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Creating and Balancing Identities: (Re)constructing Sociolinguistic Spaces through Dialect Change in Real Time

Lisa Ann Lane
la-lane@tamu.edu

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1 Introduction

In my attempts to unpack the actuation question of sociolinguistic change in limited industry maritime communities, I have focused on how residents (re)construct local sociolinguistic and sociogeographic identities when they come face to face with various types of externally generated economic and ideological pressures (cf. Lane 2001a). These are pressures that have compromised the structure of not only the local economy but also the social systems that provided the interpersonal ideological bases that supported the local linguistic norms. Interestingly, in spite of the oft-mentioned globalization of world markets that are argued to have led to the decline of local markets, the dissolution of local norms is not borne out in such a straightforward manner. Rather, we find social and linguistic evidence for a complex resolution of the pressures that the local residents are confronting. While the far-reaching effects of globalization are critical to understanding shifts in local linguistic communities, there exists a simultaneous movement of linguistic norms towards a more local indexing of identity and the (re)construction of local socioeconomic systems.

In this paper, I will offer brief theoretical overviews of the multidirectional impact that macroeconomic policies and macro-social ideologies have had on the local residents of the limited industry maritime community of Thyborøn, Denmark. More specifically, this phase of my ongoing research project employs interdisciplinary data as a foundation for conducting comparative ethnodialectological research. This research is further informed by a multidisciplinary perspective on social theory. Namely, the incorporation of anthropological, sociological, and human geographic approaches to social theory. In the ongoing comparative research of three limited industry maritime communities in Canada, Texas, and Denmark, I have found that these communities are facing dramatic changes in their cultural and linguistic ways of life as a result of changing external and internal ideologies, macroeconomic quota systems, and the globalization of industries and economies. Witnessed is a similarity in the direction and type of ideological and linguistic change. An interesting aspect of the negotiations of the pressures of macro-industrialization—and the ethnolinguistic ramifications thereof—is the isolation of factors that are

likely to be the actuators of linguistic change. The possibility then arises for the development of cross-culturally applicable methods for understanding the direction of sociolinguistic change in limited industry economies. I offer that sociolinguistic change is actuated when community internal modes of normativity, external socioeconomic pressures, the ebb and flow of historical and demographic events, macro- and micro-level social changes, discursive interactions, and social cognition, all combine to produce a cohort effect in the cycles of local social behavior. When individual cycles converge, defining moments in the life of the community are created. These moments are not just the points when both social and linguistic change are most likely to occur, but because they are the focal points for group identity, they are also likely to be the actuators of change (Weinreich, Labov & Herzog 1968). These moments are recognizable by the characteristic divergent patterns in sociolinguistic variables between locally relevant social groups (e.g. generation and gender). Herein, I hope to open these questions, briefly offer some linguistic data evidencing change in real time, and thereby contribute to the emerging interdisciplinary field of comparative ethnodialectology (cf. Lane 2000a).

2 Overview of the Situation in Limited Industry Maritime Communities

In limited industry communities, residents are highly invested economically and ideologically in a particular economy and "life mode" type (cf. Højrup 1983, Milroy & Milroy 1992). By "limited industry community," I mean a community that has one central economic base, for example the fishing industry, with all other local businesses supporting the dominant industry. Due to the limited type of industrial base in these communities, when economic changes affect the main local industry, the entire community is impacted. As a result, the local co-construction of community and individual identities are affected. For example, in times of economic prosperity, usually associated with emergent economic, social and linguistic stages, there is often a sense of intense local pride in the community which is evaluated as economically "successful" and independent.

Interestingly, in times of economic decline, the converse social and linguistic identity reconstructions do not necessarily occur. Rather, during economic crises, local residents must negotiate conflicting ideological and economic pressures as they attempt to maintain the intense local pride in their "traditional" community identity that was inherited through local oral history and through the local linguistic and social norms that were co-

constructed during the emergence stages. The traditional identity steeped in local social and linguistic pride is now associated with a failing economy; so residents must balance the history of their community's successes against the now negative evaluations of the local economy and the lack of local economic opportunities. The community external negative attitudes are evidenced and supported by the economic legislation restricting or often prohibiting the main industrial base, fishing (e.g. quotas, moratoria). The local residents must not only balance their history of a positive local identity against the new negative external evaluations, but the residents must engage in this balancing act while having to seek employment outside of their community due to the failing local industry.

It is important to note that in seeking employment outside of the local community, those residents over thirty have the additional burden of retraining and shifting vocations, hence reconstructing their socioeconomic identities. By having to seek non-local employment, especially when this involves shifting vocations, residents must now also accept they can no longer depend on their community economically, and hence a non-local orientation is necessitated in the reconstruction of their socioeconomic identities. These new workplaces, workforces and linguistic marketplaces expose the residents to daily face-to-face interactions in which they must engage in accommodative linguistic strategies that are divergent from their local linguistic norms because they no longer have the social capital to expect accommodation towards their linguistic norms. As a result, the residents must also reconstruct their sociolinguistic identities in terms of the new power and solidarity hierarchies (cf. Brown & Gillman 1960). These non-local linguistic accommodations result in local linguistic shifts along the continuum of intensification and 'concentration' (cf. Schilling-Estes & Wolfram 1999; Schilling-Estes 1997, 2000) to obsolescence (cf. Dorian 1983).

In the last stages of decline, the community is no longer evaluated locally as being "independent," and hence able to sustain the local population. Therefore, the local social norms, which include the linguistic, fall into local disfavor as well. This local disfavor is particularly salient in the discourses of the local residents when asked what they see as a possible future for the younger generations in the community. Nearly unilaterally, the response is that the present fishermen are the last generation and that the youngest generations will have to learn skills that will enable them to work outside of the community and to relocate to non-fishing communities. Those residents in their late forties stress that it is too late for them to retrain or to relocate and that they, like their forefathers, will stay in the community regardless of how desperate the situation becomes because they cannot

imagine having any other identity or home. These residents maintain this fierce local pride while stressing that they do not want their children and grandchildren to go into fishing and that they do not expect the younger generations to stay in the community because there are no opportunities any longer; a psychosocial fact that manifests in the ongoing dialect changes.

In the cases of Leading Tickles, Newfoundland; Palacios and Matagorda, Texas; and Thyborøn, Denmark, residents are calling into question the economic, ideological, social, and linguistic value of their local identities due to the external ideological pressures that present negative images of their community, or due to the externally imposed economic policies that have been destructive to the local industry. As residents live through the collapse of their local industry, they cannot justify to the youngest generation the benefit of personal investment in a strong local identity that is related to a local promise of economic independence. This new, negative economic, or material, orientation to the local community is manifested in important sociocultural and linguistic changes as exemplified in the speech of the local residents in Thyborøn, Denmark over just the six year period of data collection from 1989 to 1995.

3 Sociolinguistic Change in Real Time in Thyborøn, Denmark

In previous publications (Lane 1998, 1999, 2000a and 2000b, 2001a and 2001b) I have offered data from Thyborøn that underscore both the heterogeneity and the homogeneity of the local dialect. One of the typical examples of the homogeneous side of the Thyborøn social and linguistic identity has been the example of the first person singular nominative pronoun, *jeg*, 'I', and the negative marker, *ikke*, 'not', as evidenced in Figures 1 and 2 by the near categorical use of the local dialect variant for both of these stereotype features.

In comparing the frequency distribution of these two highly salient, highly stereotyped features in both the 1989 and the 1995 data sets for the six female speakers representing three local generational groups, I found that these are highly stable local features which continue to exhibit categorical favoring of the local variants across the generations. It is important to note that there exist additional features that follow this categorical pattern of favoring local variants. These features are both at the level of single lexical items, such as the two examples presented, and at that level of broader phonological rules. Due to space limits, I will not present additional features in this paper (cf. Lane 2001a and 2001b).

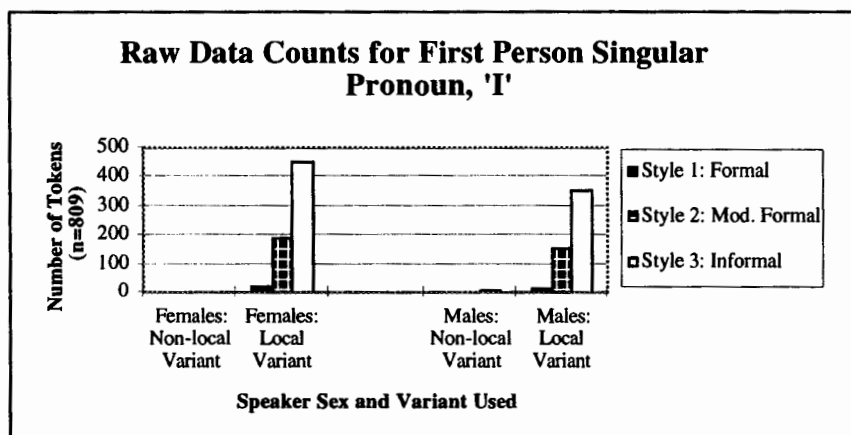


Figure 1. Raw data counts for the distribution of the first person singular pronoun, 'I', across all speech styles and both sexes

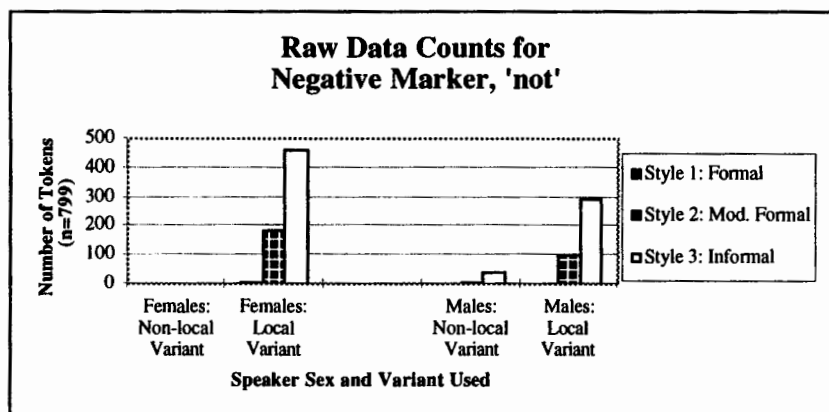


Figure 2. Raw data counts for the distribution of the negative marker, 'not', across all speech styles and both sexes

Simultaneous to these relatively homogeneously distributed features, there are features that exhibit a more complex distribution pattern, evidencing linguistic heterogeneity and thereby supporting my claims for social heterogeneity in this seemingly homogeneous local population. One of these features is the palatalization of stops in word initial position when followed by a non-low vowel (C [+stop] → C [+stop, +palatal] / _ V [-low]). The data from the 1989 corpus are presented in Figure 3, which reveals a favoring of this feature by the older generations. In the case of the younger

generations, the data reveal that the men are leading the change towards the standard variant, non-palatalization. If we consider Figure 4, which presents the distribution of this feature as exemplified by the highly frequent verb, *gør*, 'do', across the six females chosen for closer analysis, we find a similar pattern of the non-local variant increasing in frequency of occurrence except for the oldest generation of women. Again, these data have been selected as examples of the trends going on in the larger data set on the real time changes in the Thyborøn dialect. These recent pilot explorations into the real time changes in the Thyborøn dialect reveal that some features seem to be moving from a local to a non-local favoring among only the oldest generation, however the low data counts that are available advise caution at this early stage of analysis and so I will not be presenting those data herein.

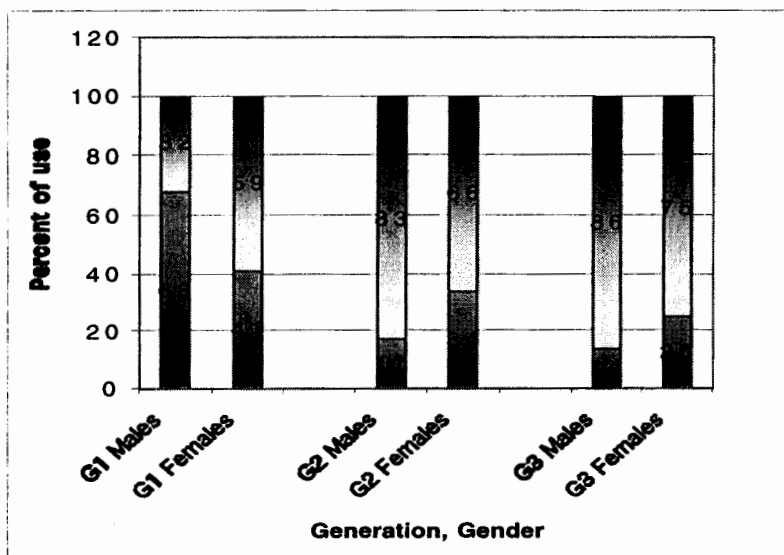


Figure 3. Comparative use of Standard Danish (S—top shading) versus Thyborøn (D—bottom shading) palatalization by male and female speakers in Thyborøn across three generations (G1—G3)

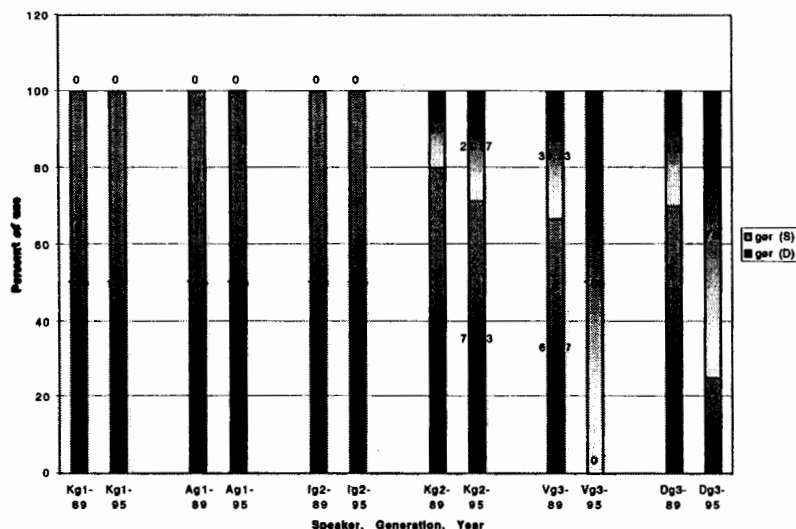


Figure 4. Comparative use in real time (1989-1995) of Standard Danish (S—top shading) versus Thyborøn (D—bottom shading) variant of *gør* 'do', by six female speakers across three generations (G1—G3)

Considering this overview of the recent analyses of the 1995 data set in comparison to the 1989 data, it is likely that we are witnessing the movement towards non-local variants for some of the linguistic features in the Thyborøn dialect, especially by the younger generations. However, this movement away from the local variants is not absolute. In fact, quite interestingly, the most stereotyped features do not evidence any movement away from local variants. Therefore, it is likely that these data represent a situation of dialect change in progress of a multidirectional type: the youngest community members index their strong local identity through their use of stereotyped variables as they simultaneously diverge in dramatic ways from the various traditional ideologies and social norms of the Thyborøn community which, in turn, manifest also in the changes in indicators and markers. The question that remains is why are the changes occurring in this seemingly contradictory manner? Contradictory because it appears that if the younger generations are at least economically moving away from a highly local orientation, and if there is evidence of a shift towards some non-local variants being favored over local variants, then why do we not see the most

salient of these features, the stereotypes, moving in the same direction as the less salient ones, the indicators and markers? (cf. Lane 2001a).

As these sociolinguistic data highlight, the local residents are negotiating conflicting pressures, namely, external negative ideological and economic pressures with growing internal uncertainty of the local industry. The growing internal uncertainty becomes understandable when we recognize that the local industry is more than just a production mode, it is also at the core of the residents' sociocultural interactional patterns, and the role relationships that cohere the local residents to each other and that structure the community. This anchoring of the local residents to the community as a place and as a socio-economy is also the anchoring of the local identity as directly tied to the industry because the industry continues to construct all types and levels of social interaction among the residents. With the local industry's future in question, the future of the local identity is also in question. The residents recognize that the external ideological orientation to their production means is negative, that it is the "depletion of the seas," hence the local residents are viewed as complicit in this disfavored industry. Regardless of this social fact, the residents also recognize that there is much good in their industry and in their local cultural constructs. The internal conflict (both at the individual and group levels) is manifested not only in local discourses, but also in the multidirectional dialect changes. The sociolinguistic data reveal a simultaneous heightening of local features along with some regionalization of other local linguistic norms. This phenomenon is evidenced in the complex directionality of the sociolinguistic indicators, such as the case of palatalization Thyborønsk (cf. Lane 1999). Additionally, the internal conflict is manifested in the economic behavior of the local residents, especially among the younger generations who are increasingly moving away from the traditional local industry out of socio-economic necessity.

The exploration into the extralinguistic factors in the residents' negotiations of local identity reveals that despite the maintenance of some of the highly salient markers of local social and linguistic identity, a more general trend of regionalization is underway. In the data presented from Thyborøn, we find the emergence of some hyperlocal norms simultaneous with the regionalization of social and linguistic norms (cf. Trudgill 1983, 1986 for a discussion on hyperdialectisms and interdialectisms). These results point to local residents' indexing of overt divergence from non-local economic orientations while maintaining at least some important local ideological orientations (see Lane 1998, for details regarding these processes).

4 Changing Voices: The Comparative Ethnodialectological Research Project

The limited industry maritime communities in Denmark, Newfoundland, and Texas that I am examining are undergoing drastic changes of the kind outlined above. These changes are likely to result in the end of the local sociocultural, economic, and linguistic ways of life as a direct result of the combination of the local and non-local pressures that are internalized by the residents and that result in a local restructuring of identity that disfavors the traditional local social and economic practices out of necessity. The external pressures include the negative ideologies and attitudes about the local industry, hence the local people; the locally destructive macroeconomic quota systems and regulations that lead to the dissolution of the local industry; and the globalization of industries that weakens the need for community internal dependency and enables the abandonment of the local community as opposed to any local restructuring. Even at this early stage of comparative research, the data reveal a similarity in the direction and type of sociological, economic, ideological, and linguistic changes across these seemingly very different limited industry maritime communities, cultures, and people. Due to these similarities, the potential exists to better isolate, explain, and compare some of the factors that are the catalysts of social and linguistic change in order to determine if there exist more universal actuators and patterns.

As a methodological note, I have chosen not to consider communities that support multiple industrial bases because of the increased complexity in determining the relationship between changes in the socioeconomic sphere to those in the sociolinguistic. It should also be noted that limited industry maritime communities that have developed a secondary industry other than tourism can thrive and maintain at least some of their traditional social and linguistic norms. One example is the community of Buckie, in northeastern Scotland, which has found new life from the employment opportunities offered by the oil platforms located just offshore in the North Sea (cf. Smith 2000). Communities that have developed tourism as their secondary industry present a serious problem to sociolinguistic and dialectological research. The problem arises because many of these communities have turned their local oral history, socioeconomic practice (now recreational rather than commercial fishing), dialect, and other aspects of their identity into the very commodity that the tourists come to purchase. The commodification of the local identity in these cases has elevated the awareness of local linguistic features to the level of stereotypes (cf. Labov 1972) and has, therefore, affected the relationship of social and linguistic norms. In this way, the

commodification of the local identity affects the direction of local linguistic change since these localisms are now bought and sold on T-shirts and tourist memorabilia which are not profitable if the localisms change. Tourists come to hear, taste, and smell what they have been told exists in these communities. In order to maintain a profitable tourist industry, the local residents must perform for the tourists (and linguists!) as expected (cf. Schilling-Estes 1998). As a result, the charting of sociolinguistic changes in these communities must be examined not only in terms of local structural changes to the dialect but also in terms of the interaction of the important variable of the local residents' awareness of their dialect as a commodity. Examples of this type of commodification of multiple aspects of the local identity are plentiful in each of the three larger regional areas of my comparative study: Twillingate, Newfoundland; Klitmøller, Denmark; and Port Aransas, Texas (cf. also the community of Okracoke, North Carolina (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1995, 1997)).

Returning to the hypothesis that in limited industry maritime communities, residents are highly invested materially and ideologically in a particular economy and life mode, an additional clarification of terms is warranted. The concept of "life mode" is borrowed from Højrup (1983), a Danish ethnologist, who suggests that we recognize that a population contains "subcultures" or "strata" which must be understood as being non-arbitrary and based on differences relating to modes of life (cf. also Wirth 1938). These "subcultures" or "strata" are what Højrup (1983) labels "life-modes." What is intended by "non-arbitrary" is the idea that these strata within a population are independently identifiable as representing distinct layers within the society. Each layer is, therefore, notably different from the others and such differences can be independently located and defined. Each society is to be understood as defining these strata, or life-modes, differently (cf. also Lane 2001a). Furthermore, life-modes are understood as existing in a dialectic, and are viewed from the perspective of the individual who is characteristic of that particular life-mode. These life-modes are associated with individuals' material and ideological orientations towards their socioeconomic roles and with each society's evaluation and organization of the existing socioeconomic roles.

This type of social analysis is particularly favored in the present research because of its emic approach to understanding social behavior in communities and because of its recognition of the inherent variability of individuals' and groups' orientations towards seemingly similar strata within the larger society. This analytic approach to social research offers a micro-level analysis by attending to individuals' orientations while contextualizing

these orientations and the constructed identities into the larger society in which the communities are situated.

Although network connections can be a relevant factor in understanding the individuals' social and potentially sociolinguistic integration into the local community, it is critical to note that social networks are not always correlated with sociolinguistic change, unlike life mode types. As convincingly tested through comparative statistical modeling in Marshall (2000), life mode is so strongly correlated with a speaker's local dialect use that Marshall was able to randomly select a speaker from the rural dialect community studied, enter the person's age and life mode type and predict their dialect score to within a statistically insignificant range. This close correlation of life mode and dialect use coupled with the ability to accurately predict dialect scores based on life mode type leads Marshall (2000) to seriously question the "line of causality proposed in social network theory [as] not necessarily reflect[ing] reality." Instead he proposes an alternative line of causality in which "a person has a positive mental orientation to the local community" and then that person (1) may either (a) "choose to be relatively closely integrated into [the local community]" or may (b) not choose to be relatively closely integrated into the local community. Then, that person will (2) "[signal] this orientation and choice when speaking" such that (3) their "social (including linguistic) behavior closely resembles that of the other in the community" (Marshall 2000). This causality hypothesis is important for many reasons: it is statistically significant and empirically reproducible; it provides us with a predictable model for speaker behavior (in rural dialect areas); and it integrates an individual's ideological and material orientation into the analysis of sociolinguistic behavior. By integrating individual orientations, we are able to develop models that recognize individual speaker differences and individual speaker choices while still enabling a reliable descriptive, predictive, and eventually explanatory model of linguistic and social behavior. As a result, we come a few steps closer to more successfully modeling linguistic and social change in local linguistic communities.

5 Conclusions

This paper argues that local social constructs that are factors in local linguistic change become understandable from the emic, socio-historical perspective of the type of face-to-face interactions that occur in a community. As research in the ethnography of communication has revealed (Saville-Troike 1996, Hymes 1974, among others), in considering face-to-face interactions, we must consider the situational and event contexts along

with the speech act itself. It then follows that the physical and social spaces (i.e. the situational contexts) in which a linguistic interaction is situated are also important factors in the sociolinguistic choices made by the interlocutors. Therefore, in our sociolinguistic and ethnodialectological investigations, we ought to include an investigation into the physical and social constructs that comprise the local communicative competencies (i.e. the local cultural norms). These constructs act as a means for providing residents with the necessary cues to categorize events in locally significant ways as they engage in linguistic interactions. The changes that do arise from residents' negotiation of the external material and ideological pressures on their community and the internal changes to the local economy impact the maintenance of the residents' positive local identities socially and linguistically. Positive local identities, that is, positive mental orientations, are focusing agents in the maintenance of local dialect features and local sociocultural norms in the face of the regional standardization pressures that non-mainstream community residents typically contend with through ever present institutional settings such as schools, government agencies, and media. By including an emic description of the local linguistic community, we are able to determine the locally meaningful sociogeographic and sociolinguistic variables employed by the residents. The differences in the linguistic norms can then be understood in terms of a holistic picture of the community, hence the direction of social and linguistic change can be explained.

I would like to underscore that a holistic identification of a local linguistic community involves more than a linguistic, geographic or sociodemographic analysis. While locating a community involves the consideration of linguistic, geographic and sociodemographic data, it more importantly involves the analysis of residents' orientation to their community. These orientations are, from a Sapirian perspective, culturally shaped categorizations of individuals' holistic social experiences of places. These experiences are framed by the physical, social and linguistic systems that construct the local place as a sociocultural space to be locally interpreted. Each resident and non-resident will experience, hence categorize, the community differently according to the differences in their sociocultural systems. The expression of these experiential differences in events are manifested in the different linguistic systems employed and the different sociolinguistic choices made (cf. Lane 2001a).

Until the data from the comparative dialect study are analyzed, I propose that some of the specific issues we ought to consider include: (1) more sophisticated social modeling of residents' interactions to account for the spatial alignments that individuals operate in and must choose to align with

or against (and the entailing continua of communication pathways); (2) empirical definitions of the types of spaces that individuals inhabit that impact sociocultural and linguistic norms and orientations to those norms; (3) delimitations of macro- and micro-level economic and ideological pressures that impact communities and individuals constructions and co-constructions of local identities; and (4) the historical trajectory of variable linguistic and social features that have defined local communities; among other marketplaces and factors that will continue to reveal themselves through additional comparative investigations (cf. Lane 2000b).

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Department of English
Texas A&M University
MS 4227
College Station, Texas 77843-4227
la-lane@tamu.edu