social Identity Theory (see Tajfel 1978; 1979), which highlights the importance of language to transmit identity, group solidarity, and language loyalty, as well as the Bakhtinian Multiple Voices theory and Dialogism (see Bell 2007a). The individual's multiplicity of social networks fosters the development of a polyhedral and versatile image, as well as a multifaceted behaviour, accommodating to their audience, as an ability to project different social identities in interpersonal communication for different purposes in also different moments, places, relational and interactional social contexts.

The best example is the pioneering case studied by Allan Bell on a radio presenter who worked for two radio stations in the same New Zealand public broadcasting service and was able to switch between them very quickly: YA Station, the ‘National Radio’—playing classical music and attracting a higher-status audience— and ZB Station —a local community radio station playing popular music and attracting a wider range of social groups. Bell found that the speech of the same individual newsreader was different when reading bulletins in one radio station or the other, making considerable style shifts to suit the audience. Under these conditions, Bell characterises style as follows (see Hernández-Campoy 2016:95-130):

- i) *Relational activity*: Style is what an individual speaker does with a language in relation to other people;
- ii) *Indexicality*: Style derives its meaning from the association of linguistic features with particular social groups;
- iii) *Responsiveness* and *Audiencenesship*: Speakers design their style primarily for and in response to their audience;
- iv) *Linguistic repertoire*: Audience design applies to all codes and levels of a language repertoire, whether monolingual or multilingual;
- v) *Style Axiom*: Variation on the style dimension within the speech of a single speaker derives from and echoes the variation which exists between speakers on the ‘social’ dimension;
- vi) *Accommodative competence*: Speakers have a fine-grained ability to design their style for a range of different addressees, as well as for other audience members;
- vii) *Discourse function*: Style-shifting according to topic or setting derives its meaning and direction of shift from the underlying association of topics or settings with typical audience members;
- viii) *Initiative axis*: Besides the ‘responsive’ dimension of style, there is the ‘initiative’ dimension, where the style-shift itself initiates a change in the situation rather than resulting from such a change;
- ix) *Referee design*: If ‘audience design’ is responsive (reactive) and addressed to a present second-person, ‘referee design’ is initiative (proactive) and addressed to an absent but highly influential third-person reference group in order to express identification;
- x) *Field and object of study*: Style research requires its own designs and methodology.

Within the framework of Historical Sociolinguistics, Hernández-Campoy/García-Vidal (2018b) also found the same pattern of audience design at the end of the Middle Ages in the case of the disappearance of the runic symbol thorn <þ> and its replacement with the Latin-based grapheme <th> in English.

4.3 Script design

In Cutillas-Espinosa/Hernández-Campoy (2006; 2007), the speech so eminently standard (92%) of a radio presenter in the traditionally non-standard local community of Murcia Region (Santomera) during his programme MQM was investigated, as well as the speech of his audience when making phone calls (mostly non-standard: ±13,4%). This diverging pattern of verbal behaviour meant our proposal of the Script Design Model as use of a professional voice. Interested in this sociolinguistic behaviour ‘on air’ of the radio presenter (with no audience design at all, unlike Bell’s results), we contacted him for a private interview (recorded with

informed consent). As we can see now in the results of the analysis of his speech produced during the interview, his sociolinguistic behaviour was then radically different, being more local and attached to non-standard frequencies (30% standard as opposed to his 'on air' speech: 92%).

Therefore, the Script Design model stresses the need to consider not only responsive and even initiative-based performance, but also the *script*, as part of structural constraints that condition the individual linguistic behaviour in public occupations. Script takes the form of a professional voice used strictly following a particular linguistic policy which is based on canonical sociolinguistic norms and attitudes to language. This view urges us to consider community-specific structural factors anchored to linguistic norms, correctness and appropriacy restraints in the explanation of, at least, some cases of stylistic variation.

4.4 Register model

Based on Malinowski and Firth's context of situation and Bailey's polylectal grammar, Biber/Finegan (1994) developed a completely different conception of style. They argue that stylistic variation should not be considered a mirror image of interspeaker variation. Rather, they assume that "the patterns of register variation are basic and the patterns of social dialect variation result from differential access among social groups to the communicative situations and activities that promote register variation" (Finegan/Biber 1994:337). From this viewpoint, style is basically context-dependent and social class differentiation is just an echo of the different registers that are most commonly used in one's professional and personal life (see Biber 1994; 1995; Biber/Finegan 1989a; 1994; Finegan/Biber 1994; 2001; or Biber/Conrad 2009, for example).

4.5 Speaker design model

Yet, in addition to the effect of audience and script, there are other factors involved in stylistic variation. There is now a new tendency towards the development of multidimensional, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary approaches to style phenomena. This new approach focuses on the proactive facet of style-shifting and the individuality of speakers, where, as Giddens (1991:82-85) remarks, self-identity requires creativity and agency, and where, as Johnstone (2000:417) states, the individual voice is seen as an active agent for the transmission of sociolinguistic meaning. Linguistic variation thus becomes viewed as the verbal instrument for semiotic identificational and interactional meanings in public: a resource for identity projection and positioning in society, where individuals and individual voices are actively responsible for the transmission of sociolinguistic meaning (Giddens 1991:82-85; Johnstone 2000:417). The speaker's sociolinguistic behaviour is now conceived as inevitably based on social meaning, where language is a social practice, and style-shifting is socially motivated through its diverse linguistic resources and mechanisms. Given the strong relationship that exists between language and society, the social meaning is stressed, conceiving language not solely as a means of communicating information (oral and written), but also as a means of establishing and maintaining social relationships (building bridges between speakers). Crucially then, language production becomes a very important instrument for conveying social information about the speaker –chiefly identificational and ideological– and/or situation (Trudgill 1983; Pride 1971): "when people talk they communicate not only information but also images of themselves" (Tannen 1984/2005:3), because "language as a social phenomenon is closely tied up with the social structure and value systems of society" (Trudgill 1983:19). In addition to enabling communication and establishing social relations, language transmits social meaning through sociolinguistic variation and the choices speakers make between them. Geographical, socio-demographic, or stylistic variation conveys some kind of social meaning in terms of identity, attitudes, and/or ideology (see Hernández-Campoy 2016:51-62). The

identificational axiom initiated by the Audience Design Model is now developed further through the Social Identity Theory: language acts *are* acts of identity, a very important symbol of group consciousness and solidarity, a signal of group identity and linguistic loyalty (Le Page/Tabouret-Keller 1985:14). In this way, language variation is understood as agentive, interactive and socially meaningful, where accents, dialects and their styling are markers of this intended social meaning (Auer 2007; Podesva 2006). This means that every single time that speakers produce an utterance, they are signalling some kind of identity (standard/non-standard), ideology (norm/usage) and attitudes (correction, adequacy, aesthetics), and the use of one variant of a variable or another expresses their social affiliation. Like any other social stereotypes, the different ways of speaking constitute prototype categories within a wider frame that comprises not only ideological components, but also markers from a wide variety of dimensions, such as speech, physical appearance, dress, dance and music (Kristiansen 2008:72-73). Styles thus represent our ability to take up different social positions (Bell 2007b:95), because styling is a powerful device for linguistic performance, rhetorical stance-taking, and identity projection. Consequently, this means that identity is dynamic and that every speech act is performance –with speakers projecting different roles in different circumstances–, because we are always displaying some particular type of image.

In this context, the philosophical thought more recently inspiring third-wave Sociolinguistics is a post-modernist social theory of knowledge known as Social Constructionism (see Hammersley 1992; Craib 1997; or Andrews 2012, among many others). Unlike Determinism, Scientism and Neopositivism, and as a reaction against them, Socio-Constructionism is essentially an anti-realist, relativist and interpretivist approach to thinking. It denies that knowledge is a direct perception of an independent and objective reality, which now appears as the product of experience and discourse. In fact, assuming that reality and elements of knowledge are not objectively given by nature and absolute laws, but subjectively constructed and institutionalised by humans in an ongoing, dynamic process, they explore how individuals and groups participate in this construction, perception and interpretation of social phenomena. As Schwandt (2003) states, this means that ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ are created rather than discovered by the mind, since reality is socially defined by individuals, or groups of individuals, through the subjective experience of everyday life within society and transmitted through the dialectical interaction of those individuals themselves. Society is actively and creatively produced by individuals just as individuals are the product of society; or, to put it another way, society is created by people but people are also created by society. Correspondingly, as Burr (1995) pointed out, the experience of society as a subjective reality provides human beings with an identity and a place within society itself, since “our identity originates not from inside the person but from the social realm” (Andrews 2012): much of what we are and do is the result of social and cultural influences. Gender, racial, ethnic, and age identities, for example, are thus social constructions and categorisations beyond any biological difference. Also under a strong influence of Relativism, socio-constructionist theory assumes the existence of multiple realities and also multiple interpretations of those realities. Likewise, ‘truth’ is a socially constructed concept, and therefore socially relative, which is the origin of current ‘post-truth’ concept and phenomena. Accordingly, there is no single valid methodology in science, but rather a diversity of useful methods (Schofield 2010). This means the realism-relativism polarisation and confrontation.

The most recent sociolinguistic trends are not unaware of these new philosophical and social conceptions. In this setting, styles and stylistic variation represent our ability to take up different social positions through linguistic choice (Bell 2007b:95), because style-shifting is a powerful device for linguistic performance, rhetorical stance-taking, and identity projection. With these philosophical ingredients in stylistic variation, now the Speaker Design theory has recently emerged as a multidimensional socio-constructionist model that analyses stylistic variation in

terms of multiple co-occurring parameters –language and society conceived as co-constitutive realities– taking into account a wide range of contextual factors that might customise people’s speech (see Coupland 1985; 2001a; 2001b; 2007): internal (purpose, key, frame, etc.) and external (audience, topic, setting, age, familiarity, etc.) characteristics as factors influencing speaker agency in the shaping of style or language choice. Building on individual agency, the Speaker Design Model views stylistic variation as a resource in the performance of speakers’ personal and interpersonal social identity (active creation, presentation, and even recreation); in other words, stylistic variation is a resource for creating as well as projecting one’s persona. Style-shifting is therefore now understood as a proactive (initiative) rather than responsive (reactive) phenomenon. Accordingly, identity is dynamic and all speech is performance – speakers projecting different roles in different circumstances– since we are always displaying some particular type of identity. Speakers do *identity work* using language to create and recreate their multiple identities, regardless of social categories, because they constantly shape, re-shape and create the situation through strategic use of language style. That is persona management, where *performativity*, *agency*, *stylistic variation*, *enregisterment*, *identity construction* and *authenticity* are crucial concepts (see also Coupland 2003; 2009; Johnstone 2000; 2014; Hernández-Campoy/Cutillas-Espinosa 2012a).

This theory was developed in sociolinguistic styling by Nikolas Coupland (1981; 1985) with his study on the multiple personal identity images projected by a Cardiff travel agent through her speech when addressing her clients and co-workers; or in the case of a disc jockey in a Cardiff radio station (Coupland 1985). Similarly, this phenomenon had also been observed by Trudgill (1980) in his study on the use of American vs. British working class linguistic features in British pop-rock music bands. Whereas singers in the mainstream pop tradition showed a tendency towards the use of American features, those in the punk-rock movement, particularly Ian Dury, exhibited an exclusive tendency towards British features, in line with the self-image they wanted to project and with the profile of those fans.

Hernández-Campoy/Cutillas-Espinosa (2010; 2012; 2013) also found this speaker design phenomenon in Spain in their study on a former president of Murcia Region (María Antonia Martínez) and her use of vernacularisation (see also Cutillas-Espinosa/Hernández-Campoy/Schilling-Estes 2010). A similar situation of speaker design was found by Hernández-Campoy/García-Vidal (2018b) in a communicative situation of late medieval England making use of the Labovian *Uniformitarian Principle*. In this case, the construction of rhetorical stance and projection of identity performatively in order to achieve a particular aim takes place through the instrumentalisation of an orthographic feature in his language production: <th> versus <þ>.

5 Conclusion

The paradigm of Sociolinguistics is in a process of theoretical reformulation and redefinition as well as methodological updating in consonance with the evolution of epistemology and the development of new fieldwork methods, data collection techniques and even statistical analysis (see Eckert 2012; 2018; Cantos 2013). Similarly, stylistic models have not been unaware of the social philosophy of their time. Rather, they have benefited from a long background in social philosophy: Rhetoric in the Sophists and Aristotle, Oratory in Cicero and Quintilian, Poetics in Jakobson, Determinism in Labov’s audio-monitoring, Behaviourism in Bell’s Audience Design, Contextualism in Biber’s Register theory, Socio-constructionism in Coupland’s Speaker Design, etc. (see Hernández-Campoy 2016). They have all contributed to account for the nature, functioning, and effectiveness of style-shifting processes in social interaction.

As stated in Hernández-Campoy/Cutillas-Espinosa (2012b:7) in the epistemic evolution of Sociolinguistics since its origins in the 1960s, there has been a shift from the early deterministic and system-oriented assumptions to the recent socio-constructionist and speaker-oriented approaches to inter- and intra-speaker variation. This has meant, as underlined in Hernández-Campoy/García-Vidal (2018a), moving the focus from collectivity to individuality, from the generality of the statistical mean to the singularity of mean deviation, from accumulative patterns of behaviour of the average speaker in large-scale aggregate data to authenticity in the individual usage of the ‘case study’, from reactive or responsive to agentive or creative, or from responsive to initiative or proactive.

Similarly, stylistic variation studies have also experienced the same epistemic evolution in the treatment of linguistic performance, rhetorical stance, and identity projection, among other effects. Traditional variationist conceptualisations of stylistic variation as a primarily responsive phenomenon, conditioned by factors external to the speaker, such as formality of the situation or audience, have been shown to be unable to account for *all* stylistic choices. Contrarily, more recent views of stylistic variation as creative and strategic, and as essential to identity projection and creation, and the furthering of speakers’ specific situational goals, can be used to explain their stylistic choices and provide us with a wider complementary perspective of the style choices speakers may make (Hernández-Campoy/Cutillas-Espinosa 2010;2012b).

Therefore, style is a complex multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be modelled in a single unidimensional theory, so stylistic studies have to progress, as Rickford/Eckert (2001:2) state, by understanding the boundaries between the three main components of sociolinguistic variation –*stylistic*, *linguistic* and *social*– as more permeable within the study of speakers’ agency and performance in society, and through multidimensional, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. We thus need to focus on the socially constructionist potential of style-shifting in order to find out how sociolinguistic variation interfaces with other dimensions of meaning-making in discourse (Coupland 2007:ix). Using Lass’ (1984:8) initial example, this means playing with new wine, some old wine, some old bottles and a good number of new bottles, epistemologically speaking, obviously.

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