STYLE, CONTEXT AND REGISTER

Stylistic differences: the *addressee* and the *context* plays an important role in choosing the variety available in language speakers employ.

In addition to the macro categories – such as gender, age, social background – the influence of the *addressee to the degree of formality*, and the *influence of the contexts of varying formality* need to be considered.

> Study the Example #1, p. 239.
> Same information, different styles!

1.   **Addressee as an influence on style**

The more familiar the speaker is with the addressee, the style used will be less formal – this tendency is observed across languages.

Factors relevant to the addressee: age, social background, gender, etc.

1.1   Age of addressee

- speaking to children, and in many cases, to the elderly, simpler vocabulary, less complex grammar, distinctive (sing-song) intonation is used;

- speaking to adults: more complex sentences, larger vocabulary, standard intonation patterns.

> Study the Examples #3 and #4 on p. 241.

1.2   Social background of addressee

Different language varieties are employed to addressees of different social backgrounds: pronunciation, vocabulary and grammatical differences – more formal to casual styles!

Figure 10.1 (p. 243) illustrates the use of linguistic features in different radio stations: *audience design*!

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The influence of the addressee or audience on a speaker's style.

2. Accommodation theory

Speech accommodation: the speech of each person converges toward the speech of the other person they are conversing with – the style becomes similar!

Condition: the speaker intends to please the addressee, or, trying to make the conversation more fluid – a politeness strategy!

2.1   How do speakers accommodate?

- Simplified speech to foreigners and children (vocabulary, grammar);
- Selecting the language (or variety) of the addressee in multilingual communities.

2.2   Speech divergence

Negative attitude:

Deliberate choice of the language or variety *not* used by the addressee: for example, the use of Arabic instead of English (p. 246 – comment!)

Positive attitude:

The divergence may benefit the speaker: for example, deliberate incorporation of foreign accent, see p. 247. Comment!

Referee design:

A third party's style is employed for special effect: see examples on p. 247. Comment!

2.3   Stylisation

The variety employed differs from the speaker's normal style – it is *stronger* or *higher.*

> Study the Example #9 on p. 248.

Are the concepts of *referee design* and *stylizations* different? Explain!

2.4   Accommodation problems
- Overdoing convergence

Study the Example #10 on p. 249.

- Possible consequences of deliberate divergence: it may be perceived as negative and arrogant   (English vs. French in Montreal, p. 249)

- The importance of considering the context: attitude issues!

Study the Example #11 on p. 249.
What are the addressee's choices here?

3.   Context, style and class

3.1   Formal contexts and social class

The degree of formality determines the choice of style: the context and the roles of participants in the formal setting is relevant!!

Study the Example #12, p. 250.

3.2   Different styles within an interview

In an interview setting, it is easier to elicit more formal styles than casual ones – why? Explain!

Study Labov's interview in Example #14, p. 251.

W. Labov (1972) included *style* in his studies:

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a major external variable: *The amount of attention paid to speech.*

Methodological challenge: *Observer's paradox*

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The aim of linguistic research is to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed, but the data are only available through systematic observation. (Labov, 1972)

Labov also utilized the tendency of people using less formal style when they are emotionally involved – for example,

asking people to report on a serious accident.

3.3   Colloquial style or the vernacular

- Objective of the interviewer: to collect colloquial or vernacular style data.

A frequently employed strategy: instead of recording individuals, researchers organize small groups and interview them in an comfortable setting.

Study the Example #15, p. 252.

- Colloquial style vs. standard speech: several linguistic features may distinguish these two styles.

Examples: p. 253.

3.4   The interaction of social class and style

Trudgill's study (1974): he examined sixteen linguistic variables in relation to social class and style in Norwich, England.

Style is kept constant → non-standard variant occurs more frequently in the lower social class.

Social class is kept constant → non-standard variant occurs more frequently in the less formal style.

Study the vernacular [in] for four social groups and four styles: Figure 10.2, p. 254.

3.5   Hypercorrection

Post-vocalic [r] for range of social groups and five styles in new York: Figure 10.3, p. 256.

Note: The lower middle class (LMC) pronounces [r] more than the upper middle class (UMC): hypercorrect behaviour!

Hypercorrect usage goes beyond the norm:
SOCIAL INSECURITY!

4.   Style in non-western societies

In several languages there is a complexity of variations with regard to style.

For example, Japanese speakers have to select from plain, polite and deferential styles:

Study the Examples #19 and #20, p. 258. Comment!

5. Register

Speaker's style may be influenced by the *function* of the speech event.

Study the linguistic features in sport announcers' talk:

- Syntactic reduction
- Syntactic inversion
- Heavy noun modification
- Routines and formulas

Study the examples illustrating these points!