
The Routledge Handbook of Language and Media

Edited by Colleen Cotter and Daniel Perrin

Media and language change

Expanding the framework

Jannis Androutsopoulos

25.1 Introduction

Recently called “one of the hottest potatoes in early twenty-first century sociolinguistics” (Sayers 2014: 187), the role of media in linguistic change has been on the discipline’s agenda since the 1980s and has accelerated in the past decade. In public discourse on language, the media has often been assumed to have an influence on language use or been held responsible for declining standards of usage, especially among the young (Moschonas 2014; Thurlow 2006). While language scholars have distanced themselves from such assumptions, they offer different, even contradictory suggestions on the issue. In German-language scholarship, for example, linguists have suggested that television can have various kinds of impact on ordinary language use: promoting the spread of standard language, accelerating dialect leveling, increasing awareness of regional and social dialects, favoring norm relaxation in public usage, and boosting the diffusion of neologisms and linguistic fads (Holly 1995; Schmitz 2004; Brandt 2000). However, empirical evidence for these suggestions is thin. In Anglophone sociolinguistics, the predominant position is that media language has no impact on phonological or grammatical language change (Chambers 1998; Labov 2001: 228; Trudgill 2014). However, there has been evidence to the contrary (discussed below), and some researchers propose reconsidering the role of media, including digital communication media (Boberg 2000; Tagliamonte 2012; Coupland and Kristiansen 2011). A recent debate on media and language change in the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* (18(2), 2014) illustrates the range of current views on this issue.

This chapter reviews research on media and language change in various subfields of sociocultural linguistics (see Stuart-Smith, this volume, Chapter 2; Cotter and ben-Aaron, this volume, Chapter 3): variationist and interactional sociolinguistics, media linguistics, linguistic anthropology, and minority language studies. Dialogue across these subfields has been limited, and one aim of this chapter is to work out their converging and diverging lines of thinking. A second aim is to critically examine some long-standing assumptions, including the two key notions, ‘media’ and ‘language change,’ which are often narrowly framed (Herring 2003). The chapter argues for the need to develop a broader theoretical frame and introduces to this aim two alternative notions which have had considerable scholarly

updates recently, 'mediatization' and 'sociolinguistic change.' Section 25.2 introduces these theoretical concepts, i.e., media and mediatization, language change, and sociolinguistic change. Section 25.3 outlines four research approaches to media and language change: the influence of media language on language use in the community, audience practices with media language fragments, change of usage in mass media language, and metalinguistic discourse on linguistic innovation and change. Section 25.4 introduces current developments in these subfields, Section 25.5 summarizes critical issues, and Section 25.6 outlines future research directions.

25.2 Definitions: the sociolinguistic change approach

Despite its presence, media is rarely discussed in scholarship on language change. In sociolinguistic literature that does address media as a potential factor, three elements tend to predominate. First, the analysis focuses (as is generally common in language change research) on single linguistic features or groups of features. Second, the scope is usually limited to a single language or linguistic variety. Third, sociocultural change is positioned as an external condition to processes of linguistic change. Findings and limitations of this paradigm with regard to media influence on speech are discussed in Sections 25.3.1 and 25.4.1.

More recently, the notion of sociolinguistic change has been evoked as a complement to that of language change. Coupland (2014) argues that as a theoretical notion, sociolinguistic change conceptualizes language and society as mutually constitutive processes and theorizes linguistic change as part of social change. A sociolinguistic change approach focuses on changing relationships between language and society with an emphasis on the linguistic or discursive character of social changes. It thus "challenges the dualism that underlies two traditions in the study of change (linguistic and social) and brings them together" (Coupland 2014: 72). Androutsopoulos (2014) suggests that a sociolinguistic change approach extends the research scope beyond the micro-level of single linguistic variables and toward processes of change at the level of linguistic repertoires, language practices, and language ideologies. The following sections elaborate on why this shift is relevant to the way we study media and language change, the main point being that the role of media is less pertinent at the micro-level, single-feature changes and more important at these broader levels of linguistic and communicative change.

The term *media* is used in scholarship on media and language change in different ways, which correlate with different research questions, types of data, and understandings of linguistic uniformity and diversity in the media. The most common one is the generic notion of 'the media' in the sense of mass media, especially television. The focus on broadcast as a potential influence in language change is grounded in the institutional power of mass media and the potential model role of spoken broadcast language, which is considered a "working definition of the standard language" (Bell 2011: 178). Linguists have regarded media as a centripetal domain of language use, whose potential influence amounts to promoting linguistic standardization and homogeneity (Chambers 1998, 2005; Milroy and Milroy 1999: 29). However, this view originated in the 1970s and 1980s, when media language was much more uniform in terms of language style than today (see Section 25.3.3). This generic understanding of media is often found in research that does not examine media language as such, but operationalizes media consumption or exposure as an independent variable to correlate it with actual language use (see Section 25.3.1.). As amply discussed in media and communication studies as well as linguistic anthropology, an undifferentiated notion of 'the media' is prone to reification. It erases the complexities involved in media

technologies, production and reception practices, and technological determinism, focusing instead on the assumption that media themselves affect or determine the communication they ‘contain’ (see discussion in Herring 2003; Couldry 2008; Cotter 2010; Agha 2011). More recently, sociolinguists have moved away from such wholesale notion of ‘the media,’ focusing instead on particular media genres or representations, narratives, performances, and stylizations, which are set in relation to target audiences or language-ideological discourses (Androutsopoulos 2010; Bucholtz 2009; Hill 1995; Jaffe 2009). This orientation is characteristic for research on change in media language (see Section 25.3.3) but also on the relation between media representations and language ideologies (Section 25.3.4).

As an alternative to ‘media,’ the term *mediatization* has come with various readings in contemporary humanities and social sciences. Its use in this chapter aligns with media and communication studies (Couldry 2008; Hepp 2014; Krotz 2009; Lundby 2009, 2014) where mediatization refers to a large-scale process of sociocultural change “by which everyday practices and social relations are historically shaped by mediating technologies and media organizations” (Livingstone 2009: 10). Mediatization is positioned on equal footing with globalization, as “a historical, on-going, long-term process in which more and more media emerge and are institutionalized,” so that “media in the long run increasingly become relevant for the social construction of everyday life, society, and culture as a whole” (Krotz 2009: 24). Mediatization scholars reject a deterministic, cause-and-effect view of media technologies as an ‘external’ force that influences social behavior, focusing instead on communicative practices with media. Mediatization in this sense is supportive to a sociolinguistic theory of media and language change in several ways. It offers an alternative to the implicit technological determinism, which shapes a lot of earlier linguistic thinking about media and language change, and supports the move from a separation of language change from its social context to an integration of both (Coupland 2014). Mediatization in the sense proposed here is itself a process of sociocultural change, driven by the expansion and differentiation of communication media. So the question is no more on the impact of media, as a technological or institutional force, or linguistic structure, but rather on a broader and more complex web of language-and-media relations. Moreover, mediatization provides a better pivotal point to think about relations between mass-disseminated semiotic messages and their uptake in interpersonal communication, including face-to-face talk and social media interaction.

25.3 Disciplinary perspectives

The four approaches to media and language change presented below emerged in different areas of sociocultural linguistics since the 1980s: variationist (Section 25.3.1), interactional (25.3.2), media linguistic (25.3.3), and language-ideological (25.3.4). They differ in their orientation to the notions of media and language change, types of data and research methods, and are differently compatible to the understanding of mediatization outlined above (for a more comprehensive discussion see Androutsopoulos 2014).

25.3.1 A variationist view: media influence on language change

This is the oldest and probably most well known branch of media and language change research (for research overviews see Stuart-Smith 2011, 2012; Sayers 2014). The notion of ‘influence’ is the key metaphor here, and the predominant answer to whether there is such an influence has usually been a negative one. Chambers (1998: 126) suggests that

“there is no evidence for television or the other popular media disseminating or influencing sound changes or grammatical innovations,” and Labov (2001: 228) claims that “language is not systematically affected by the mass media.” The understanding of language change that underpins these statements is limited to phonological and grammatical change below the level of awareness. Labov (2001), Chambers (1998, 2005), Trudgill (1986, 2014) and Milroy and Milroy (1999) point out that despite intensive exposure to mass media, regional dialects in the U.S. continue to diverge, speakers of African-American Vernacular English do not adopt Standard American English, and very few British people speak using Received Pronunciation. The implicit assumption behind these claims is that media language is fundamentally an agent of standardization. The role of media in spreading lexical innovations, idioms and phrases or fashionable pronunciations of individual words is thereby acknowledged, but not examined any further. Likewise, it is acknowledged that broadcast media might have an impact on language attitudes, especially by promoting “the consciousness of the standard and maintain[ing] its position” (Milroy and Milroy 1999: 31). The assumption here is that media representations reflect and reinforce existing language attitudes in the community, for instance by stigmatizing on-going linguistic changes (Zilles 2005: 44; Pappas 2008: 495).

Media influence on language change is empirically investigated, for example, by Naro (1981) and Naro and Scherre (1996) on Brazilian Portuguese. These researchers operationalized media exposure as an independent variable and found significant correlations of morphosyntactic features with media variables: regular media consumers use more of the standard variant of the syntactic constructions analyzed; however, the authors avoid a causal interpretation. More recently, Carvalho (2004) examines the use of Brazilian Portuguese features among young speakers of Uruguayan Portuguese in the border region between the two countries, where the speakers have no frequent contact with speakers of the standard dialect but are avid consumers of Brazilian telenovelas. She does not find statistically significant correlations, but her qualitative evidence (interviews) suggests speakers are consciously orienting to Brazilian television as a linguistic model.

Whether broadcasting plays a role in the dialect-to-standard shift widely documented in the last decades is a contested issue, which has been repeatedly raised in non-Anglophone sociolinguistics (see Ota and Takano (2014) for Japan; Auer and Spiekermann (2011), Brandt (2000), and von Polenz (1999: 457) for Germany; Kristiansen (2014) for Denmark). For example, Lameli (2005) finds real-time shift from dialect to Standard German from the 1920s to 1960s and evokes broadcasting influence as a likely explanatory factor. In the Anglophone literature, the potential role of broadcast media in the adoption of standard variants is explained as an instance of individual, intentional orientation to media language as a linguistic model, a process that lies above the level of awareness and is therefore irrelevant to systemic language change (e.g., Trudgill 1986: 41). By contrast, Carvalho (2004) and more recent work (discussed in Section 25.4.1) emphasize the role of engagement with media content as decisive for an influence of media language to occur at all.

Another contested issue is whether interpersonal accommodation during face-to-face interaction is a necessary condition for the transmission of linguistic innovations. On this assumption, Trudgill (1986: 40) rules out by definition any influence of television on the diffusion of innovations. However, several cases of rapid linguistic diffusion – such as the global spread of the English quotative *like* – have evoked the suggestion that certain innovations “are transmitted with no or relatively little interpersonal contact” (Buchstaller 2008: 36). These are called “off the shelf” changes (a metaphor coined by Eckert 2003), as

opposed to “under the counter” changes whose transmission requires regular social interaction (Milroy 2008). So-called “off the shelf” changes are relevant in the present context because media narratives might serve as a “shelf” from which elements can be lifted and recontextualized. However, research has only implied or assumed a potential role of the media in spreading such changes.

25.3.2 *An interactional view: media fragments in everyday talk*

This research perspective shifts from media language influence on structural language change to audience engagement with and recontextualization of media language features, and asks what the implications of such engagement might be for sociolinguistic change. Evidence for audiences’ creative practices with media language originates in cultural studies as early as the mid-1990s (Gillespie 1995) and is taken up in interactional sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. The focal interest here is in the recycling of media fragments, whereby “phrases and discourse styles are extracted from radio broadcasting and then recycled and reanimated in everyday usage, outside of the contexts of radio listening” (Spitulnik 1997: 95). Research on such practices has mostly focused on young people, thereby following the tradition of audience ethnography (Androutsopoulos 2014: 18–25; Ayaß and Gerhardt 2012; de Houwer 2003; Leppänen and Piirainen-Marsh 2009; Rampton 1995; Spitulnik 1997; Spreckels 2006; Talbot 2007).

Linguistic change is a side-result of this research, whose main aims have largely focused on media fragments in the interactional context. Media fragments are found to be lifted from various types of media sources. They are often (lexically, syntactically, phonologically) modified in their recycled use and set apart from a speaker’s own voice by means of prosodic and metapragmatic cues. Media fragments often belong to a different language than the surrounding talk (Deppermann 2007; Hill 1995; Lytra 2006; Rampton 1995; Shankar 2004), and their use therefore leads to instances of multilingual discourse. In terms of interactional function, media fragments have been found to contextualize specific interactional frames, for example, to prompt funny talk that disrupts regular classroom activities (Keim 2003; Lytra 2006), or to reanimate a song or performance lifted from the media (Dirim and Auer 2004; Lytra 2006; Rampton 1995; Schlobinski 1989). Media fragments can be used as a categorization device or a stylized media voice. As with other quotative practice (see Tannen 1989), speakers can draw on a media voice to distance themselves from the illocutionary force and/or the propositional content of their utterances and do things that would be considered face-threatening if accomplished in their own voice (e.g., teasing, showing off). Media fragments can constitute points of orientation for the establishment and management of social interaction, for example, by offering occasions for small talk and opportunities to index group membership. Among young people the ability to perform with media voices and to spontaneously link media references to the topic of on-going interaction is a valued creative skill (Spreckels 2006; Georgakopoulou 2014). Overall, media fragments have been theorized as a resource for creating sociability, negotiating and performing social identities (Leppänen and Piirainen-Marsh 2009; Lytra 2006; Shankar 2004).

These findings are relevant to a sociolinguistic change approach in three ways. First, recycling can be the trigger to routinization processes from which new conventionalized items might emerge. Media phrases are often ephemeral and fast-paced (Chambers 1998; Lytra 2006), but some can become normalized over years of repeated use (Lytra 2006: 267). This seems to hold true for specific categories of lexical and discourse items whose conventionalization is repeatedly attested: nicknames, categorizations derived from names of media

celebrities or fictional characters, metapragmatic discourse markers (i.e., expressions that regulate a communicative activity), and expressive interjections. That is, conventionalized media items seem to feed into functional categories that are rich in social indexicality and undergo frequent renewal. For example, Gillespie (1995: 152) discusses how her London informants appropriated the term *Mangel*, derived from the name of a female gossip character in a popular TV series, as “a term of abuse for anyone who gossips.” Spitulnik (1997) discusses the community use of radio phrases with the metapragmatic meaning of ‘do you get it?’ Spreckels (2006) shows how a group of German female adolescents use the term *Britney* (i.e., pop star Britney Spears) as a categorization for a certain type of girls and lift the interjection *yoo-hoo*, from the US animation series, *The Simpsons*.

A second pattern of sociolinguistic change is the large-scale spread and circulation of media phrases once they are recycled. Coupland (2007: 174) discusses the example of a comedy-derived phrase that contains a rapidly spreading non-standard feature in British English. It remains to be examined how the creative recycling of media phrases in everyday interaction is linked to the large-scale diffusion of media phrases. A third question of interest is how media recycling contributes to the “mediation of communities.” This notion originates with Spitulnik (1997) who argues that in large-scale societies, people’s everyday practices of “repeating, recycling, and recontextualizing of media discourse” (p. 98) establish “an indirect connectivity or intertextuality across media consumers and across instances of media consumption” (p. 98). Media fragments index joint frames of reference and thereby mediate societies into speech communities. Other researchers also suggest that the ability to recognize and recontextualize media quotes creates common ground and enables people to construct themselves as members of a community (Shankar 2004: 332; Androutsopoulos 2001: 20). These processes are relevant to considerations of language change in periods of social change, notably migration and associated practices of multilingualism, diaspora media (as in Shankar 2004), or new ethnicity-related registers of language (as in Androutsopoulos’s case, see Section 25.4.3).

25.3.3 A media linguistics view: change in media language

Mass-media language can be used as a proxy for language change research in real or apparent time. For example, Dutch researchers studied change in Dutch based on a large corpus of historical radio recordings (Van de Velde et al. 1997), so using radio language as an index of spoken Standard Dutch. Likewise, corpora of public written language have been used to examine diachronically change in sentence complexity or loanwords; for example, Lüger (1995) reports that the syntax of German newspaper language becomes simpler over time.

Two patterns of sociolinguistic change that seem to hold true across various languages and societies are *conversationalization* and *vernacularization*. The notion of conversationalization was coined in critical discourse analysis, an approach that emphasizes the economic and political interests and power relations behind mass-mediated discourse. Conversationalization involves “the modelling of public discourse upon the discursive practices of ordinary life” (Fairclough 1994: 253). Media actors such as journalists, show hosts, politicians or advertisers draw on features and styles of everyday informal speech in an attempt to symbolically bridge the gap between the organization or institution they represent and their audience’s everyday experience. This can manifest in features of everyday conversational style used in contexts where more formal styles of speech or writing would have been expected, or in combinations of spoken and written (or informal and formal) features, which might be experienced as hybrid in their early stages. Specific phenomena of conversationalization include contractions in newspaper language (Reynolds and Cascio 1999; Betz

2006), sentence-initial connectives (e.g., *and*, *but*) in newspaper language (Cotter 2003), informal terms of address such as the advance of public *Du* (informal pronominal address) over the formal variant, *Sie*, in German advertisements. The term *informalization* has also been used in reference to such phenomena (Jucker 2003).

Vernacularization is defined by Coupland (2014: 87) as a process of sociolinguistic change by which vernacular linguistic features, styles, and genres gain access “into domains that have been the preserves of standardness.” Vernacularization can be viewed as an aspect of conversationalization, but its scope is narrower in terms of relevant linguistic forms and their indexical values. The focus is on elements of (regional or social) varieties of language with a contextually salient indexical contrast to standard language. Vernacular elements have been documented in a range of media genres, including newspaper language (e.g., the introduction of youth language lexis into newspaper language documented in Androutsopoulos (2005)), fiction (Lippi-Green 1997), advertisement (Bucholtz 2009; Coupland 2007), staged performance, political discussions (Soukoup 2012), and audience participation genres (Androutsopoulos 2010). Indeed, contemporary media language is highly diverse, challenging the hegemony of standard language in the public sphere (Androutsopoulos 2010; Coupland 2009; although see Section 25.4.4 and Cotter (2010)). Sociolinguistic diversification in media language is historically contingent to aspects of mediatization, such as in particular the diversification of target audiences and the rise of the web as a new domain of mediated communication.

The language-ideological implications of vernacularization are related both to the distributional increase of linguistic features or styles and to the contextualized contrast between standard and vernacular voices within a media text or performance. The mediatization of vernaculars can boost their supra-regional awareness, offering opportunities for metalinguistic reflexivity and leading to “a more positive valorization of vernacularity as well as a weakening or restriction of standard language ideology” (Coupland 2014: 85–86; see also Cotter 1996, 2014). But media representations of vernaculars and their speakers can also lead to increased social awareness of stigmatized registers (Hill 1995).

Conversationalization and vernacularization lead to an increase of diversity in media language. Rather than media language influencing community language, it is media language that catches up with innovations and changes in spoken language (Kristiansen 2014; Cotter 2010). The proliferating “media representations of linguistic heterogeneity” (Jaffe 2009: 563) are one aspect of the increasingly blurred boundaries between media language and community language (Stuart-Smith 2011), a point Cotter (2010: 25) makes in relation to how notions of language usage by both media practitioners and “coverage” communities integrate and diverge. Norm relaxation in broadcast usage can trigger changes of usage in non-mediated contexts, an example being taboo expressions whose mediatized use might legitimize their use in formal face-to-face contexts (Bell 2001). Both patterns of media language change are embedded in, and enabled by, broader changes in the media landscape. Bell’s (2003) comparison of news reports at the beginning and end of the twentieth century suggests that the immediacy of reporting, which is afforded by audiovisual broadcasting since the 1970s, has had an impact on the development of news reporting toward conversational style. Luginbühl (2014) shows that Swiss television news has changed toward more segmentation, which favors a dialogue-oriented style of reporting. Thus genre change can shape the conditions for conversationalization in media language. Overall, this research shows that it is not only media language that might influence spoken language, but different directions of influence between mediated and non-mediated language are possible.

25.3.4 *A language-ideological view: enregisterment*

This fourth line of scholarship introduces a discursive turn. It asks how public discourses on language produce and reproduce language ideologies, i.e., shared understandings of language in its social context, and in particular ideas about linguistic change. Scholarship from linguistic anthropology and critical discourse studies emphasizes the power of metalinguistic discourse to constitute (rather than just reflect) and shape public understandings of language and social groups, thereby reproducing relations of social inequality and exclusion (Blommaert 1999; Milani and Johnson 2010; Cotter 2010; Johnstone 2011). The most influential concept in this field in terms of media and language change is *enregisterment*, defined by linguistic anthropologist Asif Agha (2003: 231) as a process by which “a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a specially recognized register of forms.” A register’s linguistic elements can belong to any level of structure (lexis, segmental phonology, prosody, syntactic constructions), and a register’s social dimension includes stereotypes of social groups or practices (Agha 2007: 147–154). In register formation, linguistic features and social categories are discursively associated by means of metapragmatic stereotypes, i.e., stereotypical knowledge about how language is used by certain speaker types and/or in social contexts. Such stereotypes are reproduced in various metapragmatic activities, and Agha mentions examples such as “glosses of language use; names for registers and associated speech genres; accounts of typical and exemplary speakers; propositions on usage; standard of appropriate use; positive or negative assessments of the social worth of a register” (Agha 2007: 150–151). In his work on the enregisterment of Received Pronunciation, Agha (2003) distinguishes five genres of metalinguistic discourses on accent, including popular novels and “weekly pennies,” each with a specific scale of circulation and target readership with specific demographic traits.

Media discourse research shows that enregisterment is accomplished in a multitude of media genres, involving contributions by journalists, lay people, and language scholars (Cotter 2010; Johnstone 2011; see also Section 25.4.3). Media reports or performances can “formulate models of language” (Squires 2010: 471) by making metapragmatic typifications of registers available to very large audiences for recontextualization and response. While the capacity of media for large-scale dissemination of semiotic messages is commonplace in media discourse studies, enregisterment research also asks how disseminated messages are taken up by audience members and how acts of enregisterment are repeated in audience uptake.

Barbara Johnstone’s work on Pittsburghese embeds Agha’s framework into a sociolinguistic study of language change in the city dialect of Pittsburgh (Johnstone 2011, 2013; Johnstone et al. 2006). Offering “a particularistic approach to linguistic and ideological change” (Johnstone et al. 2006: 77), this research links processes of sociolinguistic change in Pittsburgh’s urban community to the public circulation of language ideologies across various domains and media, including radio shows, YouTube videos, and folk dictionaries on the web. In media representations, features perceived as Pittsburghese are explicitly talked about and used in reflexive performances of identity. These media representations are especially attractive as semiotic resources to the younger generation of Pittsburgh residents whose own vernacular speech is less locally marked than the speech of their parents’ generation, as well as to newcomers who seek ways to position themselves toward established local identities. In this process, linguistic features that were previously perceived as signifiers of working class identity are reindexicalized as indices of local urban identity. Johnstone’s research brings together metadiscursive representations of local speech in the media and the local speech community.

25.4 Current contributions: shifts in theoretization

Recent developments in all these lines of research include the shift from ‘exposure’ toward ‘engagement’ as key motivation to adopt media language features (Section 25.4.1); the relation between the uptake of media fragments and their wider dissemination (25.4.2); the discursive constructing of new registers (25.4.3); the theorizing of change in digitally mediated communication (25.4.4); and the test-bed of minority language media (25.4.5). They are discussed in turn.

25.4.1 *Media influence: engagement and attitudes*

One recently questioned assumption is the notion that media exposure as such would be sufficient to trigger influence on language use. In media and communication studies, the search for direct correlations between media exposure and subsequent behavior has been replaced by studies of media reception while at the same time ethnographically grounded approaches to ‘active audiences’ emphasize people’s motivation for media consumption and their interpretive practices and engagement with media texts (Cormack 2007; Gauntlett 1998; Hepp 2014; Stuart-Smith 2012: 1081; Stuart-Smith and Ota 2014). Mirroring these developments, the suggestion has gained support that media language influence does not originate in mere exposure to media content but depends on audiences’ emotional and interactional engagement with media representations and characters (Carvalho 2004; Law 2013). This view received empirical support in a project on the role of television in the rapid spread of linguistic features from southern varieties of English in the city dialect of Glasgow, Scotland (Stuart-Smith 2011, 2012; Stuart-Smith et al. 2013). Using experimental methods, the researchers found that audience engagement with a popular London-based TV series, *EastEnders*, correlates significantly with use of these features among young Glasgow informants. More specifically, media engagement appears to be one among several factors that promote the spread of these features. There is no evidence for media language by itself ‘causing’ these changes. Rather, engagement with specific media narratives works together with other linguistic and social factors. Equally interesting is the finding that exposure to television in general did not show any significance. The same project (as well as Stuart-Smith and Ota 2014) draws on the notion of ‘the shelf’ (see Section 25.3.1) to analyze how media language features provide new stylistic variants in Scottish English and Japanese.

The assumption that change in progress shapes language attitudes, which eventually surface in media narratives, has been questioned as well. Kristiansen (2014) through research in Denmark argues that the relation between media discourse, attitudes, and usage is the opposite of what variationist research suggests: media representations shape attitudes, which in turn shape usage. Kristiansen suggests that the mass media experience that shapes the modern Danish society has a decisive influence on covert (or ‘subconsciously expressed’) language attitudes, which subsequently influence language use. In Denmark, a highly centralized society, the influence of broadcast media on speech is an indirect one. It consists in establishing a new standard language ideology, by which prestige is reallocated from Standard Danish to Copenhagen Danish, a formerly stigmatized city dialect, which has now become the language variety of most media celebrities. Empirical evidence comes from language attitude experiments, which show the ranking of local dialects, conservative Standard Danish, and modern Copenhagen Danish are strikingly similar across Denmark, suggesting that this cannot come about without the language-ideological impact of media. This is unlike

Norway, where mass media strengthen the tolerance for (and even promotion of) regional variation, with dialect use being accepted and on the increase in many media genres.

25.4.2 *Media fragments: uptake and indexical bleaching*

In Section 25.3.1 we saw that the uptake of a media fragment begins with practices of local recontextualization and can lead to a wider dissemination and in some cases eventually to conventionalization. Ethnographic methods, while indispensable in documenting the first steps of this process, cannot alone capture the subsequent trail of recycled fragments beyond local instances of uptake. We can think of this trail as involving various means of semiotic mediation, by which the reach of a recycled fragment can increase and accelerate. Social media, in particular, constitute a space where such rescaling can happen swiftly and unexpectedly, and also make it visible and traceable for researchers. An important aspect in the circulation of recycled media fragments is their intertextual or indexical bleaching, i.e., the gradual loss of their association with the particular media source from which they originate. Androutsopoulos (2014: 23) defines intertextual bleaching as “decreasing interactional relevance of the fragment’s intertextual link, so that its media origin is made ever less relevant in the actual instance of recontextualization.” Squires (2014) introduces the term indexical bleaching and distinguishes between adoption, circulation, and diffusion of a media fragment. Adoption is the fragment’s uptake by audience members in conversational interaction; circulation is its spread “from adopters to new users, who are media consumers,” and diffusion is the “spread of the feature from adopters to new users, who may or may not be media consumers” (Squires 2014: 43). Diffusion differs from circulation in that the fragment in question undergoes indexical bleaching. It “retains its semantic meaning and pragmatic force” (Squires 2014: 43) but loses its metapragmatic connection to a specific media narrative, thereby entering the lexical or idiomatic repertoire of a speech community.

What is theoretically significant here is the idea that the circulation and diffusion of media fragments are accomplished across modalities of language. There is no clear boundary between media and community language, with social media as a crucial link between the two. In terms of method, tracing indexical bleaching can draw on a range of data, for example combining newspaper corpora, social media, and ethnographically documented instances of everyday talk. Social media offer, by means of their visibility and accessibility, new and exciting possibilities of tracking such changes. Squires (2014) proposes a corpus-based operationalization of indexical bleaching on the example of how a phrase from a television show is recycled on Twitter. Tweets that contain this phrase are classified by discursive domain, topical reference, and formal modification, the aim being to trace the moment where bleaching occurs. For example, we can say bleaching has occurred when the use of the fragment neither bears a cue to its mediatized origin nor does it raise subsequent metapragmatic commentary.

25.4.3 *Enregisterment in media discourse*

Following up on Johnstone’s research (Section 25.3.4), enregisterment theory has been used more widely to examine how metapragmatic discourse constructs new registers of language. Squires (2010) examines the enregisterment of Internet language (‘netspeak’), based on metalinguistic discussions in Internet forums. She examines typical examples of ‘netspeak’ as they are negotiated in these spaces, suggestions about typical users, evaluations and classifications. This study shows that media technologies take on a language-ideological load

by virtue of their assumed effects on digital language use. So while most linguists maintain that ‘netspeak’ does not exist as a distinct variety of language, a register by the same name is discursively constructed, based on stereotyped metapragmatic knowledge about digital language and its users, and once established, the notion of ‘netspeak’ can be deployed in order to categorize and evaluate language users.

Another area of research is the emergence of new urban varieties by multilingual speakers, termed multiethnolects in Europe. Several researchers (e.g., Milani 2010) observe that this development has been accompanied by media reporting activity by which ideas about these new varieties, their relation to standard language, their social valuation, and typical speakers circulate. Androutsopoulos (2007, 2011b) examines the representation of German ethnolects in a range of media genres (news stories, performance genres) as well as educational materials. He suggests that this metapragmatic discourse involves a small number of basic operations – definitions (by means of new language labels), classifications, normative evaluations, exemplifications – by which sociolinguistic knowledge is created and perpetuated. He also finds intertextual chains across domains of discourse, for instance when educational materials draw on media stories and bits of comedy performance to thematize the new ethnic variety of German. While sociolinguistic developments in urban varieties do exist (Wiese 2015), media discourse propels enregisterment by turning sociolinguistic variation into varieties of language with apparent clear boundaries, typical features, and exemplar speakers. In a similar vein, Kerswill (2014) examines media discourse on Jafaican (‘fake Jamaican’), a recent label by which British newspapers refer to multi-ethnic vernacular forms of London English. Kerswill’s account links a corpus and discourse linguistic examination of Jafaican to previous sociolinguistic research on Multicultural London English and assesses the relation between media representations and spoken-language innovations. Kerswill identifies a number of positive and stigmatizing discourses that link Jafaican to London’s socio-demographical change, social issues, and entertainment culture.

25.4.4 Sociolinguistic change in digital written language

The traditional linguistic approach to media and language change (see Section 25.3.1) focuses entirely on mass media and explicitly excludes digitally mediated communication (see Sayers 2014; Trudgill 2014). Recent linguistic and semiotic innovations in digital written language include new vocabulary on digital technologies and practices, emoticons, and emojis. However, there is hardly any evidence for a spill-over of such innovations to other registers of written or spoken language. (There is anecdotal evidence on single items such as the abbreviation *LOL*, reported as lexicalized in French, German, and English.) Crystal (2011) suggests that the time-span involved is too short to draw any conclusions on grammatical language change. Androutsopoulos (2011a, 2014) argues that a narrow concept of language change is not sufficient to conceptualize the large-scale sociolinguistic changes brought about by digitally mediated communication.

Digitally mediated communication creates new public spaces for unregimented written language, i.e., written language produced by non-professional writers, which is neither professionally edited nor subject to institutional normative control. This enables diverse normative orientations. In some digital spaces speakers/writers orient to standard language conventions, especially on the orthographic plane, whereas in others casual spelling styles can become normalized. The rise of unregimented writing also creates opportunities of public representation for small or endangered languages, which traditionally did not find their way into public writing (Deumert 2014b). With the advance of social media since the mid-2000s, the boundaries

between professionally edited and unregimented written language become increasingly leaky. The two are often intertwined, an example being Twitter and Facebook accounts by organizations that also host comments by followers. The interpenetration between professional and unregimented language styles in social media creates new conditions for the uptake, circulation, and diffusion of semiotic innovations and for the change of communicative norms, for example in the writing style of journalists. There is still very little research on this interface. Squires and Iorio (2014) examine how Twitter messages by entertainment and sports celebrities are quoted in news reports. Their findings suggest that the non-standard orthography that is regarded as iconic of Twitter and other networked writing decreases over time. As a result, reported tweets become less deviant from the orthographic norm of the rest of the newspaper discourse. Interestingly, this finding goes against the widespread earlier assumption that digital language would have an effect resulting in ever-greater informality in written language. With more than 20 years of digital language archives available, a diachronic analysis of this sort seems timely (see also discussion in Section 25.5).

A second dimension of sociolinguistic change in digital media is variability in spelling and punctuation. The traditional sociolinguistic perspective on written language as a largely invariant domain of language use was premised on standardized written language. In digital spaces of unregimented writing, spelling and punctuation become important pragmatic resources. In a mode of familiar or even intimate communication that lacks the prosodic and gestural plane of meaning-making, the visual shape of linguistic signs can provide contextualization cues (Georgakopoulou 2003; Androutsopoulos 2011a; Deumert 2014a; Lyons 2015). Some unconventional spelling features are motivated by the representation of phonological and prosodic information (Eisenstein 2015), while others do not depend on phonological correspondence but rather operate on a specifically visual level of linguistic heterogeneity (Androutsopoulos 2016: 287–293). Depending on the writing system, some languages seem to afford more leeway for specifically visual variation and innovation. For example, there are extensive practices of “neography” (Anis 2007) in French, which draw on alternative homophone spellings for a given linguistic item. By contrast, languages such as German or Spanish seem to provide fewer options for neography. Visually specific variation in punctuation can show sociolinguistic correlations. Squires (2012) found that the omission of the apostrophe in English text messaging varies by the gender of writer and interlocutor. Also, punctuation marks such as the period are found to be losing their normative syntactic regularity and becoming markers of interpersonal and affective stance. Gunraj et al. (2016) found that U.S. college students interpret message-final full-stops in text messaging as indicating that the writer is disengaged, bored, or sad. Unlike public scenarios of linguistic dystopia, which frame smartphones and other digital media as causes of language decay among young people (Thurlow 2006; Brommer 2007), there is evidence that informal unregimented writing does not impact on a writer’s standard orthography nor does it lead to a loss of normative awareness (Dürscheid et al. 2010). Rather, digital language users seem to extend their linguistic repertoires by developing new styles of written language by maintaining the standard written language conventions required for formal communicative contexts. Such extension of written-language repertoires fits in well into a sociolinguistic change approach.

25.4.5 *Minority language media*

Minority language media provide a particularly interesting test-bed for the influence of media on community language. Since the 1980s, television and other media, including

the Internet, are often brought up as either a resource for, or a potential threat to, the maintenance and revitalization of minority languages (Cormack 2007; Cotter 1996; Fishman 2001; Jaffe 2007; Lexander 2011). Cotter (2001) and Cormack (2007) note that minority language media can offer various types of support to minority language communities. They introduce the actual written or spoken use of the minority language into the public domain, index the capacity of that language to express demands and concerns of contemporary life, and can propel the normalization of minority language use into a speech community. Media impact on language maintenance or revitalization can specifically consist in coining and spreading new vocabulary, offering linguistic models, and providing a background for actual minority language use in the community (Cormack 2007; Cotter 1996, 2001; Moriarty 2014). Cormack (2007: 62, 66) points out that it is difficult to empirically establish a direct, measurable effect of media on actual minority language use. While the provision of minority language media is a necessary means of support, it is not by itself sufficient. Minority language media must be attractive enough to constitute a model for members of the audience (Cotter 2001; Moriarty 2014).

Recent “ecological approaches” (Cormack 2007) to minority language media turn to the fluid and often fragmented use of minority languages in contemporary media ecologies, thereby taking into account the shift to digital media and cross-media networks in which boundaries between professional and participatory authorship dissolve. Pietikäinen (2014) examines uses of the Sámi language across Finnish media and distinguishes a “super fixed multilingual space” (which represents traditional uses of Sámi in broadcast) from a “strategically hybrid” space (a television program where Sámi is used together with Finnish and English in a performance of hybrid identities). Moriarty (2014) examines the impact of native language broadcasting on Irish and Basque students, who overwhelmingly evaluate dedicated television channels as positive promoters of the Irish and Basque language and identify certain media personalities as particularly influential promoters (see also Moriarty and Pietikäinen 2011). Often, the effects of media support for minority languages are fundamentally ideological in nature: it can provide motivation and models for minority language use.

25.5 Critical issues and topics: integrating across sociolinguistic frameworks

The literature reviewed in this chapter suggests elements of a new framework for media and language change research. These elements are closely linked to a critique of several earlier premises and assumptions of media and language change research: its structuralist bias, the ostensible sharp boundary between media language and community language, and the relationship between exposure and influence. The discussion shows that more integration and dialogue across sociolinguistic approaches are needed. Integrating feature-level analysis with the study of uptake and recontextualization practices and the language-ideological dimensions of sociolinguistic change could offer new insights into the complex process of media engagement and influence. Many recent contributions focus on language-ideological aspects (see Sections 25.4.1 and 25.4.5) and provide support for the hypothesis that in mediated societies, media representations can have an impact on language ideologies, which in turn can have an impact on speakers’ linguistic choices.

In this context, the idea that media influence on language can occur by mere exposure is becoming obsolete. Instead, the state of the art is that people’s engagement with media representations is a prerequisite for *any* orientation to media language, from which diffusion

and eventually change might arise. Likewise, earlier generic notions of media language are being replaced by the attempt to identify aspects of media discourse that might provide relevant linguistic models to specific audience groups. If engagement with media narratives is key to influence, as recent research suggests (see Section 25.4.1), then it becomes paramount to find out which particular representations, narratives, and styles might motivate specific audiences to engage with, and possibly linguistically imitate (cf. Kristiansen 2014; Stuart-Smith and Ota 2014; Stuart-Smith et al. 2013; Ota and Takano 2014). We need to take into consideration the complex chains of transnational adaptation and localization that shape today's global mediascapes. For example, in countries where foreign films are dubbed, the dubbing of U.S. films has been proposed as an input to language change, notably by diffusion of dubbed lexis or idioms into the receiving language (cf. Osterroth (2015) on the example of the spread of the English word *nerd* in German). These developments weaken the still powerful (techno-deterministic) metaphor of 'influence,' emphasizing instead the agency of speakers/media users and consumers in orienting to, selecting, and appropriating media resources. They also relocate media impact in more fine-grained aspects of contemporary media ecologies.

Media language has been regarded by early researchers as (simplistically) standardized and fully distinct from what is thought of as the genuine empirical object of sociolinguistics, i.e., conversational spoken language in the community, a critique that Cotter has repeatedly raised (e.g., Cotter 2001, 2010). Such dichotomies between 'media language' vs. 'speech community language' or 'mass media' vs. 'interpersonal contact' originate in scholarship that long precedes the pre-digital age. Today, all evidence indicates that relations between media and community language are increasingly blurred. A sharp distinction between mass and interpersonal communication is currently dissolving in media and communication studies, too (see Livingstone 2009). Analogizing this to language and media research, we start perceiving new intersections between media and community language in connection with the global circulation patterns of semiotic innovations in mediatized societies. A sociolinguistic change approach assumes different patterns of directionality and circulation of linguistic resources, which might or might not eventually result in systemic language change (see Section 25.4.3). For example, evidence on the development of digital written language on the Internet suggests a process by which a phase of innovative, unconventional usage is followed by an increase of more conventional linguistic forms, which are closer to standard-oriented usage. A study on French chat interaction over five years (Strätz 2011) shows a decrease in typos, an increase in normative punctuation and syntactic complexity, a decrease in abbreviations, and various stylistic shifts toward more formal styles of writing. A similar process of gradual standardization in usage was found by Cotter (1996, 2001) in her study of an Irish-language community radio station (see also Squires and Iorio (2014), discussed in Section 25.4.4). In a sociolinguistic change approach, such shifts toward de- and re-standardization in usage are regarded as part of "the dynamism and mobility of language" (Spitulnik 1997: 114) in popular and media culture. The end-result of such mobility can also be the emergence of new registers, i.e., new ideological links between speech forms and speaker *personae* (see Sections 25.3.4. and 25.4.4. and Lyons 2015).

25.6 Future directions: research in the digital age

The role of media representations in shaping new registers, as discussed in Section 25.5, is an important area for future research, which asks whether the speaker stereotypes entailed in enregisterment might play a role in subsequent register choices in the audience's

interpersonal communication. Sociolinguistic theory of language change builds on the idea that speakers accommodate to a particular interlocutor. However, alternative views have been proposed, such as that interpersonal accommodation “is better explained as accommodation of a stereotypical *persona* or mental representation (model) of a social group” (Auer and Hinskens 2005: 343) or, put differently, that “accommodation may not be in response to a particular interlocutor, but to stereotypes of the group the interlocutor belongs to, or of a socially attractive group not actually represented in the immediate context” (Carvalho 2004: 141–142). This view ties in well with the language-ideology research notion that media representations shape enregisterment by linking speaker stereotypes to linguistic features. Such registers might offer a resource for accommodation.

Clearly, certain aspects of sociolinguistic change are very difficult to capture empirically. An example is the large-scale repertoire shift towards the ever-increasing acceptance of English into the linguistic repertoires of Germany. Indicators of such a shift include an increasing presence of English in the public realm, in the linguistic landscape, on TV and in newspapers. For example, untranslated English quotes in a German newspaper story or TV magazine assume sufficient linguistic proficiency on the part of the audience, which was certainly not the case a generation ago. Such a shift, which fits well into a sociolinguistic change approach, is difficult to capture empirically because its traces are all over the mediascape, scattered across several genres and formats, so that the study of a single linguistic variable, or a single newspaper corpus, does not corroborate ethnographic observations.

New approaches to language data, and new ways of working with very large corpora can perhaps offer solutions to these issues, opening up new ways of carrying out empirical research to examine anecdotal observations. Media and language change research can experiment with new tools from other fields and disciplines, notably digital humanities and computational linguistics, which advance new ways of dealing with the collection and annotation of very large textual corpora. Twitter data, in particular, are already being studied in terms of language change questions (Squires and Iorio 2014; Goel et al. 2016), and innovative computational methods enable modeling the diffusion of non-standard words and abbreviations in relation to the structure of user networks. Such research also shows the usefulness of lexical items for language change research in the digital age.

25.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviews scholarship on language, media, and sociocultural change that originates in variationist sociolinguistics, interactional sociolinguistics, media linguistics, language-ideology research, and minority language studies. It attempts a synthesis of these lines of research, identifies critical issues, and offers suggestions for further research. The chapter suggests going beyond a narrow and by now insufficient understanding of media and language change, which in the past was limited to structural language change in restricted broadcast contexts. I argued that the concepts of sociolinguistic change and mediatization enable a broader theoretical framing that includes various ways in which media discourses and representations shape the social life of language. While the notion of language change is part of a structuralist paradigm, the notion of sociolinguistic change orients to a post-structuralist view of language as a set of resources and practices (Blommaert 2010; Heller 2007). And while the notion of media can lead to a techno-determinist view, mediatization advances an understanding of media as a dimension of any semiotic activity and a set of conditions for the social life of language. Mediatization is implicated in several processes of sociolinguistic change, including the acceleration of structural changes, the spread of new

vocabulary, the formation of new registers of communication, and the shaping of language ideologies. It is suggested that this wider framing can accommodate research on the circulation and diffusion of semiotic innovations across different modalities of language and communication media.

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