

Summary of *Stylistic practices in the urban, heterogeneous high school. An ethnographic and sociolinguistic study.*

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In this dissertation I present a study of linguistic and social variation in an urban Copenhagen high school. The study is based on approximately five months of participant observation, 52 interviews, 10 group recordings, self recordings, and questionnaires. I treat a number of connected sociolinguistic themes – sociolinguistics in late modernity, communities of practice, identity, style and stylistic practices. These themes all relate to problems that can be addressed by posing the following general questions:

I.a. How can we study language variation from a sociolinguistic perspective in the heterogeneous urban context of late modernity?

II.a. How do speakers give social meaning to language variation?

II.b. How can we in a fruitful way combine quantitative analyses of sociolinguistic variables with qualitative discourse analyses of interactions?

With Eckert (1996, 2004) as the source of inspiration I study language variation as an integrated part of stylistic practices since I view language variation as part of the construction of style (and not the other way round). I identify seven style clusters, three masculine and four feminine clusters. A *style cluster* is a collection of signs that in the course of time cluster together, i.e. they are performed in regular patterns by the members of the community of practice. Members can (and do) perform resources from different clusters. In my registrations of signs that cluster together, I treat the notion of sign broadly as body-signs (gendered and racial), signs of school attitude, physical positioning at the school area, preferences for music, clothing and so on. I have registered regularity in how these different types of signs cluster, and argue that it is this regularity that makes the style clusters socially meaningful as part of a shared repertoire of the community of practice.

In the quantitative analyses (part 5 in the dissertation) I study the variation of the affrication of word initial *t*, and find that boys with Danish ethnic background use significantly longer t-affrications than everybody else. In a quantitative analyses of lexical resources (slang, swear words, words and phrases from English and other languages) the same pattern is found – boys with Danish ethnic background use significantly more of the different lexical resources than everybody else. But the variation of these different types of resources not only correlates with gender and ethnicity. As it turns out the long *t* and the frequent use of the lexical resources cluster with a series of other signs in a style cluster which I call *Danish, tough*.

In the qualitative discourse analyses of conversations (part 6 in the dissertation) I study how the speakers use stylistic resources in presentations of different personae. Among other things I conclude that by including the practice perspective (and thereby a time dimension which goes

beyond the single piece of conversation), it becomes clear that the speakers' positions in the social landscape in the local community of practice are co-determinant of their self-presentations in the concrete interactions. I furthermore argue that, with the concept of practice and a multi-dimensional concept of style, we can combine insights from quantitative and qualitative analyses in a fruitful way in our investigations of the social meaning of variation.

PART I

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A school

Style

Community

Identity

Meaning

1.2 A study of language variation as stylistic practice

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1.3 The content of the dissertation

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2.3 Globalization

2.4 Late modernity and identity

2.5 Summary

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3.2 The speech community of modernity

3.3 The speech community of late modernity

3.4 From rules and system to agency and practice

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4.2 A theory about practice, community and identity

Practice + community

Meaning

Identity

4.3 A level of analysis

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CoP and social identity theory

CoP and network

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6.2 Style in sociolinguistics

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1.a and 1.x

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Summary

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