LANGUAGE AND RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN EAST LONDON

A paper to be presented to the Linguistics Association at Lancaster April 11th 1978.

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Abstract

In the very complicated sociolinguistic situation of the multicultural London Borough of Newham the matched guise technique and variations on it have been used to investigate the stereotyping patterns of adolescents (Native East Enders, Asians and Suburbanites) towards various social and racial groups. It has been discovered that it is not easy for listeners to some kinds of speakers to unambiguously assign them to racial or social categories from speech alone. The original matched guise methodology has therefore to be modified in this particular situation. A stereotyping pattern has emerged in which the effect of negative labelling of the East End Working class dialect (Cockney) seems to have been internalised even by East End adolescents themselves. The stereotyping patterns for immigrant groups gives insights into the racial tensions in the area.

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The London Borough of Newham is an inner city area where one can find a fascinatingly mixed community, probably unparallelled in any other British city. The indigenous population, if such there is, is predominantly white working class. In the last thirty years immigration has taken place, from every part of the Caribbean, from most parts of the Indian subcontinent and in the shape of the East African Asians. The result is an amazingly heterogenous social and sociolinguistic situation. As a community worker in the borough I have become very aware of the problems of inter group relationships which have been superimposed on a situation of urban social deprivation. A particular interest in the stereotypical perceptions of out groups and own group by indigenous and Asian young people led me to the work of Lambert (1967) and Giles and Powesland (1975) in an attempt to apply the methodology they had developed to the local situation in Newham.

The first stage of experimental work involved designing a matched guise experiment in which three Gujerati mother tongue speakers counted up to 30 first in their mother tongue and then in English. The speakers were deliberately chosen as representative of three separate varieties of English in their English guise. One was judged by me and a pilot group to be a Cockney speaker, the second a speaker of Indian English (i.e. there was strong-interference from the Mother tongue) and the third (the only female speaker) as representative of neutral or standard English. About 50% of judges completing the questionaire confirmed these assignments to social/racial categories. Groups of local fifth formers, English and Asian were asked to listen to the speakers in random order on the understanding they were hearing six different speakers. They were asked to rate each speaker on 14 semantic differential storeotype scales e.g. intelligent/stupid, clean/dirty and on five social distance Likert scales e.g. How would you feel if speaker married your sister. Respondents were also asked to guess the geographical and social background of the speakers. Altogether 124 respondents in approximately equal groups of Asian boys and girls, and English boys and girls completed the experiment.

Symmarising a whole set of results in two or three sentences the following facts were outstanding. On the social distance scales there was a clear preference from all groups for speakers of their own race. English listeners, boys in particular appeared to be very hostile to the Asian voices, particular to the male speakers. On the stereotype scales both races of respondents tended to follow a similar type of pattern for each speaker though there were certain scales which showed a difference in absolute terms and for many scales there was a difference in degree in the ratings between the races. Overall the remarkable feature was the extremely negative stereotype of the Cockney speaker, while the "sian speakers were generally rated favourably as was the standard English speaker (though it may be a result of her being female). However the whole set of results were put in doubt by an analysis of the perceived origins of each speaker. Large numbers of English listeners failed to recognise the Gujerati guises as Asian but thought they were e.g. French, German etc. Similar difficulties occurred with the Indian English guise and with the Cockney and standard English guises only about half of the respondents can be said to have positively identified the varieties of English involved. Tests of significance on the Asian guises showed that identification of speakers as Asian or otherwise did have an effect on stereotype rating on several scales. However this effect did not seem to apply to the Cockney speaker (see Milroy and McGlenaghan 1977).

As a result of the problems in this first experiment it was thought necessary to design a further experiment which would

- a) investigate the ability of respondents to assign speakers to social/racial groups by voice alone and
- b) give an unambiguous stereotype and social distance pattern for the four major social/racial/linguistic groups in Newham. (Cockneys/Asians Black (Afro Caribbean)/Posh (standard speakers))

Therefore 20 speakers were recorded, the majority being matched pairs of Punjabi or Gujerati mother tongue speakers with various types of English plus a small number of native Cockney, standard English and local black British and one matched guise pair of Cockney/ and "put on posh voice". All the speakers were male, adults or adolescents. The respondents tasks were to first of all assign each speaker to one of the four major social racial as defined by pictures of groups of youths drawn by an artist. They were allowed to make two guesses for each speaker the first as a snap guess after hearing only phonological information, i.e. the speaker counting up to 30 and a second one after hearing about a minute of connected free speech on the topic of what to do if you find a fire. The second task was to give stereotype and social distance ratings for each of the four groups based on the pictures and the voices they had finally assigned to each group. At this stage the sample was enlarged to include groups of middle class suburban teenagers from Sevenoaks as well as Newham whites and Asians. A total of around 180 divided into six race (class)/sex groups completed the work.

In the case of voices of native speakers of English and Asian languages, the task of assignment of speakers to the correct or expected social/racial groups proved relatively easy for all the respondents. Over 60% of all listeners assigned the native Cockneys, Asians, blacks and standard speakers to the correct groups. The sevenoaks listeners, however did significantly worse than the others at assigning Asian language guises to the correct group, a large number placing them in the black group. This is almost certainly due to the fact that in Sevenoaks there were no native speakers of Asian languages in the experimental group while the Newham groups were mixed and the Asians reacted very publicly to their own mother tongue. An index created from the assignments of all the English language speakers showed that the Newham white group got significantly more right answers than either Asian or Sevenoaks groups.

It was in the case of Asian speakers speaking in English that the most difficulty in assigning speakers to groups occurred. One Asian speaker managed to "pass" as a Cockney (i.e. over 60% of all listeners rated him such on both guesses) and another passed as a Cockney on the first guess (i.e. on the basis of phonological cues alone) At the other end of the scale one speaker was seen overwhelmingly on both guesses as an Asian. There remained four speakers (plus one on the second guess) whose variety of English appeared to be indeterminate. Only in one case did more than a handful of listeners assign a speaker to the Posh (standard English group). The tendency was rather for a more or less equally divided assignment to the Cockney and black groups with only a minority making the "correct" assignment as Asian. (It is hoped to do some more detailed work on the linguistic cues involved here —

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A brief examination of the phonetics of representative speakers of each group showed the following articulations which may have been cues enabling listeners to make assignments. The speakers assigned to the "Posh" group used a pronunciation not far removed from the classical descriptions of R.P. The speaker most closely analysed tended to use an affricated rather than an aspirated / t/ and to nasalise and centralise the dipthong in the word "nine". The representative Cockney speaker showed the following features.

1) use of f for R.P. \vec{B}

2) use of centralising diphthong 20 for RP 2

3) more open and backward articulation of dipthongs

for dI and AI for CI

4) use of vocalic instead of dark 1
5) /t/ affricated rather than aspirated, or glottal stop in final position, or \emptyset in medial position in twenty-one twenty-two etc. น เป็น ซี และ เป็น และเบาะเทรีย

The speaker representative of Asian English showed the following features which are clearly non-native speaker characteristics.

- 1) distinction between/w/&/v/not clearly made. Both sounds tended to be articulated as a labio dental semi-vowel.
- 2) / t/ almost always realised without aspiration and often with a rather post alveolar articulation (though not necessarily beyond the range of native / t/)
- 3) Syllabic/n/ usually realised as vowel + n the vowel being a lax, back to central, open, slightly rounded one. (Final n in some words not fully closed giving the effect of prenasalisation).

The representative black speaker showed little difference from the Cockney except in a closer articulation of front diphthonas. EI rather than AI and AI rather than UL There was however a distinctly black voice quality effect which for the present defies description.

The five other Asian speakers of English who received split assignments all appeared to fall somewhere in the continuum between R.P. and classic Cockney. The fact that many black working class Londoners also use a pronunciation which falls within this range, probably explains why many listeners assigned this sort of voice to the black category. It has to be admitted in any case that in linguistic terms the four possible categories in the questionnaire present a forced and maybe unrealistic choice.

The results of the stereotype and social distance scales were analysed by factor analysis and analysis of variance techniques. The most outstanding features of these results will now be set out.

Firstly for all groups of speakers it is clear that reactions in terms of social distance scales and stereotype scales are quite distinct. This is particularly true for the two native English guises, viz. Cockney and Posh speakers, where there seems to be a fairly general stereotype.

On the social distance scales however there are big differences. Newham respondents prefering own group etc. some stereotype scales also show this kind of difference at least in degree. For the black and

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Asian speakers the fact of same group or outgroup membership for listeners seems to determine the result—of the social distance scales. This also seems to directly influence the stereotype judgements as there are large differences between these racial groups.

The pattern of results for each voice can be seen on the accompanying tables.

Cockneys

This group is seen as basically unfriendly, stupid, lazy, dirty, dishonest, cruel, badly spoken, ugly, poor. The Newham listeners see them as significantly more friendly, intelligent, hardworking and clean than do the Sevenoaks or Asian listeners and it is noticeable that girls of Sevenoaks and Asian groups rate them favourably on several scales than do corresponding boys. However these differences are only of degree. Newham boys alone rate them as "like me".

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All groups see the cockneys as very unsnobbish, East Enders, modern, tough and irreligious though the Asian scores for snobbish, East Ender and tough are less extreme. Asian and Sevenoaks males are hostile to this group in terms of the social distance scales, corresponding girls are basically neutral while the Newham listeners, especially boys react favourably on these scales.

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Posh Speakers

This group's stereotype rating is almost a mirror image of that for Cockneys. It is interesting to note that the Newham listeners, especially boys hold the most extremely favourable view of the group followed by Sevenoaks then Asians. Basically the posh speakers are seen as clean, wellspoken, rich, intelligent, honest, hardworking, snobbish and religious. They are seen generally as kind and friendly except that Newham girls rate them significantly lower on these two scales than do the rest. The Asians rate them good looking, the rest neutral. Asians rate them as modem, Newham as old fashioned and S evenoaks as neutral. All groups rate the posh speakers gentle, Newham listeners extremely so, and all groups of listeners rate them neutral between East Ender and foreigner.

On the scale Like me/different from me, Sevenaaks listeners rate them Like me and Newham and Asians (especially girls) as different from me. On the Social distance scales Sevenaaks of both sexes and Newham girls are friendly to neutral while Newham boys tend to be hostile. The Asians seem quite friendly to the posh speakers in terms of social distance except they are reluctant to accept marriage into the kin group.

Asians

On the following scales Asian listeners rate Asians positively, Newham negatively and Sevenoaks neutrally, with the girls in the white groups tending to be more favourable on at least some scales, intelligent/stupid, honest/dishonest, hardworking/lazy, kind/cruel, clean/dirty, friendly/unfriendly, well spoken/badly spoken.

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Asians rate Asians as good looking, whites (especially Newham) rate them ugly. All groups rate Asians as foreigners. All except Asians rate Asians as different from me. All groups rate them slightly gentle. Newham rate Asians old fashioned. Asians see them as poor. All groups rate them as very religious and neutral or just below on the snobbish/unsnobbish scale.

On the social distance scales Newham listeners express extreme hostility, Sevenoaks moderate hostility and Asians friendliness to the Asian speakers.

Blacks

The view of black speakers is more complex since there is a consistent sex difference on the part of white listeners with girls giving more favourable ratings. Basically Asians of both sexes and white girls have a favourable to neutral view of blacks while white boys downgrade them.

White boys rate the blacks as poor, stupid, dirlty, ugly, badly spoken, different from me, distionest, lazy and cruel while on these scales the white girls and Asians give neutral or even favourable ratings. It is interesting to note the extremely unfavourable rating from Sevenouks boys on the ugly/good looking scale. All groups rate the blacks as tough except Sevenoaks boys who give a neutral rating. All groups rate them as modern except Asian boys (neutral) and all groups rate them unsnobbish though the Asians considerably less extremely. Newham listeners rated blacks as fairly religious while the other groups gave a neutral rating. All groups agreed in labelling the blacks as foreigners.

On the social distance scales (and friendly/unfriendly scale) Newham boys showed strong hostility, Sevenoaks rather less strong hostility. The white girls and Asians expressed a neutral to favourable reaction to blacks except on the scale "marriage" where fairly strong displeasure at the thought of a black marrying one's sister was expressed.

Summary and Discussion

There are four important points in these results which warrant discussion.

e minimum e a participações de Moderna, e 1) Stereotype patterns

For the two indigenous (white) groups stereotype patterns are firmly established through all sections of the community. Basically posh speakers are rated very favourably (on competence and personal integrity qualities, to use rather loosely Lambert's terms) while Cockneys are rated low on such scales by all groups of respondents. The stereotyping pattern for more recent immigrant groups does not seem to be so generally well established except for odd scales like the agreement by all groups that Asians are religious.

2) Self Image

As expressed by listeners in terms of stereotypes for their own social/ race group is very interesting. Basically Sevenoaks (middle class) and Asian listeners show a highly favourable view of their own group while Newham working class listeners have a negative view of their own Cockney speaking group (which they do in the case of boys rate as like themselves). This clearly shows they have internalised the generally held negative labelling of the working class East Ender. This clearly has implications in the field of education (are working class kids bound to be failures?). Perhaps what is needed is some sort of working class consciousness (Cockney is beautiful) movement. A negative view of ones own culture may lead to alienation and hostility towards more successful out groups (Asians). This may explain the attraction of the National Front to such youngsters. The N.F. at least gives a positive view of some aspects at least of local white culture.

One question in regard to the Asian's self image arises. Namely how long will they maintain this positive view of their own culture and language if it is not highly valued and promoted by the majority culture in the shape of the school and the media (Khan 77 p.8) Countering these pressures towards assimilation will be another series of pressures in the shape of prejudice and hostility from the host community which are already driving the Asian community to withdraw into itself.

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3) Social Distance

There is a clear implication from these results (which is confirmed by local knowledge) that whites (particularly boys and particularly those in Newham, who are nearer the "front line") are reluctant to mix and indeed hostile to immigrant groups. I This is particularly true of their attitudes to Asians, and less so in the case of West Indians/ Black British. Newham boys also express hostility to the Posh speakers The fact that it is boys who are particularly hostile, and that Asians bear the brunt of this hostility can probably be explained in economic terms. The unemployment situation for youth is presently very bad, particularly in the unskilled manual jobs which have been the traditional work of the Cockney. The Asians in Newham who are the latest arrivals in any case appear to the average white person to be \sim doing very well, with shops and businesses and in education where hardwork and a desire for success often compensate for the disadvantage of studying in a second language. It is not surprising therefore that the immigrants and Asians in particular become the scapegoats for the situation of urban deprivation and simplistic racist solutions become popular. There is some degree of common interest with the black who shares certain cultural, and working class values.

The Asians in return (again mainly boys) express hostility to the local whites who they see as the enemy (in terms of pakki bashing etc.) while they are reasonably well disposed to blacks with whom there is some solidarity as immigrants together and to the posh speakers, who they assume are less prejudiced towards them. The exception to this is the reluctance to accept intermarriage which no doubt goes back to caste endogamy rules.

4) Sex and Attitude to Blacks

White girls are significantly more favourable to blacks than are boys. Though some of this difference might be accounted for in socioeconomic terms the differences are so great and consistent in both white groups that we must seek a psycho sexual explanation. There is some evidence that white women find the negro sexually attractive (even though mixed race relationships may be taboo) while the white male tends to feel particuarly resentful of black men who have a sexual relationship with a white woman and highly protective of his own race womenfolk. These themes run deep in our racial memory/mythology (see Mason 1970, bastide 1961, pruden 1936) and are being worked out in Newham young people at the present time.

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APPENDIX

THE MATCHED GUISE EXPERIMENTS IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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A brief summary of work in this field in other cultures

The matched guise technique for investigating social attitudes and stereotyping in cross-cultural situations was originally developed in Quebec by Wallace Lambert and his colleagues from the late 1950's onwards. Quebec is the classic case of a bilingual community where the daily language of the majority of the common people is French Canadian, while the language of the dominant culture and of national administration is English. Personal improvement in socio-economic status is to a large extent dependent on ability to use English. Many people are fluently bilingual, but there are still plenty of monolingual English and French speakers to be found.

Lambert designed an experiment in which two groups of students listened to bilinguals reading a passage in their two guises without knowing the speakers were the same. The first group of English speaking listeners rated the English guises more favourable than the French on such stereotypes as good looking, tall, intelligent, dependable, kind, ambitious and having character. They rated the French guises only as more humorous. French Canadian listners surprisingly rated the English guises superior except on kindness and religiousness.

Later work in Canada showed a number of elaborations on this basic pattern. Firstly, European as opposed to Canadian French was consistently given more favourable ratings. Experiments with child listeners showed that stereotyping patterns only became fixed around the age of 12. Sex differences were also discovered both from the listener and speaker side. Female French speakers were consistently upgraded by English Listeners (especially the men), while French Canadian male listeners preferred English guises of both sexes, but French Canadian female listeners upgraded French male guises.

In the Canadian studies early explanations talked in terms of self denigration or negative self image. A distincation was made between three types of stereotyping scales, those referring to competence, personal integrity and social attractiveness. But as it was mainly on competence scales that French Canadians downgraded their own group, it was possible also to explain the results in terms of community wide knowledge of socio-economic reality.

However, a study by Tucker (1968) in the Philippines comparing Tagalog, Filipino English, and American guises showed some downgrading on personal evaluative traits of the Tagalog guises, i.e. not "competence" traits.

A number of studies have been carried out more recently in the U.S.A. Generally in comparison with Negro English and Southern Accent. Negroes and Northern whites were found to upgrade Negro English above the Southern, while Southern white listeners placed the Negro English bottom.

Studies of Franco American bilinguals in Maine have shown that they do not share the downgrading associated with Canadian French.

Mexican Americans (Spanish bilinguals) and English monolingual control groups have both been found to downgrade spanish guises on status or competence scales, but to upgrade them on solidarity or sociability scales. This is particularly so where Spanish is being used in appropriate domestic contexts and English in appropriate educational ones. But Mexican accented English was generally downgraded even on solidarity scales in home contexts. Broadening the accent of the speaker also resulted in a less favourable view of the speaker.

This raises the question of whether a speech variety is a discreet entity correlating with group membership and the associated stereotype of whether a sliding scale model is more realistic.

Studies in Britain have mainly been the work of Howard Giles and his colleagues. Comparisons of R.P. with Yorkshire and Scots accents have tended to show that R.P. speakers are rated as more competent than accented speakers by all kinds of listeners, but that accented speakers are regarded as possessing greater personal integrity and social attractiveness, particularly by their own group listeners, by also by R.P. speaking listeners (note all listeners were students).

Similar findings to these were reported by Giles using South Welsh and Somerset accent in contrast with R.P. for listeners from the Somerset and South Wales communities. In short, it seems that for some British accents at least regional speakers are perceived favourably on, scales like honesty, friendliness, etc. However, it must be pointed out that little convincing work has been done as yet on the lowest prestive accents such as Cockney or other urban working class speech, or on the difference between different kinds of listeners (e.g. according to class).

Giles and his colleagues have also conducted a considerable amount of experiemthal work in connection with bilingual Welsh speakers. With Welsh listeners the Welsh language guises were perceived more favourably than Welsh accented English and this, in turn, more favourably than R.P. The only scale on which R.P. was rated definitely more favourable was self-confidence. Although direct comparison with his own earlier study is difficult, Giles believes he has detected a more favourable view of Welshness as expressed by language and accent because of changes in the socio-political climate in Wales around 1972. Because of the rise in nationalistic aspirations, the Welsh self-image is now highly positive even on traits of competence as well as in terms of social attractiveness and personal integrity.

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STEREOTYPE RATINGS OF FOUR GROUPS OF SPEAKERS

BY SIX RACE/SEX GROUPS OF LISTENERS.

How would you feel if someone from group -

- a) married your sister
- b) moved in next door
 - c) joined your class
 - d) left the country

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SOCIAL DISTANCE RATINGS OF FOUR GROUPS OF SPEAKERS BY
SIX RACE/SEX GROUPS OF LISTENERS.

