

41. The study of language and space in media discourse

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1. Introduction

This article explores the relationship between language and space in the context of mass and new media, drawing on a critical review and synthesis of research literature. My starting point is the observation that media discourse may draw on linguistic variability – e.g., phonological variation, lexical or code choice – to index how social actors, institutions or reported events are related to particular spaces or places. We encounter such constructions of “linguistic locality” (Johnstone, Andrus and Danielson 2006: 79) on any ordinary day of media consumption. They include advertisements which use a regional dialect to authenticate a product’s origin; television shows which blend in the local languages of tourist destinations; pop stars who self-consciously use their urban vernacular; or films using a vernacular to underscore the origin of a character. In these and other cases, linguistic form ties in with propositional content and other semiotic means to construct “what it means linguistically to be ‘here’ or ‘from here’ and how places and ways of speaking are thought to be related” (Johnstone, Andrus and Danielson 2006: 79).

Such linguistic heterogeneity is sometimes felt to be the rule rather than the exception in today’s mediascapes (Appadurai 1996), but language in the media looks back to a rather standardized or centripetal tradition (Fowler 2001; Bakhtin 1981; Androustopoulos 2007). As a result of the nexus between mass media and the emerging nation-states of the nineteenth century, the media used standard language to reach national audiences, thereby strengthening the bond between language and nation and contributing to the standardization process (Anderson 2006; Giesecke 1992). This did not exclude vernaculars from public discourse, but restricted their status, functions and reach. The use of vernaculars to index origin or social class against the backdrop of standard language predominance has a long tradition in theatre and fiction (Blake 1981; Goetsch 1987; Lippi-Green 1997; Culperer 2001; Schröder 2005). In film, the contrastive deployment of standard and non-standard dialects as indicators of social class was established by the mid–World War II era (Marriott 1997).

However, there is a widespread impression that the visibility of vernacular speech in the media has increased in the last few decades (Crystal 2002). In Europe, regional speech is embraced in broadcast and celebrated in advertising (Burger 2005: 364; Coup-

land 2007: 171). Representations of dialect in newspapers have become more common in the last decade (Betz 2006: 78, 173), and minority languages or mixed codes are surfacing in local or minority media (Jaffe 2000, 2007; Busch 2004).

These processes have received relatively little attention in sociolinguistics, where, despite important forerunners such as Bell (1984), language in the media has been viewed as distinct from “authentic” vernacular speech. However, a number of current developments seem to have built up momentum for a focus on media discourse in sociolinguistics: foundational concepts of authenticity and identity are being critically questioned (Coupland 2001; Bucholtz 2003; Bucholtz and Hall 2008); the role of media in the agenda of fields such as language ideology and critical discourse analysis has been acknowledged, and “the reach and impact of media language in contemporary social life” (Coupland 2007: 28) is becoming increasingly apparent to researchers of language and society. The turn to “post-variationist”, style-centered approaches offers a pivotal point from which to engage with media sociolinguistics, and concepts such as stylization and performance are in part fleshed out with media discourse data (Coupland 2001, 2007; Schilling-Estes 2002; Auer 2007). This article is both motivated by and aims to contribute to this turn by developing a post-structuralist view of local speech as a resource that is deployed in media contexts in ways that go well beyond its classic understanding as marker of local belonging.

2. Shifting values of localness in heteroglossic mediascapes

The proliferation of vernacular speech in the media reflects wider processes of social and institutional change, and I draw in this section on Fairclough’s (1995) distinction between micro, meso and macro dimensions of discourse in order to sketch out these processes and how they affect the mediatization of local speech. On a macro level, the deregulation of media systems over the last decades has led to a tremendous diversification of target audiences; more recently, the digital revolution has increased grassroots access to media production technology and blurred the boundary between producers and audiences, creating new chances for vernacular voices to be heard publicly. Tendencies toward regionalization or localism, which emerge as a response to globalization pressures, may lead to a rediscovery of local linguistic values. Two other relevant aspects of the globalization process are commodification, i. e., the use of local linguistic resources for promotional purposes, and disembedding, i. e., the detachment of social relations from their original spatial context (Coupland 2003; Coupland, Bishop and Garrett 2003).

Such macro-level processes can be seen as affecting meso-level changes in institutional practices of media planning and production. For instance, media diversification leads to a proliferation of local media and narrowcasting programs (see section 3.2), in which the celebration of local identity and culture gains priority. Formats of audience engagement and participation have become widely popular in the last couple of decades, resulting in a dramatic increase in the presence of lay speakers in broadcast content (Straßner 1983; Hausendorf 2003; Burger 2005). These institutional changes in turn affect the micro level of linguistic and textual processes which we focus on here. The key tendency to *conversationalization* (Fairclough 1995), i. e., the use of informal speech and conversa-

tional features in public discourse, is no doubt joined by *vernacularization*, i. e., an increase in the currency of non-standard speech. Language in the media now regularly includes “exposed dialects” (Coupland 2007: 171), and linguistic variability that is associated with specific target audiences is being transformed into linguistic capital (Richardson and Meinhof 1998). In media linguistics literature, this is reflected in, e.g., the view of media language as a “variety mix” (Burger 2005) and the suggestion that nowadays any linguistic variety has good chances of being mediatized (Schmitz 2004: 33).

However, it seems important not to lose track of the ideologies and power relations surrounding the mediatization of vernacular speech. Traditional ideologies of non-standardness are still widely reproduced, and we can clearly see their workings in the example of local dialects. For instance, when regional television channels reserve use of the regional dialect exclusively for “local culture” shows, they draw on and reinforce the link of dialect to local rural tradition (Richardson and Meinhof 1998). In other cases, linguistic localness is ideologically transformed into an index of social stratification, with film, comedy or newspaper reports often drawing on vernacular speech as a signifier of low status (Marriott 1997; Sand 1999; Lippi-Green 1997).

Such patterns are certainly not without exception. Local speech styles may also be represented in ways that challenge these stereotypes, and some vernaculars have ambivalent and contested meanings: for instance, London English (“Cockney”), traditionally cast as a working-class marker, is repositioned as marker of subcultural, street-smart styles in contemporary pop music culture. Indeed, the current proliferation of local speech in the media makes it increasingly difficult to allocate local speech a single, fixed meaning. Rather, it bears a range of potential meanings, whose activation depends on the specific contextual embedding of local speech (see Eckert 2008). On the other hand, as media contexts are complex and ambivalent, resorting to stereotypes of localness may offer producers and audiences a relieving reduction of complexity.

An implication of this discussion is the need to steer away from fixed meanings of local speech as a marker of local identity. Rather than subscribing to an “anything goes” view of linguistic variability in the media, I suggest an understanding of media discourse as a site of *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin 1981). Defined as “(a) the simultaneous use of different kinds of forms or signs, and (b) the tension and conflicts among those signs” (Bailey 2007: 257), the notion of heteroglossia has been adopted by researchers interested in the intricate relationship between linguistic diversity, social difference and power (Baxter 2003: 67; Cook 2001, 187; Busch 2004, 2006). Viewing media as fundamentally heteroglossic means that our close analytical attention to the diversity of media language is complemented by a focus on the power relationships that shape the meanings of this diversity in context. The following sections attempt to flesh out such an approach.

3. Spaces, media, language: Reviewing the main concepts

The nexus of language, media and space has received one dominant reading in the literature, i. e., the use of regional dialects in broadcast. While this remains a centerpiece in the following discussion, this article aims at bringing further aspects of space, media and language together in a comprehensive framework.

3.1. Spaces – from local to virtual

To begin with, it seems useful to think of spaces and places (see Johnstone in this handbook) in terms of a cline or scale, reaching from e.g., a country to a single neighborhood, with a different set of sociolinguistic contrasts becoming relevant on each level (Richardson and Meinhof 1998: 88). For example, a regional dialect in a standard-language environment has the potential to index some sort of engagement with, or proximity to that region and with what the region conventionally stands for. On a larger scale, a language as a whole may be juxtaposed with another language in order to index the national affiliation of a speaker. On a smaller scale, an urban dialect may index belonging to a city (as opposed to other cities or the surrounding region), and a slangy speech style or an ethnic or mixed variety may be mobilized to index proximity to a particular district or neighborhood. The relations between spaces and associated linguistic resources are not essentially fixed, but evoked and reproduced in discourse by means of ideological links between vernacular varieties, social types and places.

But spaces indexed by language may transcend a single geographical location or lie beyond physical space altogether. In media for migrant and diasporic communities, both the community's current location and their place of origin are made relevant in discourse and indexed by code-switching or other patterns of bilingual speech. And as digital communications technologies enable people to interact via computer networks, virtual spaces emerge on platforms such as chat channels, discussion boards or role-playing environments, which lie in a tradition dating back to the earliest days of computer-mediated communication and extending to currently popular formats such as *Second Life*.

3.2. Media – from mass to narrowcast

As these observations suggest, an open, inclusive understanding of media may increase awareness of the highly diverse ways in which language may signal local affiliations in public discourse. Different delimitations of the media field will constrain the phenomena under consideration in different ways. Linguists interested in media discourse often restrict their scope to printed media and broadcast, excluding domains such as film and the new media, where linguistic constructions of localness are common and potentially influential.

One point of entry for a consideration of the role of the media is to compare the use of vernacular speech across different media types. Straßner (1983) suggests that dialect is most common in Germany's press, followed by radio and then television, whose nationwide reach impedes the use of dialects. However, the sociolinguistics of television have dramatically changed in the last two decades, and as the research focus is shifting to the discursive work done with "dialect" in particular contexts (sections 4 and 5), such a broad hierarchy seems questionable. Other researchers compare patterns of vernacular use in different media within a speech community, e.g., Jamaican Creole in newspapers and radio phone-ins (Sand 1999), Cypriot Greek dialect in newspapers, radio phone-ins and advertising (Pavlou 2004), and dialects across all media types in German-speaking Switzerland (Burger 2005; see section 5). Their findings clearly suggest moving beyond a comparison of media types as a whole.

Another macro-level approach is to consider the potential impact of media institutions. Based on the tripartite system of public service media, private commercial media and alternative media (Busch 2004; Busch 2006; Androutsopoulos 2007), one might ask how the communication economy of each media sector shapes their constructions of locality and uses of local linguistic resources. Private commercial media have been shown to drive forward the processes of conversationalization, and this seems to hold true for vernacularization as well; for example, private broadcasters have been crucial in increasing the share of dialect in the Swiss media (Burger 2005). It remains to be examined whether alternative media such as community radio deal with localness in distinct ways, perhaps driven by their aim of offering a forum to social groups traditionally excluded from the public sphere (Busch 2004).

Yet a different angle is to examine how the reach of a media institution or product to specific target audiences may impact on constructions of localness. This allows a connection to the study of local media and narrowcasting, i. e., “channels dedicated to particular types of programming ... as well as channels designed to reach a local population rather than the country as a whole” (Richardson and Meinhof 1998: 87). Local media have been around for a long time (e.g., local newspapers), but narrowcasting refers specifically to private or public broadcasting which emerged after the deregulation of media systems. The question here is how the targeting of a spatially delimited audience may draw on language that is indexical of that area, and how this complies with relevant media aims and policies (Löffler 1998).

A final perspective is to ask which media genres and formats favor the proliferation of local speech. My literature survey and observations indicate six key areas:

1. *Advertising* offers textbook examples of how local linguistic forms are turned into symbolic capital in the authentication of products or geographical regions (see Bell 1992, 1999; Coupland 2007; Johnstone 2004; Piller 2001). Dialect advertising comes with different degrees of audience engagement, sometimes inviting recipients to become part of an imaginary local community. Within an advertisement, dialect is often confined to the narratee, i. e., the person using or promoting the product (Piller 2001), while the voiceover or concluding slogan, which feature voices of institutional authority, are in standard language. Straßner (1986) finds that in southern German newspapers dialect advertising is restricted to particular product categories, especially food and beverage, and capitalizes on romantic, rural and traditional connotations. Such conjunctures of dialect, local produce and local identity indeed seem quite widespread (see e.g., Pavlou 2004 on Cyprus), but dialect is nowadays also used in ways which challenge traditional dialect values, as in examples discussed by Coupland (2007: 171–176) and Bell (1999) or in a series of commercials by the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg, in which dialect-speaking celebrities and professionals are framed by the slogan “We can do anything. Except speak High German”. The meanings of localness in advertising, then, are complex and multilayered, and despite enduring traditional stereotypes, local speech is sometimes coupled with high social status and recontextualized as a symbol of collective or corporate identity.
2. *Linguistic landscape* (Gorter 2006) seems an important site for the commodification and emblemization of vernacular speech. Local codes may be selected for use on shop signs, in company logos or tourist memorabilia. This may fulfill the informational function of the linguistic landscape, i. e., to index the territorial presence of a language and its speakers, or its symbolic function, i. e., to declare ethnolinguistic

identity. These purposes may coexist with the wider commercial function of language display (Eastman and Stein 1993), i. e., to authenticate services by indexing a relation of the service to the places where that language is actually spoken. In that sense, any language may be used to index the place of origin of a product or service, as the domain of gastronomy makes clear.

3. *Film and other types of fiction* (comedy, drama, novel, music, television series) are important sites for the public staging of localness and local speech (see Balhorn 1998; Blake 1981; Crystal 2002; Goetsch 1987; Marriott 1997; Schröder 2005; Taavitsainen, Melchers and Pahta 1999). When local varieties are used in fiction, the contrast with other linguistic varieties is typically tied to contrasts between the characters of the plot. In film, speech styles become part of wider, multimodal “mechanisms of juxtaposition and contrast” (Marriott 1997: 184), which involve clothing, outfit, scenery, etc. As Lippi-Green suggests,

In traditions passed down over hundreds of years from the stage and theatre, film uses language variation and accent to draw character quickly, building on established preconceived notions associated with specific regional loyalties, ethnic, racial or economic alliances.
(1997: 81)

When dialect is used as “shortcut to characterization” (Lippi-Green 1997: 81), it will often index social stratification by being allocated to working rather than middle class characters, people from the “street” rather than representatives of an institution (see also Johnstone, Andrus and Danielson 2006: 94). Local speech can also be used to enhance a film’s setting and to provide local flavor, and different functions of local speech in fiction may be intertwined, acting both as class and mood marker as well as reminder of the narrative setting.

4. *Audience participation formats* such as talk, game, quiz or reality shows contribute to the visibility and diversity of lay people’s voices. Formerly restricted to direct quotations and sound bites in news shows or documentaries, lay speech is now spread across media programs, and the drive to engage the audience can even lead to lay speakers assuming small institutional roles in narrowcasting stations, such as weather presenting (Richardson and Meinhof 1998). Lay speakers are not professionally trained speakers, and in some cases are presumably selected because they display “a legitimate connection to a place” (Johnstone, Bhasin and Wittkofski 2002: 160; Jaworski et al. 2003). Their speech will often be positioned as authenticating the places, activities and experiences being reported on. In turn, by accepting and embracing lay vernacular voices into its program, a media institution may authenticate itself as representative of local concerns.
5. In *media for transnational and diasporic audiences* (e.g., community newspapers or ethnic websites), discourse is shaped by the tension between “here” (place or residence and everyday life) and “there” (homeland, place of ethnic identification), and their linguistic practices may relate to both relevant spaces. If the community language is still the audience’s base language, traces of contact to the majority language will index the community’s current location and cultural setting. If the community has shifted to the majority language, residual elements of home language, often intricately bound to heritage culture, remain in place and are transformed into “rich points” of diasporic culture (see section 3.4). Code-switching may be used in accentuating con-

trasts between home and diaspora, thereby drawing on associations of ethnic “we-code” and dominant “they-code” (Gumperz 1982). On web discussion forums popular with Jamaican expatriates, most Creole occurs in contributions from abroad, and code-switching tends to accompany deictic shifts between the writer’s place of residence and the Jamaican homeland (Hinrichs 2006).

6. *Virtual spaces*: in computer-mediated environments, local deixis (i. e., “being here”) becomes fundamentally ambiguous as it may index both the virtual discourse ground and a physical space that is important to the participants, and language may index orientation to both physical and virtual space. In online communities which are oriented to familiar geographical space, such as city-based chat channels (section 5), markers of local affiliation are ubiquitous, including dialect features, local references and allusions, and accompanying visual elements. In multi-user role-playing environments such as *Second Life* or *Active Worlds* (Axelsson, Abelin and Schroeder 2003), physical space may provide the backdrop for novel virtual territories, in which local language policies are established and corresponding linguistic performances emerge, authenticating the virtual space (e.g., use of Spanish expected in “*mundo hispanico*”, Dutch being spoken in *Second Life’s* “Amsterdam”). In online communities which are not defined in relation to geographical space, references to virtual space may take various forms, e.g., labels for the space and its regular visitors, a specific jargon for online activities relevant to the group. Metalinguistic conventions regulating content, style or language choice emerge, and norm-enforcing practices may occur, in which what is considered appropriate “here” gives reason to exclude participants from the virtual ground.

As this overview suggests, the media environments which host local speech are those which favor heteroglossia generally: talk and interaction, fiction, audience participation, less informing or educating discourses than entertaining ones. Some of these facets of media discourse have received relatively little attention in (critical) linguistic literature, which has often tackled politically “important”, yet stylistically standardized, monoglot domains of the media (Fowler 2001).

3.3. Local speech – as language, code or symbol

As suggested by the discussion so far, the range of linguistic variability that can be deployed to index space in the media is, in principle, limitless. Local dialects, varieties of a pluricentric language, creoles, mixed vernaculars or minority languages – they all may evoke, depending on context, an association to particular spaces or places, even though they are *per se* primarily associated with other social dimensions such as class or ethnicity.

In examining how local linguistic resources are positioned in relation to other languages in a media context, I find it useful to draw on tripartite distinctions familiar from social dialectology and creole studies. Mattheier (1980) suggests that dialect may function as the “main variety” of a speech community, a “social symbol” or a “relict language”. Mair (2003) classifies contemporary uses of Jamaican Creole as “language”, “code” or “symbol” (see also Hinrichs 2006). In what follows, this latter distinction shall be used as a window onto the functions of vernacular varieties in media contexts.

On the first level of this triadic scheme, a local vernacular serves as a *base language* for given media across various genres and topics. Radio hosts with a regional *accent*

would be a case in point, as reported from the UK or (southern) Germany, albeit presumably restricted to spoken language media of regional reach. Media using a local *dialect* as a base language seem rare, Switzerland being a noticeable exception (see section 5). We might expect that the willingness to accept a regional variety as an institutional voice presupposes highly positive attitudes towards that variety. There is evidence that local media may celebrate dialects which are stigmatized in the wider speech community (see Richardson and Meinhof [1998] on Saxon dialect in regional television), but the dialect voices in this case are lay speakers, not professional journalists.

The notion of *code* foregrounds relations of contrast, in which a code of localness is juxtaposed with other codes with different, non-local associations. Drawing on concepts from bilingualism research, their distribution may be conceived of as *situational* or *metaphorical code-switching* (Gumperz 1982). The former implies a conventionalized distribution of a code to activities or situations. When for instance local media regularly cast a small part of their content in dialect (a column on local affairs, a political cartoon, advertisements etc.), the local code is made visible and granted default status within a niche of the media product, but at the same time kept at bay from fully fledged institutional usage. The situational dimension also captures occasional uses of local codes which are perceived as obvious and “natural” in terms of topic or life-world. When for example a television documentary on the life of fishermen features the fishermen speaking exclusively their local dialect, these local voices tie in with local activities in sharp contrast to the language of the narrator or the surrounding program. On the other hand, *metaphorical code-switching* captures linguistic evocations of localness that are typically short and often unique in the course of a text or program: a show host switching to a local vernacular in order to caricature a social type or to address a caller; a politician in a talk show switching into his dialect to claim an understanding of local affairs; a newspaper report casting direct speech by elderly locals in the dialect (Selting 1983; Schlobinski 1988; Birkner and Gilles 2008). This is a wide, largely uncharted territory, in which language often indexes spaces and associated social types by means of double-voicing and stylization (section 5).

Finally, the notion of *symbol* implies that local speech is quantitatively and functionally restricted, but nonetheless made relevant to the participants’ identity claims. Symbols of localness are often single lexical items and proper names, which are positioned in discourse in such a way as to flag individual or institutional identities. Titles, headings, mastheads, product and company names, slogans, web forum signatures, website navigation buttons are typical textual slots in which local codes may take on symbolic functions (Coupland, Bishop and Garrett 2003; Androutsopoulos 2003, 2007; Johnstone, Bhasin and Wittkofski 2002). Here dialect is both reduced to an accessory *and* elevated to an icon of identity, collaborating to this end with other local indexicals of self-presentation. We return to such usage of dialect with Coupland’s (1995) notion of “rich points of culture” in the following.

3.4. “Rich points”: Where local forms meet local references

This tripartite distinction is also related to Johnstone’s (2004) distinction between two types of regional speech in the media, i. e., a *strategically symbolic* and a *habitual* type. The latter corresponds in my classification to “language”, albeit a language with restricted and controlled distribution in terms of the voices and participation formats it is

allocated to. Johnstone's strategically symbolic type, corresponding to both "code" and "symbol", entails the planned use of markers of localness in the design (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001) of a media product, thereby relying on vernacular stereotypes and anticipating audience reactions.

A striking instance of this symbolically strategic type is the fit between form and content of local indexicals, by virtue of which markedly local forms come to designate a local place or category. Consider Johnstone's example of *Dahntahn*, an item representing the feature of monophthongized /aw/ in media reports on "Pittsburghese" dialect. When this feature is represented in media reports, it tends to be illustrated by precisely that lexical item. This co-variance of local form and local place name is also encountered in city names whose pronunciation or spelling emphasizes their vernacular form. When they occur embedded in a standard-language environment, these variants foreground specific relations of the speaker, the addressee or a referent to the urban location. For instance, writing *Saaf London* – which marks two key features of London English, i. e., *th*-fronting and a monophthongal variant of the MOUTH vowel (Wells 1986: 309, 328) – may index either attributes of lower social class stereotypically associated with that area, or the familiarity of the speaker with local vernacular culture, or possibly both. Likewise, departing from the base language of discourse to label a social group or a key cultural concept in its own code serves as a powerful emphasis of group membership, which can be deployed in order to identify with addressees or referents or to render them as "other" (Jaworski 2007; Hinrichs 2006).

This coupling of linguistic form and local reference is captured in Coupland's (1995) notion of "rich points of culture". For Coupland, what makes dialect a culturally powerful marker of local identity is, precisely, "the conjunction of pronunciation and ideational reference", his example being a Cardiff place name pronounced by broadcasters in Welsh English (rather than standard English). Coupland views such conjunctions of dialect phonology and place names (or culturally relevant common nouns) as "producing expressions that are cultural mini-icons" of regional or ethnolinguistic identity (Coupland 1995: 316–317).

Importantly, such "cultural mini-icons" are not fixed once and for all. The co-variance of local indexicals is a resource available for deployment in different socio-cultural contexts. A telling example is a slogan used by an Austrian far-right politician during the 2008 election campaign: *Daham statt Islam* 'At home instead of Islam'. This uses a dialect form of the adverb, i. e., *daham* with long [a:] instead of the diphthong /ai/ of standard *daheim*, with all other campaign materials in standard German. More than just the choice of a dialect variant for rhyme, dialect-as-symbol is mobilized here to bolster the notion of local identity, which is juxtaposed to an "other" religion and thus contextualized as a national Christian identity. Interestingly, during the same period an Austrian cultural association released a CD of religious music called *Daham ist Islam* 'At home is Islam', thus mobilizing the same item of dialect-as-symbol for the opposite social meaning.

4. Mediated local speech: The "reflection fallacy"

Determining the "authenticity" of mediated local speech seems a central concern in parts of the literature, and my aim in this section is to question this. By "reflection fallacy" I refer to the often tacit expectation that local speech in the media be a (accurate) reflec-

tion of non-mediated language, and to the resulting tendency to foreground this relation in the analysis. To be sure, linguistic constructions of localness in the media owe their indexical power to their tacit interpretation as representations of the informal, everyday language of a community (see Balhorn 1998; Jaffe 2007). As vernacular varieties are reproduced outside educational institutions, their mediatization contrasts with the non-local codes and registers required for professional media discourse practices. However, this fundamental contrast does not mean that mediated local speech will always correspond to an “authentic” counterpart.

Indeed, the problematic nature of such an expectation becomes obvious in the frequently mentioned gaps and inconsistencies between the two. According to some authors, advertising features “inauthentic, synthetic, simulated” (Straßner 1986: 323) or “softened up” (Janich 1999: 171) dialects, in which deep local features are ironed out in order to avoid comprehension problems or evocations of stigma. By other accounts, based on a range of genres, the media exaggerates a few stereotypical vernacular features; combines “authentic” dialect features with less realistic ones; or even presents authorial creations as “authentically local” linguistic forms (Crystal 2002). More specifically, Bell (1992: 334) points out how advertising relies on a few “typical features to mark target dialects”. Marriott (1997: 182–183) shows how a British film draws together both more and less realistic dialect features in the representation of characters in terms of social class. Birkner and Gilles (2008) find that Cologne dialect in television shows occurs only in stylizations, in which a few dialect features are grafted onto colloquial standard German.

Expecting mediated local speech to live up to an “authentic” model seems fraught with theoretical and methodological problems. First, it may easily lead to an idealized view of local speech (Bucholtz 2003) and a “fetishization” of supposedly authentic linguistic form. Second, the expectation of accuracy does not always correspond to the views and motivations of media practitioners whose language use is shaped by a complex web of institutional, technological and generic constraints. A “realistic” rendering of language varieties is often not intended at all (Bell 1992). Third, in some cases an authentic model is not obvious (e.g., in advertisements featuring a mock foreign accent) while in others the mediation of local speech relies on traditions of public vernacular use (Marriott 1997; Birkner and Gilles 2008). Thus filmic representations of English dialects owe their success not to their documentary precision but their popular availability, “permitting [a] ready identification” (Marriott 1997: 183).

Overall, it is perhaps realistic to assume that much mass-media language works no differently to literature, in that authors and speakers are “not aiming at the systematic and accurate representation of real-life sociolinguistic facts, but at supplying some markers of particular varieties, leaving readers to fill in the gaps with background knowledge” (Culperer 2001: 209). This does not mean that accurate representations of non-standard speech do not exist; it means, however, that we should not expect them to be the default case.

More generally, the search for an authentic model is rooted in the belief that language “naturally” belongs to geographical spaces. Taking inspiration from human geography and Foucault-inspired discourse theory, Johnstone (this handbook) proposes rethinking this relationship: no bond between language and space pre-dates discourse; rather, it is in discourse that the link between language and spaces is constituted. This fits well with the (equally Foucauldian) tenet of critical discourse analysis, that media discourse does

not represent a reality beyond itself, but rather creates social reality in its own right (e.g., Fairclough 1995; Thornborrow 2002). Johnstone shows how, in media reports and web forum discussions, a new urban dialect, “Pittsburghese”, is literally talked into being, regardless of whether or not this status is dialectologically accurate (Johnstone 2004, Johnstone and Baumgardt 2004). We may also think in this context of the *Mundartwelle* ‘dialect wave’ in Germany in the 1970s, i.e., the increased use of dialect in advertising and other mass media, which was less a symptom of dialect resurgence in society at large than a trend within the media, neither reflecting nor initiating an increased use of local dialects “out there” (Löffler 1997). Indeed, a post-structuralist perspective on language and space challenges the primacy of “dialect out there”, instead drawing attention to how discourse shapes the understanding of dialect.

5. Shifting approaches: From language variation to “techniques of localism”

The relation between media, language and space has been examined within various research frameworks so far, and I sketch here a transition from descriptive and variationist to currently influential post-variationist and interactional approaches. Parts of the literature focus on the frequency and distribution of regional dialects across media types and genres (Straßner 1983; Schmitz 2004: 31). The strengths of this approach are illustrated by the work of Burger (2005: 362–388) on dialect use in southern German, Austrian and Swiss German media. The diglossic situation of German-speaking Switzerland entails a split between written and spoken language media. In the former, written dialect is restricted to “occasional exceptions” (2005: 368) such as adverts for local shops and services. In spoken language media too, the choice is organized by local reach, with local radios using almost exclusively dialects, and local topics and participants favoring the use of dialect in nationwide programs, where standard German otherwise predominates. If both varieties are co-present in a program, their distribution is organized along the boundary of spoken/written or spontaneous/edited discourse (2005: 371–373).

In research within the audience design framework (Bell 1984), the relationship between language style and target audience is examined based on variationist methodology. Bell’s original study found that colloquial phonological variables in the language of New Zealand radio stations occurred more frequently on local community stations, followed by commercial regional channels and the national public program. Even though no dialect variants were involved, localness is played out in Bell’s interpretation, which suggests that the more a station orients to a local (and younger, lower-status) audience, the more it will draw on vernacular variants as a resource to shape its relationship to that audience; by contrast, the more detached a station is from local contexts, the higher its share of standard features. This correlation of colloquial speech with restricted reach is confirmed by other studies. Reynolds and Cascio (1999) found that a British local newspaper uses more contracted forms than do national dailies, and Burger’s work, even though not variationist in methodology, offers ample evidence for the systematic association of regional speech with regional reach. Research on computer-mediated communication shows that German chat channels named after a city or region display features of the respective dialect, albeit restricted in terms of frequency and environments (An-

droutsopoulos and Ziegler 2004; Franke 2006). A study on Swiss-German chat communication (Siebenhaar 2006) shows that local chat channels (with a younger audience) use local dialect features almost categorically, whereas supra-regional channels (with an older audience) vary between dialect and standard forms.

The attention paid in these studies to the distribution of local features is not always accompanied by an equal amount of attention to localness in discourse. Some earlier descriptive work tends to view dialect in the media in a matter-of-fact way, i. e., as a variety that happens to be used in certain genres or by certain speakers. Dialect is thus viewed as “behavior” rather than “performance” (Coupland 2001), and its function as an index of local origin is assumed *a priori* rather than examined in context. What I term the “reflection fallacy” (section 4) also forms part of this angle. Characteristically, Burger’s “fundamental linguistic question” is whether the distribution of varieties in broadcasting “mirrors the conditions of everyday linguistic reality” or whether the media develop their own usage, which might in turn impact upon “linguistic reality” (Burger 2005: 369; my translation).

Methodologically, a strictly distributional approach implies that the occurrence of local features will be interpreted as an index of the strength of local orientation of a station or show. However, regional features may be non-deliberate, and their interactional treatment may suggest that they are less a resource for claiming localness than something participants try to avoid (Pavlou 2004). While on a more abstract level even such unintended uses of dialect are, of course, indexical to particular places, claims about the identity relevance of local speech in the media may be risky without a close look at what is actually being done with that speech within the discourse context.

In work located within the perspective of interactional and style-oriented sociolinguistics (Schilling-Estes 2002; Coupland 2007) local speech is viewed as a resource in the construction of individual or institutional style. The focus shifts from linguistic features as such to the social types and activities styled or stylized through local speech, and from authenticity to processes of authentication, by which local speech marks people or activities as “genuine”, and is itself constituted as genuine (Bucholtz 2003; Eastman and Stein 1993). A prime example of this line of research is from Coupland (2001), who illustrates the contrast between variationist and interactional views of dialect – “behavior” or “performance” – using the example of a Welsh radio disc jockey. In one of his examples, the radio host uses Welsh English in utterances that constitute a “local” worldview, but subsequent utterances representing an authoritative opinion are voiced in Standard English. Stereotypical conjunctions of language and social identity are still in place here, but these are more-or-less strategically selected and reflexively performed, i. e., they are an outcome of stylization. Dialect stylization emphasizes the relationship between dialect as a resource, the communicative activity at hand and the identity projected by the speaker. “To style dialect is to construct a social image or persona that interconnects with other facets of a speaker’s communicative design ... in a particular event or act.” (Coupland 2001: 348)

In this spirit, Birkner and Gilles (2008) examine dialect stylizations in reality shows and television comedy, pointing out that the default assumption in social dialectology, i. e., that dialect is a marker of regional belonging, is entirely off target in their data, in which practices of styling local origin, stylizing local social types or performing dialect prevail. Androutsopoulos and Ziegler (2004) show that local dialect in a German chat-channel often serves as a contextualization cue, marking shifts in topic or key, quotes

and asides, or evoking the voice of local proletarian types. Franke (2006) finds similar patterns in a Berlin chat-channel. Again, far from being a reflection of the channel's collective identity, dialect is tailored to specific interactional purposes, including the jocular staging of local stereotypes.

A logical progression from this point would be to move towards a more holistic view of media discourse, extending the scope from individual speech styles, texts or shows to larger units. Local media and narrowcasting invite us to examine how local linguistic resources are strategically positioned in wider processes of media planning. As narrowcasting audiences are typically delimited by region, constructing a sense of locality can be considered a core aspect of local media design. Richardson and Meinhof find that British and German narrowcast programs deploy a broad range of "techniques of localism" (1998: 99), which involve media content (locally significant stories and topics), visual content (both contributing to a story and as an independently meaningful code), intertextuality (allowing participants to draw on and demonstrate local knowledge), and local jargon (designations of urban locations, often abbreviations, acronyms or metaphors). Narrowcasters will constantly seek occasions to produce local talk, even though these occasions may be asymmetrically distributed across participant formats and voices. In this process, bonds formed by music, topics and linguistic forms signify the importance of place, and non-standard varieties may gain niche prestige in the grassroots mediation of local communities.

6. Contrast and voice: Issues of analysis

The preceding discussion hopefully makes clear the importance of the specific discourse context in interpreting the meaning of linguistic localness. Speaking simply, it makes a difference if local speech comes from a newsreader or a fictional character, the show host or an interviewee, in prime time or late at night. In order to identify and interpret these differences, I suggest that the analysis of linguistic forms needs to be complemented by the analysis of *contrasts* between local speech and other linguistic resources in their discourse context, the *genres* in which local speech occurs, the *voices* local speech is allocated to or presented as owned by, and the *identities*, i. e., social categories, which are represented or evoked through local speech in discourse.

Elaborating on the interplay between contrast and voice, the importance of contrast follows from the principle that sociolinguistic styles are relational, i. e., gain their social meaning through situated contrasts to other styles (Coupland 2007). The notion of voice, on the other hand, foregrounds issues of ownership, participation format and perspective: to whom does regional speech belong, to whom is it allocated, whose perspective does it cue? (Bakhtin 1981; Baxter 2003; Blommaert 2005; Coupland 2007: 111). Local speech may be cast as the voice of institutions or of lay speakers, and it may appear as a speaker's own, habitual voice or as an alien voice that is temporarily "put on" (in Bakhtinian double voicing). It is convenient to initially assume such simple dichotomies, even though this will not always suffice to capture the multiple layers of voices in broadcast.

Local forms are in most cases not the default language in media discourse. Their choice is a matter of voice (Blommaert 2005), and a local voice in the media is always

implicated in contrasts to other voices present in the media output. The analysis of this interplay operates on an ideological as well as linguistic level. It asks how local voices are framed and contextualized by other voices (e.g., those of show hosts or reporters) or other semiotic material (music, sound, moving images). This includes an assessment of the relative frequency of local speech vis-à-vis other resources, bearing in mind that indexing localness may be “more a matter of individual occurrences of salient variants than of quantitative sums and relative frequencies” (Bell 1992: 337; see also Bell 1999). Voice contrasts may be organized sequentially, as in code-switching or double-voicing, or in a more complex, multimodal way involving juxtapositions of speech, sound and visual event.

The nexus of genre, topic and code choice may give local speech visibility and legitimacy in the media, but it also confines it to niches and excludes it from wider institutional uses. In German local newspapers, such niches are typically found in the local pages and the arts and culture section (*Feuilleton*; Straßner 1983), where dialects are used in articles on local everyday life or local politics, albeit often in a satirical or polemical manner (e.g., political cartoons with dialect-speaking characters who critique or mock local affairs). Straßner argues that dialect offers more drastic illustrations than standard language and enables statements that taboo or lack of evidence would not permit in standard language. In other words, dialect legitimizes certain statements by contextualizing them as originating from a non-institutional voice, perhaps a “man in the street” perspective. These observations fit in well with the written representation of “Pittsburghese” in connection with “topics that have a strong local link and about which people are not being completely serious”, such as “cartoons about the city transit system” (Johnstone, Bhasin and Wittkofski 2002: 159).

Judging from the research literature, the relation of local speech to voices in media discourse follows a fairly consistent pattern. If local speech is only allocated to some participants, these will be lay speakers rather than presenters or hosts (Richardson and Meinhof 1998: 99). In fiction, it will be given to villains, low-status or minor characters rather than protagonists or “goodies”. If a show host uses local speech (Coupland 2001), their delivery will be double-voiced and comic rather than thoroughly serious. If local speech is represented in newspaper reports, it will be contained within reported voices (i. e., as direct speech) rather than in the reporter’s own voice; if a broadcast feature has both on-screen voices and voiceover, vernacular will probably feature as on-screen voice (e.g., in live reporting), while the voiceover will be cast in standard language (e.g., Burger 2005: 365); and so on. In all such tendencies, the local code constructs an orientation toward everyday, extramural life, and its exclusion from professional voices eventually sustains the preclusion of accent/dialect from institutional use. While one effect of the proliferation of lay speakers is that institutional language loses its monopoly and mediascapes become more heteroglossic, this does not necessarily empower vernaculars and their speakers, as their mediated exposition is still regimented by relations of asymmetry. Many lay-speaker appearances are one-off and of short duration, and non-standard speech is thereby positioned as the speakers’ only voice, i. e., as behavior rather than performance, as habitual and thus unavoidable rather than strategically selected. Thus an analysis of voices and contrasts may show how the dominance of standard language persists even within highly heteroglossic mediascapes, but it can also be used to reveal where any exceptions and challenges to this pattern lie.

7. Conclusion

Local speech in the media is employed in highly versatile ways which defy easy generalizations, and this article is only a first step towards synthesizing research insights into a coherent picture. I argued for the need to move beyond the “reflection fallacy” and to rethink the relationship between language and space in the media as inventive and creative, with the media actively constituting links between speech and spaces rather than simply reflecting existing links. Representations of localness are often done with limited linguistic material, and may echo traditions of public discourse. The heteroglossic perspective advocated here assumes that discourse does not just reflect but also creates social reality in its own right. As a consequence, the focus shifts to contrastive relations between codes and voices within media discourse, and to the workings of mediated local speech within its generic and institutional contexts.

In terms of methodology, the study of language and space in the media is bound to take us beyond news discourse. Engaging with fiction and entertainment culture acknowledges that these genres may also be crucial in shaping the values of linguistic heterogeneity. The perspective developed in this article reinforces the idea, entailed in a post-variationist type of approach, that constructing localness is not simply a matter of using a local code, but of doing so in ways that evoke places and foreground “cultural icons” associated with these places. As a consequence, the attention shifts from varieties to styles and stylizations, and from linguistic forms as such to their conjunctions with other dimensions of discourse and multimodality. A question for further research is therefore how local speech in the media becomes meaningful not just by virtue of belonging to a distinct linguistic subsystem, but through its fit with particular topics, voices, genres, and visual sceneries – in short, with wider homologies of localness. We may think of the ways in which a sense of locality is constructed as working in a puzzle-like manner, complementing each other across different semiotic levels. Reconstructing this puzzle requires multi-level analyses, which would benefit from combining the methodological frameworks reviewed in this article.

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