

Intra-speaker Variation

LINGUIST 159

American Dialects

11/11/2014

Style

- There are no single-style speakers: everyone engages in **style-shifting**
- **Registers:** language varieties associated with particular *situations of use*
- **Genres:** highly ritualized/structured registers
- **Styles**

Three waves of variation study

“I view social studies of linguistic variation as coming in three loosely-ordered waves.” -Eckert, 2012

First wave

How can we use social factors to explain aspects of language use, variation, and change?

- Correlate demographic categories with linguistic behavior
- Big picture distribution of variables in large urban populations

Second wave

How is language used to create *local meanings*, in daily life?

- Ethnographic approaches → discover, rather than impose, salient social categories
- Local variables as tied up in local ideologies, symbolic capital

Third wave

How do people use language as a resource for constructing *identity*?

- Connections of an individual's use of language in creating identity to more general social patterns
- Language use as a *practice* situated in communities of practice
- Study *social meaning* of variables

First wave - Summary

- Large survey studies of geographically defined communities – large-scale coverage, short contact with each speaker
- Focus on pre-determined social categories
- Variables *mark* social categories, carry prestige/stigma
- Style is attention paid to speech, controlled by orientation to prestige/stigma

Attention to Speech

Social stratification of English in NYC (Labov 1966)

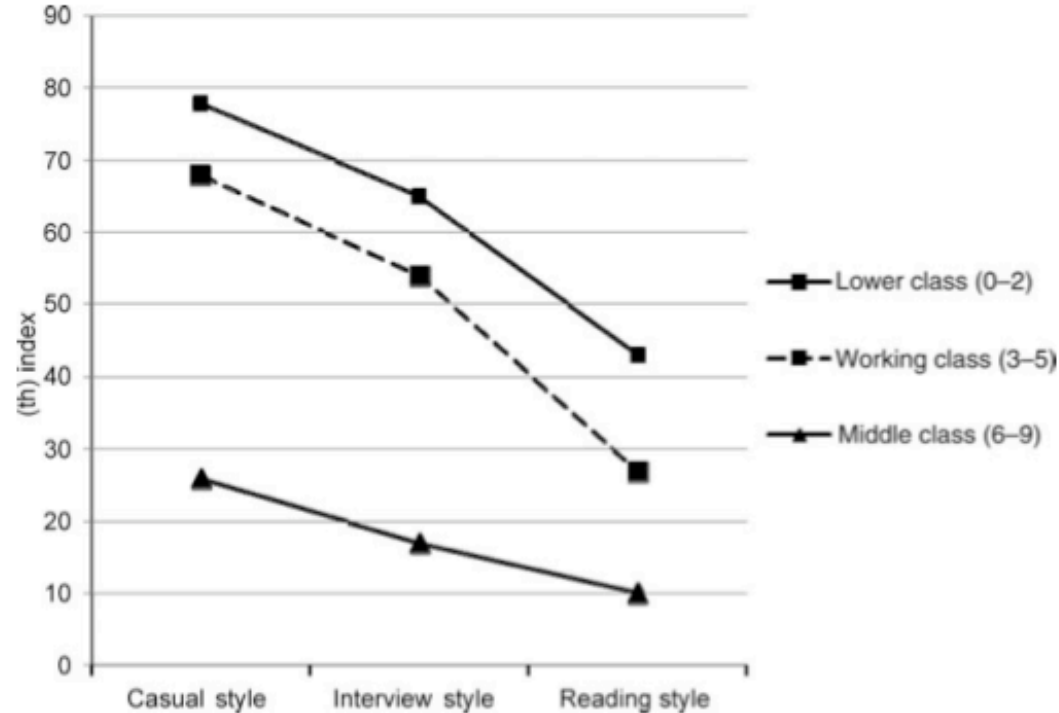


Figure 1

Class stratification of (th)-stopping. From Labov (1966).

Attention to Speech

- Style-shifts based on how self-conscious we are of our speech (Labov 1966, 1972)
- Continuum of little attention paid to most attention paid
- Interview: careful versus casual speech

Salience (Labovian terms)

Indicators

a variable feature that shows no pattern of stylistic variation in users' speech, speakers are not aware of this variable

Markers

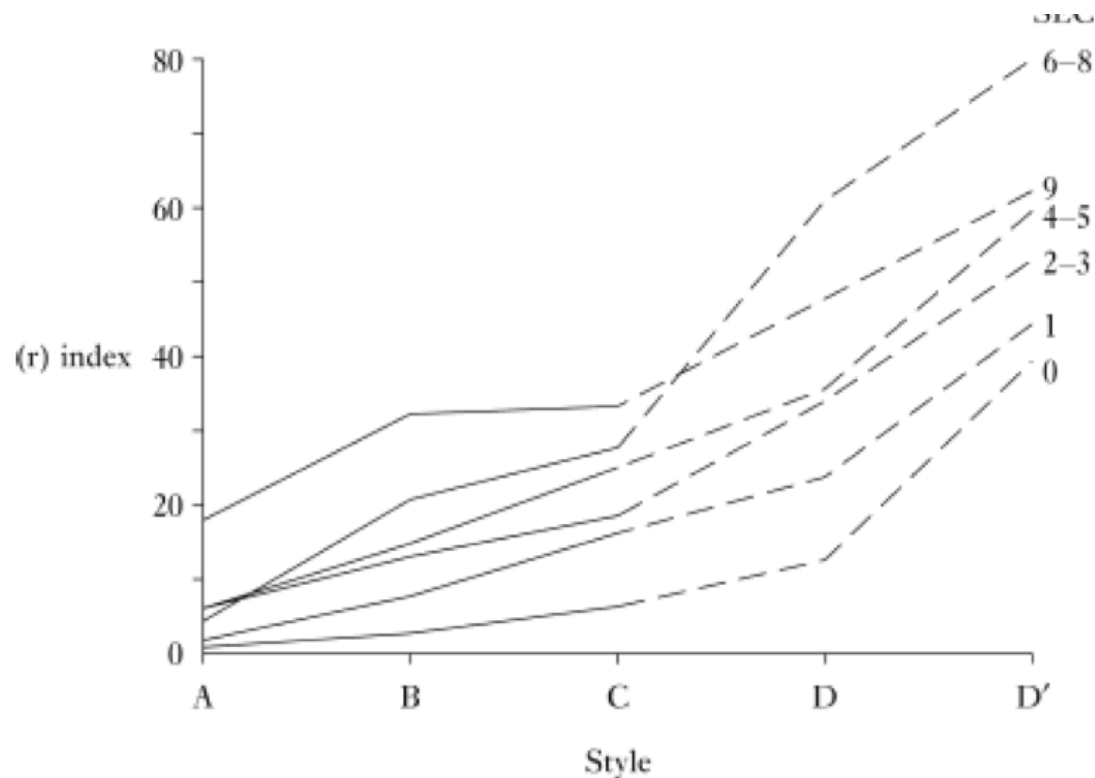
a variable feature that show stylistic variation, speakers use different variants in different contexts; speakers have some implicit *social evaluation* of the feature

Stereotypes

a variable feature that is the *overt* topic of social comment; may become increasingly divorced from forms that are actually used

Attention to Speech

Social stratification of English in NYC (Labov 1966)



SEC scale: 0-1, lower class; 2-3, working class; 4-5, 6-8, lower middle class; 9, upper middle class. A, casual speech; B, careful speech; C, reading style; D, word lists; D', minimal pairs.

Attention to Speech

The Vernacular Principle:

“the style which is most regular in its structure and in its relation to the evolution of the language is the **vernacular**, in which the minimum attention is paid to speech”

(Labov 1972)

Attention to Speech – Assumptions/ Questions

- Assumption of standard/non-standard continuum as primary
- Consensual model of prestige/stigma
- Formality and attention co-occur (high performance)
- Context differs not *just* on the dimension of attention
- Is there such thing as a “most natural” style? How do we know if someone is using their most natural style?

Second wave - Summary

- Ethnographic studies of geographically defined communities
- Local categories as links to larger demographic categories
- Variables *index* locally-defined categories
- Style is an act of affiliation

Accommodation Theory

- Speakers style-shift primarily in adjustment to **addressees** (SAT/CAT, Giles 1973, 1984)
- Social motivations of a speaker and relationships between speaker and addressees strongly dictate accommodation v. disaccommodation

Accommodation Theory

- Speakers **converge** when:
 - They seek social approval from an interlocuter
 - They desire to communicate efficiently
 - Social norms don't dictate alternate speech strategies
- Speakers **diverge** when:
 - Seeking in-group identity in an inter-group situation
 - They wish distance themselves from an interlocuter
 - They wish to “bring another's speech behavior to a personally acceptable level”

Audience Design

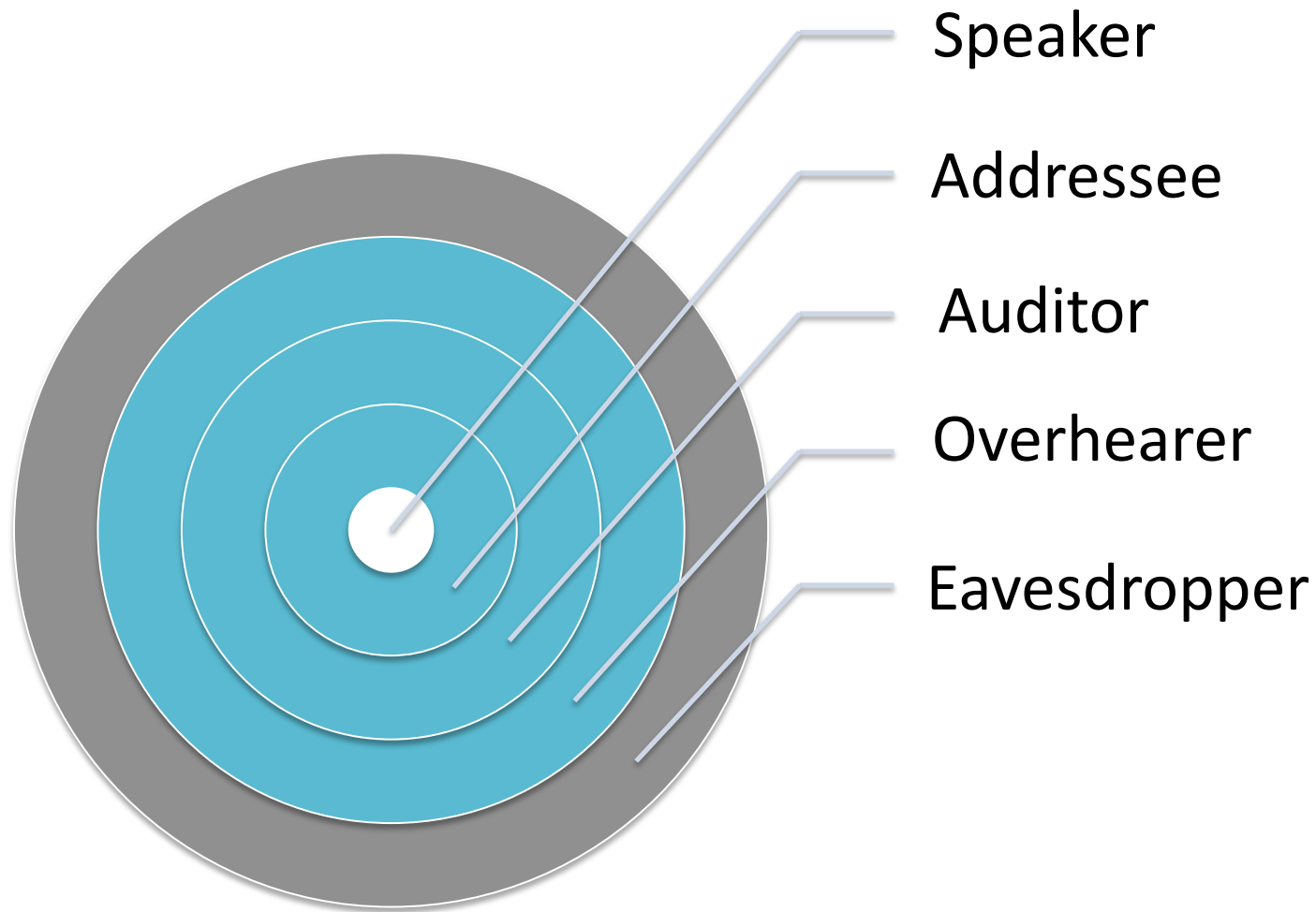
- Speakers style-shift primarily in response to audience (Bell 1984)
- Brings CAT to variationist linguistics
- Speakers shift language use to show solidarity or distance with audience members of **different kinds**

Rickford & McNair-Knox (1994, 2013)

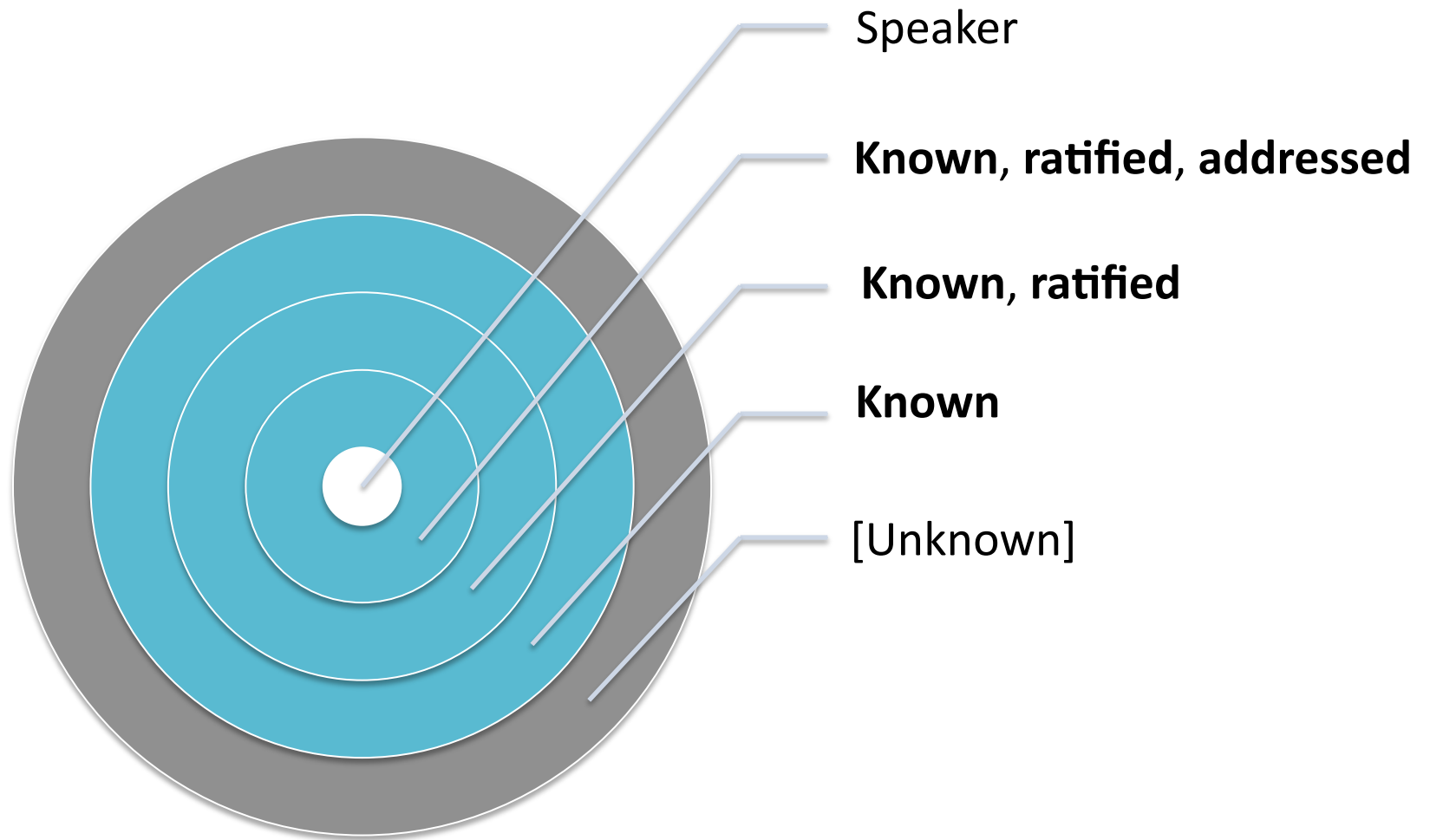
Table 9: Foxy Boston's vernacular usage across her multiple interviews

Interview date	Age	Interview	Interviewer and co-interviewee (where recorded; duration)	3rd sg. present –s absence	<i>is+are</i> absence	Invariant habitual <i>be</i>
Dec 1986	13	EPA 7, 8	Faye and RaShida (at Foxy's home; 2h 29m)	97% (69)	90% (154)	146 (97 per hr)
Sep 1988	14	EPA 42, 43	Faye and RaShida (at Faye's home; 0h 56m)	47% (36)	36% (77)	75 (81 per hr)
Jun 1990	16	EPA 55, 56	Faye (with RaShida and another teenager; 1h 55m)	73% (114)	70% (283)	385 (201 per hr)
Feb 1992	17	EPA 114	Beth (White, unfamiliar Stanford grad student, at Foxy's home; 1h 15m)	36% (124)	40% (176)	97 (78 per hr)

Audience Design (Bell 1984)



Audience Design (Bell 1984)

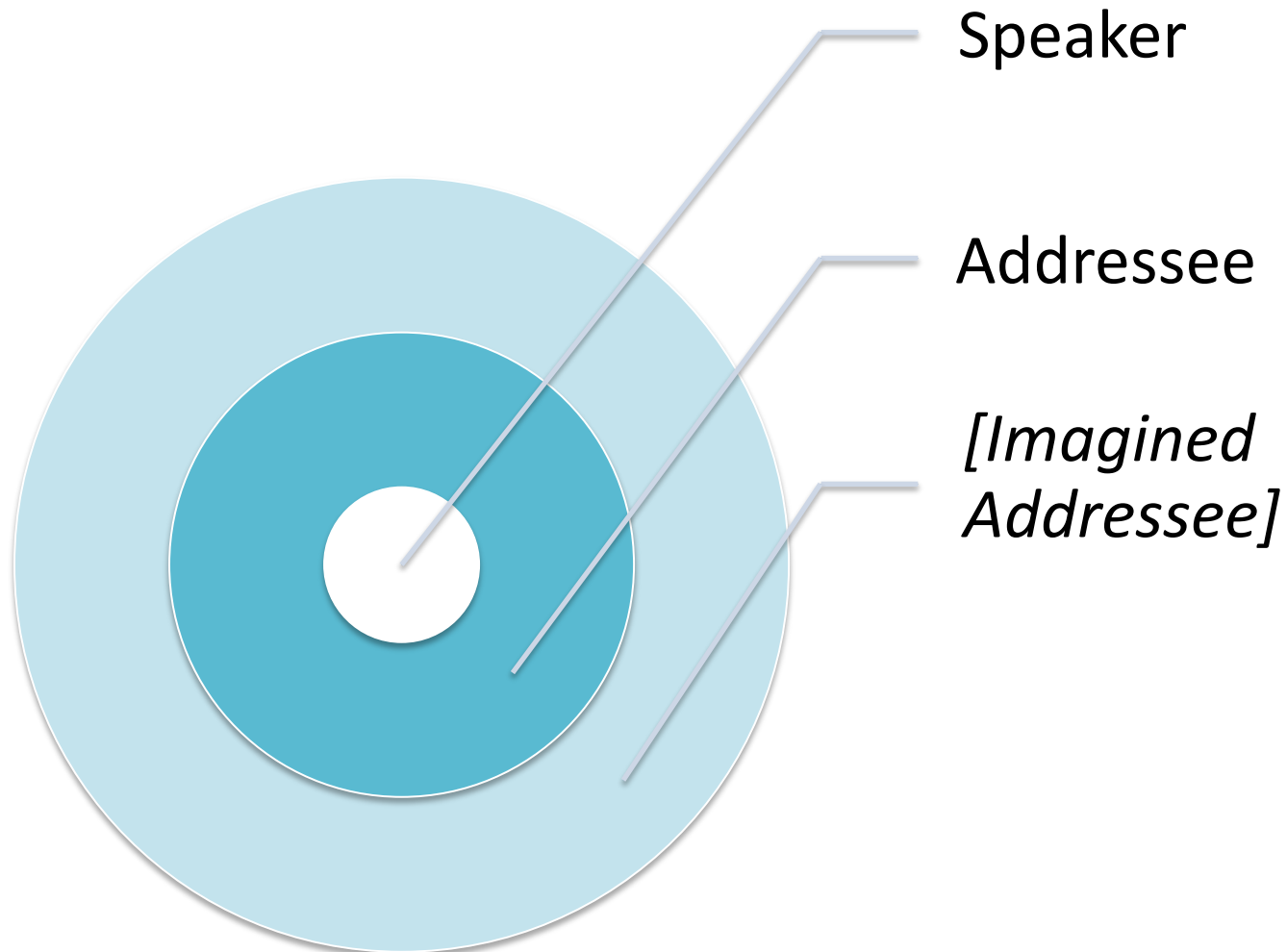


Audience Design



Key & Peele: Phone Call - YouTube
www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzprLDmdRlc ▼

Topic-based Shifting in Audience Design (Bell 1984)



Becker (2012)

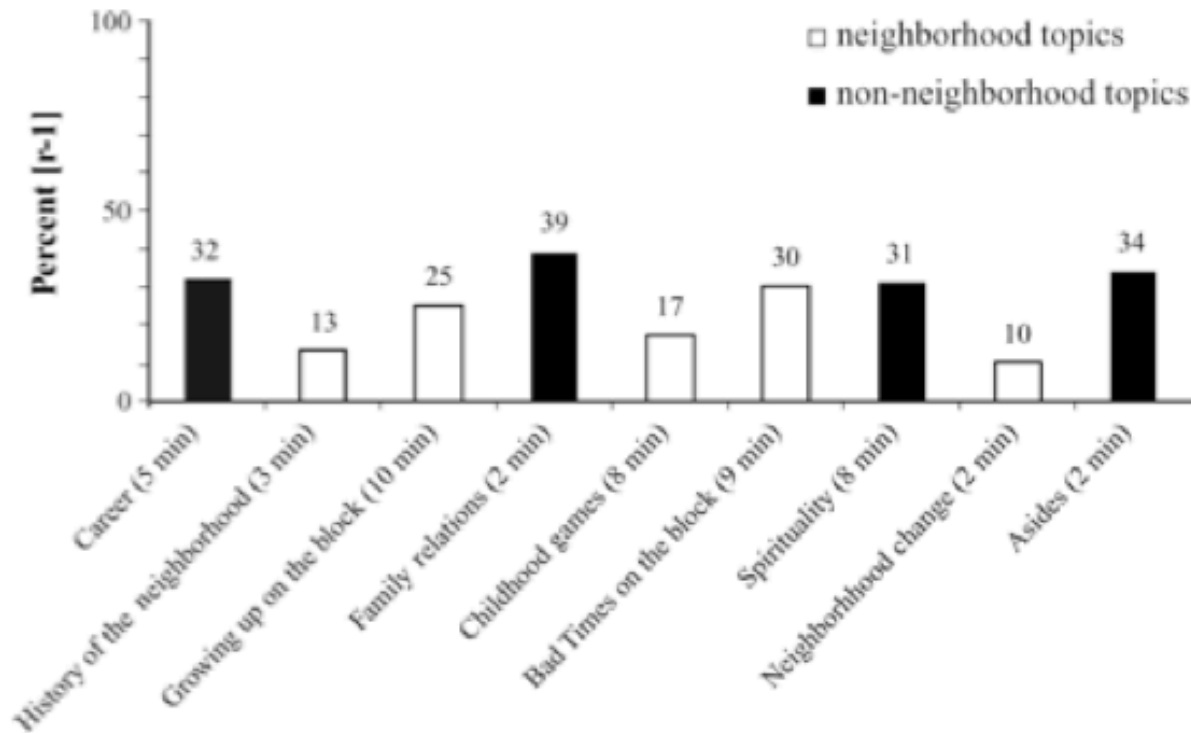


Figure 4. One NYCE speaker's rates of [r-1] across topics, reproduced with permission from Becker (2009)

Rickford & McNair-Knox (1994, 2013)

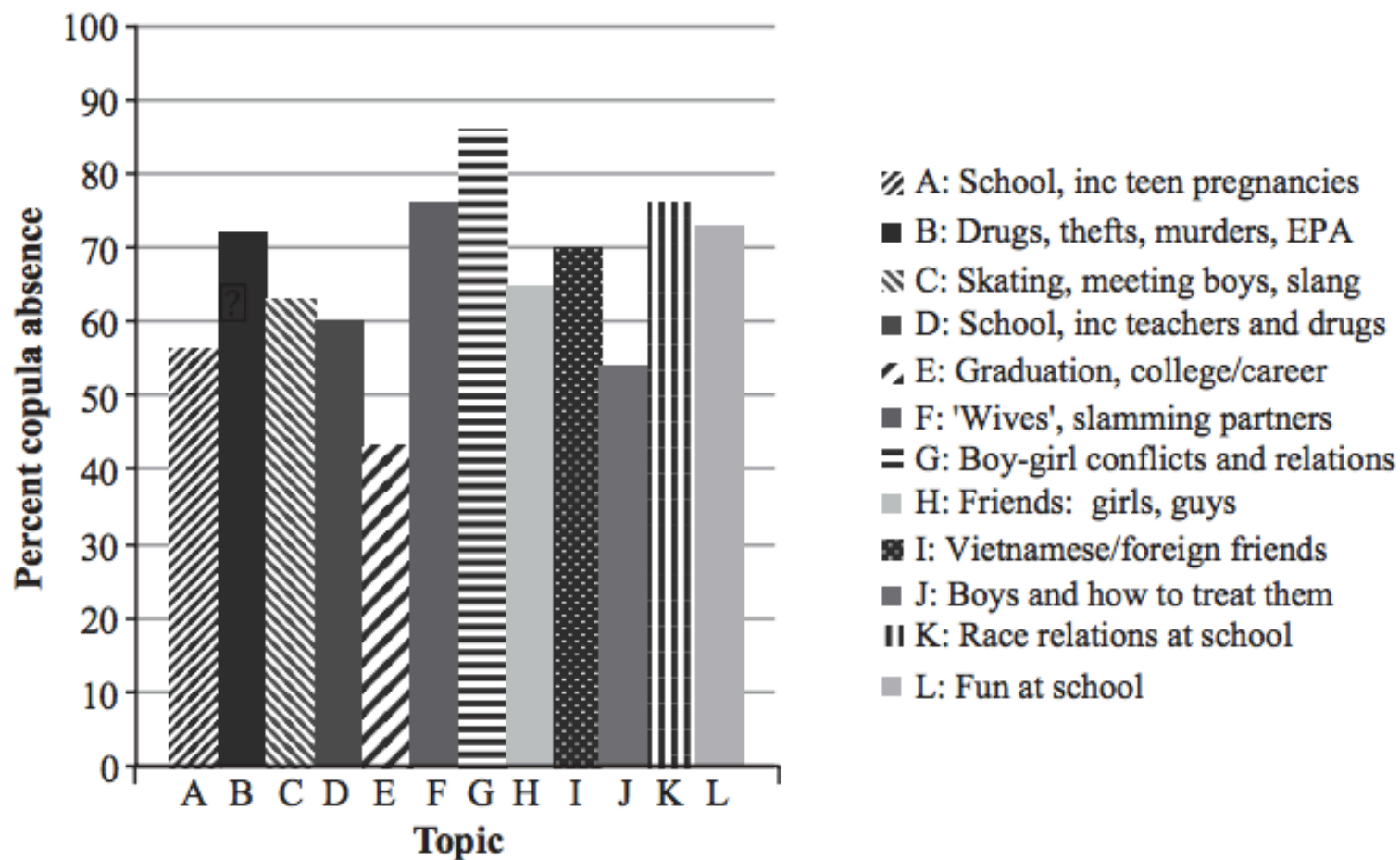
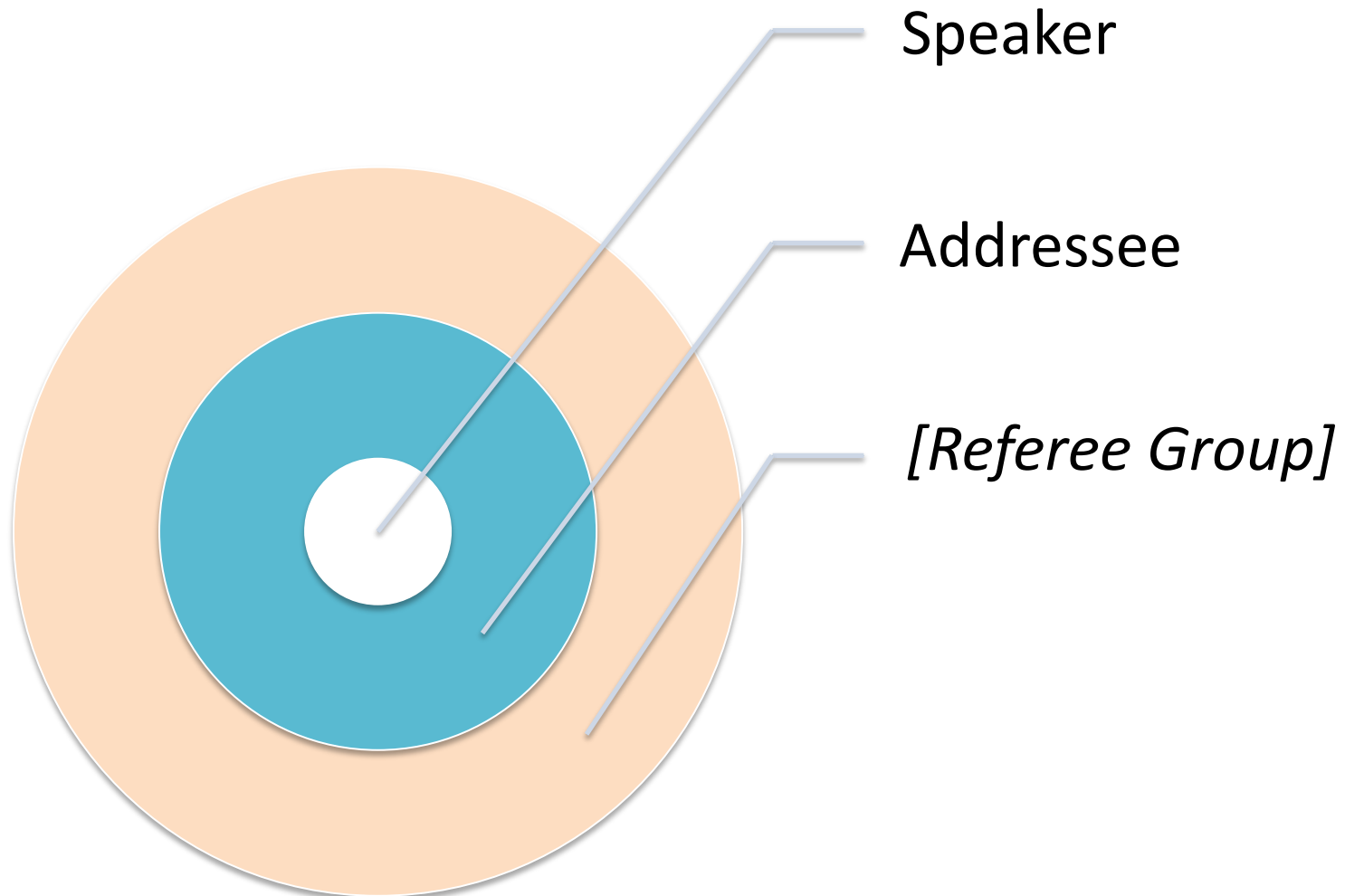


Figure 11: Foxy's zero copula use by Topic, Interview III, with Faye and RaShida (Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994)

Audience Design

- **Responsive Style Shift**
 - Style shift in **response** to shift in external factors (attention, speech setting, audience member, topic)
 - Attention to Speech, Audience Design
- **Initiative Style Shift**
 - Style shift **initiated** by speaker in an attempt to alter the existing situation
 - Referee Design

Referee Design (Bell 1984)



Audience/Referee Design - Questions

- What **aspects** of addressees/referees are speakers converging with/diverging from?
How do we know?
- Relationship between responsive style shifts and initiative style shift?
- Referee/addressee groups affect style shifting – in what way? How do these groups come to influence particular styles/features?

Third wave

- Studies couched in *communities of practice*
- Local categories built on common *stances*
- Variables *index* activities, stances, characteristics
- Focus on *social meanings* of variables
- Style is part of persona construction

Speaker Design: Style in the third wave

Third wave conception of *style*:

“Style is a socially meaningful clustering of features within and across linguistic levels and modalities.”

-the Half Moon Bay Style Collective,
“The elements of style”

Indexical fields

A variable can index a variety of social meanings, which can be accessed or created via one another



Indexical field of /t/-release, from Eckert, 2008

Figure 4: Indexical field of /t/ release. Boxes = social types, black = permanent qualities, gray = stances

Style in the third wave

- Features index social meanings by virtue of what other features they *co-occur* with (linguistic and non-linguistic)
- Use of styles both reproduce and create new social meanings

Style in the third wave

We build styles through the process of

bricolage: taking a variety of resources that exist in the world and combining them to create new meanings/identities/personae





COSTUME
idea :
BASIC BITCH

Style in the third wave

“Styles are **ideological**: people don’t do stylistic work around issues that are trivial to them. They construct styles which reveal something about their beliefs about their **experiences.**”

-the Half Moon Bay Style Collective,
“The elements of style”



Style in the third wave

“Both style and meanings are **fluid** and **ongoing**, and hold the possibility for change.

We don't change willy-nilly; any innovation must be **legible** – it must build in a comprehensible way on established resources.”

-the Half Moon Bay Style Collective,
“The elements of style”



