Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition

Learning to Use Language in Context

Kimberly L. Geeslin with Avizia Yim Long
Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition is a comprehensive textbook that bridges the gap between the fields of sociolinguistics and second language acquisition, exploring the variety of ways in which social context influences the acquisition of a second language. It reviews basic principles of sociolinguistics, provides a unified account of the multiple theoretical approaches to social factors in second languages, summarizes the growing body of empirical research, including examples of findings from a wide range of second languages, and discusses the application of sociolinguistics to the second language classroom. Written for an audience that extends beyond specialists in the field, complete with summary tables, additional readings, discussion questions, and application activities throughout, this volume will serve as the ideal textbook for advanced undergraduate or graduate students of second language acquisition and instruction, and will also be of interest to researchers in the fields of second language acquisition, second language instruction, and sociolinguistics.

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Kimberly L. Geeslin
with Avizia Yim Long
This project is dedicated to teachers: Those who gave me a strong foundation, those students who have taught me so much, those who give me comfort because I know my children are in good hands, and those in my personal life who teach me daily.

Kimberly L. Geeslin

To my teachers, mentors, colleagues, family, and friends. Above all I dedicate this to Kim Geeslin, a wonderful teacher, mentor, colleague, “mother hen,” and friend.

Avizia Y. Long
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Although grammatical competence has generally been the dominant concern of researchers in the field of second language acquisition, it is widely recognized that the development of sociolinguistic competence is essential in order for a learner to communicate effectively. The ever-increasing body of research that bridges the gap between the fields of sociolinguistics and second language acquisition has explored the variety of ways in which social context influences the acquisition of a second language. Learners face variation in the input they receive, which is constrained by the characteristics of the speaker, the geographic location of the interaction, and the context in which the interaction takes place. Moreover, they must learn to correctly interpret the social information included in the input they encounter. Additionally, learners must acquire the ability to vary their own speech as a reflection of these social factors in order to produce language that is appropriate and consistent with the expectations of their interlocutors and their own communicative goals. Finally, the means by which social information is conveyed through learner speech must be acquired in order for language learners to develop and project their own identity in the second language. Research on these topics encompasses empirical work on a wide range of second languages, including at least German, Spanish, English, French, and Chinese, as well as a variety of theoretical accounts as to how the human mind identifies, produces, and stores variable structures. As such, this body of work provides an account of an essential component of language acquisition and is consequently of interest to readers with backgrounds in second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, speech and hearing sciences, anthropology, linguistics, and education.

Given the importance of this area of research and the relative lack of coverage in existing works, the current book has three primary goals. The first goal is to provide a unified account of research on social factors in second language acquisition with a scope that is sufficiently broad to include diverse
approaches and sufficiently focused to provide a coherent and reasonable quantity of information for a standard college-level semester-long course. Although edited collections with extremely broad coverage of social issues in language learning and language teaching exist, these volumes may be less useful as course textbooks because the breadth of coverage may come at the expense of focused coverage of the central issues in second language sociolinguistics. Likewise, research monographs on a single approach to social factors in second languages or on a set of empirical analyses of a single dataset are the building blocks for advancing research in the field, but do not serve to provide a contextualized view in which multiple approaches, second languages, and methods of analysis are included. Thus, in response to the need for an academic resource with appropriate scope, the current volume aims to provide a comprehensive introduction to the importance of social factors in second language acquisition, establish the foundations necessary to assess research in this field, review current research conducted on a variety of second languages in a range of learning contexts, critically examine several different theoretical approaches to second language variation, and explore the implications of these findings on language learning and language instruction.

The second goal of this book is to provide an appropriate and accessible text for advanced undergraduate and graduate classes. The topic of social factors in second language acquisition has increased in popularity in the last decade and is taught across the country, at times to students specializing in language acquisition or language teaching and at times to students with more general interests in linguistics or sociolinguistics. The current text is geared primarily toward students with backgrounds in second language acquisition or language education but is also written with the expectation that readers may have varying depths of knowledge in these fields. Consequently, this text is designed with introductory chapters to review the most central issues in second language acquisition (Chapter One) and sociolinguistics (Chapters Two and Three). Each subsequent chapter has been written with an awareness of the need to provide additional background when necessary and to provide an accessible account of current research, regardless of reader experience with second language variation. The final chapters address the implications of findings from research on social factors in second language acquisition with an eye to making additional connections between language instruction, second language acquisition, and sociolinguistics. These chapters are included to further solidify the interdisciplinary nature of the manuscript and also to reach a broader audience than a more narrowly focused volume might.

The final goal of the current book is to include a current, detailed account of the most recent research in the field of second language sociolinguistics. This includes the most recent empirical research on the topic as well as a critical review of recent theoretical developments intended to account for variation in
language. It is this aspect of the text that will appeal to researchers in the field of second language sociolinguistics, even those who are experts in their respective areas of inquiry. The value of this book among researchers in the field stems from the fact that there are several different research paradigms that currently address social factors in language acquisition. For example, theories of social interaction and social identity are pursued parallel to variationist accounts of the linguistic and social factors that constrain variation. Moreover, although the variationist paradigm of analysis is predominant in this field, there are several cognitive models within which variation may fit. These include, but are not limited to, Optimality Theory, Connectionism, Dynamic Systems Theory, Complexity Theory, and usage-based accounts. This variety of approaches has generally meant that researchers work within a single framework, even though findings from one study are often quite relevant for those working under other, competing frameworks. To this end, there are three chapters (Chapters Four, Five, and Six) that provide an overview of these approaches with information on recent developments in each. To my knowledge, no other work currently provides a synthesis of this breadth of approaches and, thus, specialists in the field will find this source of information valuable in contextualizing their own research paradigms.

This book seeks to meet the growing demand for textbooks that cross the disciplinary boundary between second language acquisition and sociolinguistics. It is designed to provide a unified account of multiple approaches to this issue, with an eye to including examples of research from a wide range of second languages. It has been written with the non-expert reader in mind, providing a review of the basic principles of sociolinguistics necessary to evaluate the theoretical approaches and empirical studies reviewed in later chapters. Finally, it provides a uniquely broad account of multiple theoretical approaches to social factors in second languages such that experts in one of these theoretical frameworks may use this book as a source for current information about competing approaches. We hope that this book will serve as a resource for students, instructors, and researchers and, even more so, that it will stimulate interest and expand scholarly inquiry into research that explores the intersection of sociolinguistics and second language acquisition.
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This project was conceptualized several years ago and has developed over time as a result of the support and guidance of many people. I would like to take a moment here to recognize these efforts and influences. I begin with a special thanks to Ivy Ip for her invitation to write a book on sociolinguistics and second language acquisition. It was quite inspiring to learn that a field that was once so limited in numbers had grown enough to merit a focused account of the research it encompassed. I am also grateful to Mae Lum, Elysse Preposi, and Leah Babb-Rosenfeld, who provided invaluable assistance in keeping this project moving forward. This assistance included allowing me to bring Avizia Yim Long into the process of researching and writing this book, and I am continually impressed by her intellect, her attention to detail, her positive approach to very hard work, and her enthusiasm for this topic. Although people may first notice her tireless work ethic, what truly sets her apart is the quality of the work she produces. In every sense she is a rising star in the field of second language acquisition. I cannot overstate the value of her participation in this project and I am especially thankful for the opportunity to collaborate with her.

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to the field. Each of them has played an important role in shaping the final product, and their willingness to provide quick and accurate feedback at very busy times is greatly appreciated. These friends and colleagues include Stephen Fafulas, Aarnes Gudmestad, Laura Gurzynski-Weiss, Jason Killam, Jennifer Leeman, Kelly Sax, and Lauren Schmidt. Finally, Matt Kanwit provided invaluable and exceptional assistance with the pedagogical materials in this manuscript. His talent in the classroom coupled with his depth of knowledge of the field allowed him to provide irreplaceable support to this project. I am further grateful to the anonymous proposal reviewers who provided guidance and whose comments significantly improved the final version of this manuscript.

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Section I

Principles of Sociolinguistic Variation and Second Language Acquisition
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As we set out to examine the importance of sociolinguistics or of social factors more broadly, for the language learner, we must immediately recognize that to do so requires background knowledge in several different fields of inquiry. Minimally, one must be aware of certain basic facts about the acquisition of languages beyond the first, have an understanding of how social factors influence language and the methods through which these factors are studied, and also have current knowledge of research findings on effective methods for classroom instruction. To be clear, few are the experts in all three of these areas and, thus, we begin with the assumption that the readers of this volume possess a wide range of backgrounds and, quite frankly, of practical goals and expectations for this work. One might even ask how to approach such a diverse topic as the sociolinguistic competence of second language learners. It is for this reason that we begin this chapter with a discussion of why sociolinguistics matters for the second language learner and why we, as researchers and language teachers, should seek to understand the impact of social factors on the language learner more fully.

Whether you are preparing to become a language teacher or have been in the profession for years, it is reasonable to ask why it matters whether or not you know about sociolinguistic variation. Although we will define variation more carefully in the next chapter, let’s take as a working definition that sociolinguistic variation refers to the choices a speaker makes when selecting the forms necessary to convey a message that is appropriate in a given context. Speakers are not always consciously aware of these choices. For example, sociolinguistics involves deciding how to choose among the greetings listed in Figure 1.1.

For most speakers, several choices in Figure 1.1 are possible, and the right choice depends on our audience and the context in which we are speaking. I might choose ‘hello’ for my elderly neighbor when I pass by his house and
‗hey‘ for my husband when I come in from work. I don‘t think I would ever say ‗S‘up‘, but I bet I say ‗wassup?‘ sometimes when greeting close friends, even though I am thinking ‗what‘s up?‘. I‘m sure that I don‘t use ‗howdy‘ or ‗hiya‘ at all. As you read the list of greetings, you most likely had reactions yourself as to which ones you would use often, which ones you would use only in certain contexts, and which greetings you never say. The more we know about sociolinguistics, the better we understand the choices we make every time we produce an utterance.

Now imagine that same list of greetings in Figure 1.1 as it is produced and understood by a second language learner of English. Do you think second language learners have strong intuitions about when to use each greeting and when such a greeting would be inappropriate? Do you think second language learners know so many choices exist? What are the consequences for the learner if he or she fails to select an appropriate greeting? As (socio)linguists we seek to understand the constraints on use of these forms and the ways in which factors such as the characteristics of the speaker, hearer, and the speech context impact these choices. As language teachers, our understanding of these issues will influence the explanations we offer, the instructional materials we select, the activities we design, and nearly every other aspect of the instruction we provide. As second language learners ourselves, we understand how important it is to be able to identify these differences and interpret the meaning behind the choices speakers make. In this first chapter, we explore the connection between sociolinguistics and language learning, beginning with the development of definitions of different types of language competence that include these abilities and continuing with a brief review of the basic tenets of second

Sample greetings in American English:

Hello
Hi
Hey
Hiya
How‘s it goin‘?
S‘up?
Howdy

FIGURE 1.1 Examples of greetings in American English
language acquisition upon which one’s understanding of sociolinguistics in second languages should be based.

**DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

The theoretical connection between sociolinguistics and communicative language teaching has existed for decades. In fact, knowledge of sociolinguistic variation has long been recognized as an integral part of learning to communicate in a second language. As is widely understood, the goal of communicative teaching methodologies is to create an environment in which learners develop the ability to exchange meaning effectively in a second language (Dörnyei, 2013; Spada, 2007). In fact, we know that such interaction is essential to language development as a whole (Gass, 1997). The ability to communicate effectively is generally referred to as **communicative competence**. One of the best-known discussions of communicative competence and its connection to the second language classroom is found in the classic article by Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (1980). In that article, they assess the existing models of communicative competence and provide a unified model of their own. Their model shows communicative competence as comprised of three different types of abilities: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. **Grammatical competence** refers to a learner’s ability to use the lexical items, as well as the rules constraining morphology, sentence structure, and the sound system. Canale and Swain note that there are many linguistic theories that may do the job of describing this system of rules, and their definition does not hinge on a single theoretical approach. The second type of competence, **sociolinguistic competence**, refers to a learner’s ability to interpret an utterance for its social meaning. In other words, learners must be able to glean information about the appropriateness of an utterance and the intended meaning of the speaker, especially when the intended meaning is not identical to the literal one. Finally, communicative competence includes an ability called **strategic competence**, which refers to the ways that learners compensate when there are breakdowns in communication. This last ability is especially important for beginners, who will need to learn to paraphrase when they do not know a form that is needed to express a given meaning (grammatical competence) and who will also need to learn how to interpret the social situation in order to use language appropriately (sociolinguistic competence). Table 1.1 provides a summary of the skills included in each of these domains and gives an example of the type of function each serves.

In reflecting on the detailed definition of communicative competence provided by Canale and Swain (1980), it is clear why meaningful communication and interaction are complex and have been the object of extensive research. In fact, this early work by Canale and Swain has been elaborated and modified
### Table 1.1
Summary of communicative competence as described by Canale & Swain (1980)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of competence</th>
<th>What basic abilities are included?</th>
<th>What is interpreted?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammatical</strong></td>
<td>Morphology (e.g., verb forms, rules for pluralization) Syntax (e.g., sentence structure, word order) Phonology (e.g., rules of pronunciation)</td>
<td>Sample utterance: ‘The mail came at three’ Example of grammatical information to be interpreted: ‘came’ is the past tense form of the verb ‘to come’; this event has already happened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociolinguistic</strong></td>
<td>Rules of use: deciding what is appropriate based on factors such as the topic of conversation, the context in which the conversation takes place, rules of politeness and formality, etc.</td>
<td>Sample utterance: ‘The mail done come at three’ (The mail came at three) Example of sociolinguistic information to be interpreted: This speaker is telling me (informally and indirectly) that I won’t be able to get this letter out today because the mail carrier has already come. It would be appropriate for me to say ‘Okay’ to show I understand. From the sentence, I can also tell something about the individual characteristics of the speaker (e.g., regional background, level of education, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic</strong></td>
<td>Mechanisms for coping with breakdowns in communication that may result from situational or proficiency-related factors</td>
<td>Sample utterance: ‘The mail came at three’ Example of use of strategic competence in a follow-up question: ‘The mail comes again tomorrow?’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
since that time and there are several competing definitions of communicative competence today. For example, Bachman (1990) provided a model of language competence that distinguishes organizational from pragmatic competence. The former includes both grammatical and textual competence (i.e., the ability to create a cohesive and rhetorically appropriate text), whereas the latter includes sociolinguistic as well as illocutionary competence (i.e., the ability to perform functions with language). The purpose of this discussion is not to provide a comprehensive list of definitions for communicative competence. In fact, nearly thirty years ago Bachman and Savignon (1986, p. 381) noted that the term “communicative competence” had already been used in so many ways that it has essentially become a term to denote all that language researchers believed to be “good” or “right” in language use (see Dewaele [2010] for a recent discussion of communicative competence). Instead, the important insight for our purposes is that no subsequent definition has argued against the importance of sociolinguistic competence. In fact, a quick search of recent research monographs will identify several that explore sociolinguistic competence alone (e.g., Regan, Howard, & Lemée, 2009). Thus, regardless of how it has been named or subdivided, we see that sociolinguistic competence is widely viewed as an essential component of communicative competence.

From a language instruction perspective we see that fostering the development of communicative competence includes, minimally, providing sufficient input to cover a range of types of interaction and giving students sufficient opportunities for meaningful interaction. What is likely also clear, however, is that the first type of competence, grammatical competence, usually receives the bulk of our attention in the language classroom and in second language acquisition research in general. To be sure, no one will deny the importance of grammatical competence. A learner without grammatical competence cannot interpret or produce an utterance in any social context. Nevertheless, it is also clear that sociolinguistic competence is essential for effective communication. For this reason, it is imperative that second language acquisition researchers continue to investigate the cross-section of sociolinguistics and language acquisition and that language instructors bring these findings into their own language classrooms. What follows is a closer look at how sociolinguistic knowledge directly impacts comprehension, production, and expression of identity for second language learners.

SO CIOLINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the second language learner in the face of sociolinguistic variation is that of comprehension. It is intuitive that a clear and constant signal will be easier to perceive and interpret than one that changes according to social and linguistic factors. Along these lines, one type
of variation that receives a lot of attention is geographic variation. For example, we know that certain geographic areas are associated with different pronunciations and word choices, and sometimes even different verb forms or sentence structures. To make matters more complex, some of these features are actually present to varying degrees across varieties, rather than contrasting simply through their presence or absence. Consider the examples in Figure 1.2 and think about the place of residence of each speaker.

If you are not familiar with US English, it may be hard to even make sense of a few of these utterances, but if you have lived in the US for an extended period of time, you likely associate each sentence with a different geographic region fairly easily. In some cases, the “clue” was the pronunciation of a certain sound, in others it was a choice of lexical item, and in still others it was the use of a syntactic construction that doesn’t exist in all varieties of English. For example, words like ‘y’all’ and ‘reckon’ tend to be most frequent in the southern US, while ‘pop’ appears in the Midwest and northern US, and in the Northeast the word ‘bag’ would be used instead of ‘sack’. The pronunciation called “r-dropping” (as in ‘pahk ya kah’) is associated with the northeastern US, specifically cities like Boston, Massachusetts. Constructions like ‘wanna’ (want to) and ‘shoulda’ (should have) exist in all varieties of US English, at least in informal settings. You might have also noticed through this exercise, however, that geography doesn’t tell us the whole story. In example (a) we may think of the southern US in particular, but there are plenty of southerners who don’t speak that way at all. In fact, there are likely additional relevant considerations like the age, level of education, and socioeconomic status of the speaker. It will also be important to consider the level of formality of the interaction/setting, and the characteristics of the person decoding the message (i.e., our interlocutor or audience), something called “style”, which we will discuss in future chapters. Additionally, whether language is transmitted through spoken means or written measures will have an effect on the linguistic forms chosen by a speaker/writer. Likewise, expressions like ‘I reckon’ may be associated

| a. Y’all come back now, ya hear?  |
| b. Pahk ya kah in Havahd yahd.  |
| c. Wanna pop?                    |
| d. Dude, that wave was totally rad! |
| e. I reckon he shoulda pu dat in a sack. |

FIGURE 1.2 Examples of geographic variation in US English
with older speakers and those from lower income brackets. Certainly we don’t expect former US presidents Clinton and Carter to say ‘I reckon we otta go to war’ simply because they come from an area where this expression exists. What these examples quickly illustrate is that the simple act of decoding a message is actually quite complex and can be a particular challenge for the second language learner. Although the examples in Figure 1.2 are taken from US English, they illustrate facts that are true for any language. Simply put, both spoken and written speech contain variation that reflects facts about the origin and personal characteristics of the speaker (as well as the standards for language use particular to each speech community, region, etc.). Furthermore, the choices one makes when speaking any language can affect any feature of the grammar. To give a sense of the fact that this is, indeed, a characteristic of natural languages, Table 1.2 provides some examples taken from other languages. The first row of this table includes one of the examples from US English for the sake of comparison.

It becomes clear that the challenge of decoding the basic linguistic elements of an utterance is not trivial. In fact, this can prove challenging even for native

### TABLE 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Variable forms</th>
<th>Characteristics associated with the choice between forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Bag vs. sack</td>
<td>Varies regionally across the United States; 'sack' is not used in the northeastern region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>J’parle-tu francais vs. J’parle francais (both mean ‘Do I speak French?’)</td>
<td>The former (with interrogative tu for yes/no questions) is associated with Quebec French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>aigo vs. aigoo (both mean ‘ah!’ or ‘Oh my!’)</td>
<td>The latter (characterized by final /o/-raising) is associated with young females from Seoul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>pame stin agora vs. pame sto pazari (both mean ‘let’s go to the marketplace’)</td>
<td>These are used in distinct regions (city vs. rural) of Greece and associated with different levels of socioeconomic status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>tienes vs. tieneh (two pronunciations of ‘you have’)</td>
<td>The latter is associated with southern Spain and the Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>gehsteig vs. buergersteig (both mean ‘sidewalk’)</td>
<td>The former is used in Austria and the latter in Germany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
speakers of a language. For example, less than half of the native speakers of Spanish from dialect regions that do not produce aspirated ‘s’ (see the examples for tienes vs. tieneh in Table 1.2) perceive [h] as the phoneme /s/ (12/27), whereas nearly all of the native speakers from aspirating regions (17/20) did (Schmidt, 2011). What is more, beyond decoding a message, the learner must further interpret and understand the social information that is concomitantly conveyed. For example, each choice of form, whether at the level of the sound system, the lexicon, or other areas of the grammar, also conveys details about the speaker’s place of residence (or sometimes place of origin), gender, age, income, and level of education. Although native speakers of a language may not be able to articulate the differences between forms and list all of their associated characteristics, we do know enough about sociolinguistic variation to react on a subconscious level to the information contained in these details. This knowledge allows us to comprehend nonlinguistic messages as well. One might argue that being able to discern the geographic origin of a speaker is not a necessity for a second language learner still struggling to understand the basic elements of an utterance. Nevertheless, it is easy to appreciate the importance of comprehending how the forms used to express a given utterance tell us whether the speaker is attempting to indicate familiarity or to establish distance. These examples demonstrate that sociolinguistic variation has an effect on comprehension in second languages both at the linguistic level, in terms of one’s ability to decipher the linguistic elements of a message, as well as beyond the level of the grammar, in terms of one’s ability to also comprehend the added social meaning conveyed with each utterance.

**SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE PRODUCTION**

As stated in the previous section, it is likely that linguistic variation has the greatest impact, at least for beginning learners, on the ability to comprehend a given utterance. Nevertheless, the influence of sociolinguistic variation is also important for second language production. One important function of varying one’s speech is to convey nonlinguistic information along with the linguistic information. For example, one might wish to establish a connection with a classmate. From a conversational point of view, such a connection might be essential to continuing the interaction. From an interpersonal perspective, we note that the second language learner who is able to establish connections is more likely to be successful in the target culture and more likely to be motivated to continue living in that environment and/or acquiring the language. From a basic, acquisitional point of view, a speaker who cannot make connections and foster interactions will not receive the necessary input to continue on the path to acquiring the second language. This single function demonstrates that the ability to vary one’s speech in a second language is not trivial.
There are other ways in which a lack of understanding of linguistic variation might influence language production and have tremendous consequences. For example, immigrant second language learners will find limited access to certain employment opportunities if they are unable to demonstrate formality and politeness at the appropriate moments, either on the job or simply during the initial interview. In an interesting study of Thai and Vietnamese speakers learning English, Adamson and Regan (1991) found that second language learners of English differed by gender and, in particular, the male learners used the informal variant –*in* (vs. –*ing*) with greater frequency than native English-speaking males did, even in careful speech styles. Although on its own, one might not see the consequences of this hyper-informality, a combination of informal features might lead these speakers to give the impression that they were less suited for certain types of work, were taking their coursework less seriously than other students, or were less intelligent, less educated, and so on. Even though as linguists we know that “g-dropping” (i.e. ‘runnin’ vs. ‘running’) is not associated with intelligence, the choice of a given form, particularly in a formal context such as a job interview, could have negative consequences for the speaker’s perceived characteristics and qualifications. The underlying issue is that second language learners need to be able to comprehend varying forms in a second language, but in addition, they must understand the social correlates of these forms in order to properly interpret what they read and hear and also to produce language that is situationally appropriate. In sum, sociolinguistic competence is not limited to language comprehension but rather must also be acquired for effective production and interaction in a second language.

**SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND LEARNER IDENTITIES**

The brief discussion of the effects of language variation on second language production in the previous section mentioned some of the potential challenges a learner faces in producing situationally appropriate utterances. Beyond demonstrating classroom seriousness, employment promise, and so on, we also use language to provide information about who we are, the social groups with whom we identify, and the kinds of people we would like to get to know. In later chapters we will see examples of individuals who were less successful second language learners because they were unable “to be themselves” in a second language (e.g., Lybeck, 2002; Norton Peirce, 1995). Beyond conveying basic information, second language learners oftentimes need to fulfill other functions in the target language, such as establishing friendships, building community ties, and participating in recreational or leisure activities. In short, the ability to “live” in a second language rests on the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence, which allows us to have and express an identity in a second language. In later chapters we will see that this particular ability is linked to
our motivation to learn more and to our attitudes toward the target culture and language, and that these are in turn linked to our ultimate success in the acquisition process. Finally, as has been stated already, all theories of second language acquisition afford a role to input in the target language, and one's ability to create opportunities for increased input is most certainly worthy of further study.

CENTRAL ISSUES IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

In order to fully appreciate the influence of sociolinguistics on second language learning and second language use, it is important to establish common ground in the field of second language acquisition as a point of departure. To be sure, the field of second language acquisition can be characterized by its rapid development and its multiple perspectives. It is certainly accurate to claim that there are many competing theories that describe the process of acquiring a second language, the types of knowledge that learning a second language entails, and the degree to which this knowledge is influenced by factors external to the second language grammar. Despite this apparent discord, there are several issues that arise across theories, and these will need to be considered before we explore theories that address social factors in later chapters. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to describing these issues in order to contextualize the discussion in later chapters about the place of each theory and its overall contribution to the field.

What Is Input and What Does It Do?

In the middle of the last century, it was believed that the environment was primarily responsible for human behavior. This theory, called Behaviorism, explained that learning (and all other behavior) took place as a child responded to stimuli in the environment. When children responded appropriately to such stimuli, positive associations were made and habits were formed. According to Skinner (1957), language learning took place through imitation. An accurate imitation of adult speech was rewarded by a positive response and an association was developed and strengthened. In the second language classroom, the Audiolingual Method of instruction was developed to provide appropriate stimuli for learners to imitate and a context that fostered association formation. Learner errors were corrected immediately so as to prevent the formation of bad habits. Second language instruction was designed to mirror the process of association strengthening, or habit formation, believed to take place in first language acquisition.

In response to the view of environment as the determining factor in language acquisition, Chomsky (1959) proposed that learners were capable of
creating language and that the knowledge needed to do so came from the learner’s own mind, not the environment. Chomsky pointed out that children said things that no adult had said (e.g., ‘goed’ instead of ‘went’). In addition, he noted that acquisition proceeds so quickly and so effectively for all normally developing children that learners must have access to a set of guiding internal principles for the acquisition and use of language. Chomsky argued that this provided evidence that linguistic information was contained within the human mind at birth. He referred to these internal grammars as Generative grammars because they allow speakers to generate an infinite number of original, yet grammatical, sentences. This theoretical shift away from the view that the environment was the primary determining factor in language acquisition led second language acquisition researchers to explore the innate knowledge second language learners might have. Such inquiries remain important today.

In contemporary discussions of (second) language acquisition, the ‘environment’ in the descriptions of Behaviorism and Generative Theory is called input, and this term is used to refer to all language, written or spoken, to which a learner is exposed. The degree to which input may be taken to include other, nonlinguistic elements may vary from one theory to another and so, too, does the degree to which input is seen as the explanatory element in language acquisition. For some, such as those working under the contemporary Generative framework, input may serve as a trigger for innate grammatical information, which largely determines the path of acquisition and the knowledge a learner stores. In contrast, other theoretical approaches, such as Connectionism (to be discussed at length in Chapter Five), afford a greater role for input, and a lesser role for innate, language-specific information, in establishing connections between linguistic form(s) and meaning(s). For the purpose of this volume, the reader should know that no theory claims that second language acquisition proceeds in the absence of input, and the key point of comparison will therefore be the degree to which input is viewed as containing purely linguistic information, rather than a combination of linguistic, social, or other information, as well as the actual role that such input is believed to play as communicative competence develops.

How Can Learner Grammars Be Characterized?

The shift toward viewing second language acquisition as an internal cognitive phenomenon, rather than an environmental phenomenon, led Corder (1967) to propose that learner errors could provide clues regarding the rules contained in a second language grammar at a particular point in the acquisitional sequence. He argued that errors provided researchers with evidence of the rules used to form an utterance and claimed that an analysis of learner errors
would allow a researcher to identify the process through which a structure was acquired and should, therefore, be the primary focus of research on language acquisition. Additionally, Corder described developing learner language as having different grammars at different points in time. In other words, a learner grammar is viewed as constantly changing as it approaches target norms. This changing grammar was described by Nemser (1971) as an approximative system, which changed as it became more and more like the system it was designed to resemble. The following year, Selinker (1972) described the system of learner language as **interlanguage**, and the term is still used today. This nomenclature captures the relationship of learner language to both the first and second language, since it is believed to be somewhere between the two.

As the name implies, interlanguage is learner language that contains influences from the first language, as well as examples of target-like features. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that these are not the only two factors that influence learner grammars. It has been argued that certain universal principles, those that are true for all natural languages, are also true for interlanguages (Adjemian, 1976). As such, no interlanguage will violate the constraints that are obeyed by existing natural languages. In addition, those who follow Chomsky contend that interlanguage may also contain the innate knowledge with which each child is born. Such knowledge guides the possible forms that interlanguage grammars might take. Consequently, interlanguages are independent, such that they may contain properties that do not belong to the first language or the second language. Regardless of the approach taken to investigate the process of acquisition, it is generally agreed that learner grammars are indeed well described as approximative systems that change as new aspects of the target language are acquired and learner grammars are restructured. The various cognitive approaches that are prevalent in second language acquisition research today can be addressed in terms of their relationship to interlanguage. For example, some approaches seek to describe the components that influence interlanguage (e.g., universal grammar) while others examine the process through which an element becomes part of a learner’s interlanguage (e.g., input processing). With clearly defined objectives, these diverse research goals and multiple approaches to studying learner language can all contribute to a single body of research.

One characteristic of Corder’s description of interlanguage that is especially important for those interested in the influence of social factors is that interlanguage is **systematic**. In short, not only is interlanguage an independent system (from the first and second languages), but it is also governed in such a way that learner language is not random. This means that when learners make an error repeatedly, that error is stemming from a “rule” in the interlanguage. For example, in the case of ‘goed’ rather than ‘went’, we might claim that the form stems from a rule that states “form the past tense of a verb by adding –ed”
or a connection that links past tense to the form –ed. What is more, when two forms are possible in the native grammar, the alternation between the two can also be seen as “rule-governed” (or constrained). For example, the earlier example of the alternation between –in and –ing in English might contain information about the word class (e.g., verb, noun, etc.) as well as the social characteristics (e.g., gender, age) that are relevant for the use of each form and the identification of the speaker and their social network. The “rule”, or association, would then be something like “use –ing more often with verbs and if you are male”. From these two examples we see that under some approaches the information contained in such governing rules may be exclusively linguistic, either stemming from universal knowledge or from information available in the input, whereas under others the “rule” itself may include the influence of social factors. In this sense, the concept of interlanguage remains essential to all approaches to second language acquisition, and what differs across approaches are the characteristics of the learner’s system.

How Does Acquisition Proceed?

The influence of Corder’s (1967) focus on errors and Chomsky’s internal grammar led to the proposal that all first language learners, having been born with the same innate knowledge, should pass through the same stages in acquiring a language, and their errors would be an indication of this. The studies designed to test this hypothesis are known as the morpheme acquisition studies. This body of research showed that a series of morphemes in English (e.g., plural –s, progressive –ing, etc.) were acquired by all children in the same order (Brown, 1973). This idea was soon applied to second language acquisition (Dulay & Burt, 1974) and it was found that those same English morphemes were acquired in the same general order, regardless of a learner’s first language. These studies showed early evidence of universal processes of acquisition, but the morpheme acquisition studies were criticized because they did not provide information regarding the path that learners took on the road to acquiring each structure. It was argued that one must study a single structure during the process of acquisition, testing a learner at several different points so as to gain a more complete picture of the developmental path that learners follow. Of the studies designed to respond to this criticism, some of the best known are those that focus on the acquisition of negation in English. It was found that the stages through which learners pass as they acquire negation in English do not vary widely from one learner to another, regardless of learning context or first language (Cancino, Rosansky, & Schumann, 1978; Eubank, 1996; Milon, 1974; Schumann, 1979; Stauble, 1978). Thus, transitional stages of development were proposed for this and other structures. Rather than refuting the morpheme acquisition studies, these later studies
of stages of development refined the hypothesis that learners pass through similar stages as they acquire a second language, and provided more detailed evidence regarding the path of acquisition. What remains from these studies today is the largely held assumption that second language acquisition can be described as a series of steps through which learner grammars are modified as the grammar moves toward a closer approximation of the target. We will see that our understanding of what a grammar is, the types of modifications that take place, and the degree to which such modifications are universal varies from one approach to another. What is generally accepted, however, is the conceptualization of language acquisition as a gradual process, rather than a series of instantaneous changes from non-target-like structures toward target-like structures and patterns of use.

Thus far we have seen that second language acquisition theories tend to recognize that language learning is a process and that input is essential to this process. We noted earlier that theories differ in the means through which a learner grammar and its development are characterized and also the degree to which the steps toward native-like use are common to all learners. Most theories recognize second language acquisition as a process, and there have been several strands of research that focus on a single part of this process. In some ways these strands of research may be seen as more theory-neutral because they do not dictate a particular structure for the learner grammar nor a specific learning mechanism. For example, if we agree that the learning of a second language involves exposure to input that causes some change in the linguistic knowledge of the learner, we might be interested in how a learner attends to input, regardless of whether we believe that grammatical knowledge is innate or experience-based, or how we view linguistic knowledge itself. In his important essay on learners’ errors, Corder (1967) distinguished input from intake. Whereas input refers to the linguistic data available to a learner, intake is the portion of the input that is actually attended to and made available to the developing system. An early hypothesis about which linguistic elements were first converted into intake claimed that only input that could be comprehended by the learner could be helpful in the acquisition process (Krashen, 1985). An additional part of this hypothesis, and one that will be relevant later, was that learners had an affective filter which was low under optimal conditions but which was raised under time pressure or other stress. It was said that acquisition could only take place when the affective filter was sufficiently low, or when the social conditions did not prevent acquisition. Since that time, the research surrounding the conversion of input into intake has developed to recognize other psycholinguistic factors, such as attention. The process of comprehension does not necessarily require a learner to pay attention to each element in an utterance. For example, in the Spanish sentence *Veo a la mujer* ‘I see the woman’, a learner may well understand the meaning of the utterance.
without paying any attention to items such as the personal *a* or the gender of the article *la* ‘the’. Not only does the second language learner not need to connect the form *a* with the meaning (‘indicates human object of the verb’) to understand the sentence, but doing so may come at a cost to overall comprehension. This is because the act of comprehension can be described as the management of several stimuli all competing for the learner’s limited resources. Especially at levels where comprehension is still difficult for a learner, learners do not have the luxury of attending to every detail in the input. Instead, those elements that are most important for comprehension “steal” attention from those elements that are non-essential. This tension between limited resources and the attention a learner can pay to each form in the input is described in a series of principles, outlined in VanPatten (1996). This line of research is commonly referred to as input processing and has received a great deal of attention in recent years (Carroll, 2013; Henry, Culman, & VanPatten, 2009; VanPatten & Borst, 2012a, 2012b; VanPatten & Jegerski, 2010; VanPatten & Uludag, 2011). The principles of input processing describe what happens in phenomenon, such as second language comprehension, where resources are limited (due to the level of attention required for understanding). These principles have allowed researchers to generate hypotheses about why learners make certain types of errors, what items in the input most often become intake, and what the effects of manipulating a learner’s attention might be. Each of these studies contributes both to the development of the theory of input processing and our knowledge of the acquisition of second languages in general. Because these studies are designed to measure the effects of instructional materials created with these claims about input processing in mind, this research is also especially relevant for classroom learners.

A second strand of research that may be viewed as relatively theory-neutral, at least in the sense that it does not a priori require linguistic knowledge or learner grammars to take a given form (although some accounts do claim a particular view), is the research on input and interaction (Gass, 2008; Gass & Mackey, 2007; Long, 1981). As mentioned earlier, no theory of second language acquisition claims that input is unnecessary for language learning. Nevertheless, while some approaches support the idea that input alone (in combination with internal grammatical knowledge) is sufficient, others posit that there are additional, essential elements. One very productive area of research along these lines is that which claims that interaction is a second, required ingredient for successful language learning. It is proposed that learners who are merely exposed to the second language and not given the essential opportunities to negotiate meaning, check comprehension, or receive negative evidence will fail to reach target-like abilities in the second language. In contrast, learners who do interact will recognize, for example, when a certain form is not fulfilling the function they had intended, and will have the opportunity to modify the
form accordingly. Although the word *interaction* might imply that these are social theories of language learning, this is not necessarily the case. In fact, for some, interaction serves merely to provide negative evidence against incorrect hypotheses as the internal linguistic grammar develops (e.g., Long, 1981). Nevertheless, other theories do indeed explore the characteristics of these interactions and how they, in turn, comprise an additional series of factors that ought to be considered as part of the learning process. We will see in later chapters that not only can “input” be viewed as containing social information, but “interactions” can also be described in terms of the additional influence that their nature has on the acquisition process.

**What Is Linguistic Knowledge and Where Do We Store It?**

One of the main research initiatives today is the description of what learners know, how this information is structured, and how learning progresses within the portion of the mind that controls language. In other words, as we talk about the system of interlanguage, what form does that system take and how does it change over time? The concept of generative grammars, described in the early work of Chomsky (1959), continues to stimulate interesting research today and is the dominant paradigm for describing linguistic systems to date. Such investigations propose that each language learner has innate linguistic knowledge in the form of a universal grammar. Such knowledge provides a structural framework that describes all possible human languages (principles) and a series of options that describe cross-linguistic differences (parameters). The task of first language learners is to find evidence in the language around them that allows them to select the appropriate language-specific setting of each parameter. Evidence that learners have innate grammatical knowledge is said to come from the fact that all learners pass through similar stages when acquiring a language, and that learner language (in this case, language acquired as a child) is systematic and rule-governed. Although Generative approaches have developed to explore the degree of access second language learners have to this information (e.g. White, 2003), as well as the nature and structure of this information, these general ideas remain true in contemporary inquiry. With the possible exception of the social factor of age, they are also characterized by a relative neglect of inquiry into the effects of social factors, in large part because it is presupposed that innate grammatical information should be the same for all humans.

In contrast to the theory of Universal Grammar, which claims that language learning is rule-governed, other theories, such as Connectionism, describe language learning in terms of the effects of frequency of exposure to a particular structure. This model of learning claims that linguistic information is contained in the mind as a complex cluster of links, or associations between
linguistic units and their meanings. For example, a noun would be linked to its gender appropriate article, as in \textit{el libro} ‘the book’. These links are strengthened through activation, and weakened through lack of activation. Consequently, learning is an associative process and is not based on the construction of abstract rules. Research on first language acquisition within this paradigm has focused on computer models that closely mirror the acquisition process of children. For example, Rumelhart and McClelland (1986) showed that a computer model learned the irregular past tense in English starting with the correct form, moving to the overgeneralized (and incorrect form), and finally reaching the correct form again, just as child learners have been shown to do. To investigate how the same model can account for second language acquisition, computers must be programmed to account for pre-existing first language knowledge. Connectionism, and other theories like it, demonstrate that linguistic “rules” (of the type described in the earlier discussion of interlanguage) may take a different form, such as the form of neural connections. This, in turn, leads to different descriptions of how language acquisition progresses, even though the notion of stages of development can be maintained.

While the two theoretical models outlined in this section, Universal Grammar and Connectionism, are quite different from each other, both illustrate a similar approach to language acquisition. Each addresses the structure of linguistic knowledge and seeks to describe the means through which the human mind uses new linguistic information to advance a first or second language system. Each model begins when linguistic information enters the linguistic system. As we explore social approaches to language learning in subsequent chapters, we will see that the way in which linguistic knowledge is characterized may vary, but the inclusion of social influences in a linguistic model does not dictate that linguistic knowledge take on a given form. Instead, it merely means that a given model recognizes a role for the influence of social information in language acquisition or language use.

\textbf{What Role Does the First Language Play?}

During the same time period that Behaviorism was prevalent, Lado (1957) developed the \textit{Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis}. This hypothesis stated that linguists could predict areas of difficulty for second language learners through a careful comparison of the first language to the second language. Those areas that were different from each other were predicted to pose the greatest difficulty. Relating this hypothesis to Behaviorism, the identified areas of difficulty were those where good habits would be hardest to form because they had already been formed differently for the first language. In the language classroom, it was suggested that the language teacher could use the method of Contrastive Analysis (carefully identifying differences between the first and
second language) in order to address those areas of difficulty and avoid errors that were likely to be committed. Lado hypothesized that only these areas of difference needed to be taught in language classrooms, since grammatical constructs that are the same in both languages would automatically be produced correctly.

This approach to second language learning is appealing because the work of linguists and language instructors alike is clearly defined. Nevertheless, experience showed that the predicted areas of difficulty were not always the hardest to acquire, and some areas predicted to be easy to acquire were not readily learned (e.g., Eckman, 1987). Consequently, the idea that a close analysis of two paired languages could explain acquisition was not as profitable as expected. At the other extreme are approaches that posit that language learning is governed so strongly by innate grammatical information that the first language plays a minimal role in the development of the second language. The majority of approaches, however, recognize the effects of the first language as an influencing factor among several others. This has led to interesting research about exactly how the first language influences the second. For example, Kellerman (1977) used the intuitions of Dutch learners to demonstrate that his second language learners were able to identify those meanings and functions most likely to transfer from one language to another as opposed to those that were likely to be language-specific. Likewise, Andersen (1983) proposed the Transfer to Somewhere Principle, which states that the influence of a first language will be seen only where the structures of the first and second language are parallel, such that there is a “landing spot” in the second language for the element from the first. What these studies and the many others show is that neither the idea that the first language explains everything about the second nor the proposal that the first language has no influence on the second at all can be correct. Instead, current theories must view first language influence as a potential contributing factor in the process of second language acquisition, rather than the defining characteristic of that process. This is true no matter the form of the system or the mechanisms one believes are used as acquisition of the second language progresses.

Can Metalinguistic Knowledge Help?

Thus far, our discussion has centered on theories of language acquisition and how interlanguage might be characterized. Nevertheless, in subsequent chapters we will address both how second language systems might incorporate social factors and how language teachers might foster the development of communicative competence, and more specifically sociolinguistic competence, among their students. Thus, prior to continuing it is important to also establish a baseline of understanding of how formal instruction might
influence developing systems. Returning once more to the mid-point of the last century, methods of instruction were generally focused on the differences between the first and second language and required learners to repeat utterances with the goal of forming good (i.e., native-like) habits. With the shift to a cognitive view of language learning and the view of input as a trigger for innate linguistic knowledge, teaching methods moved toward provision of positive evidence, sometimes in the form of access to native input and other times in the form of explanations of native-like rules of grammar. Just as the field of second language acquisition is diverse in the theoretical approaches it espouses, so too is the field of research on language instruction. There are multiple, competing instructional methods, but, as we will see, there is also common ground.

It is widely agreed that all instruction is not created equal. Instead, the effectiveness of language instruction is mediated by the structure taught, the method through which it is taught, and the learner to whom it is taught. For example, research has explored whether teaching marked structures might lead to the acquisition of unmarked structures (Doughty, 1991; Ellis, 2006) and also whether some structures are simply more teachable than others. There is also evidence to support the hypothesis that certain structures will not be acquired if a learner is not at the appropriate stage of development when instruction takes place (Pienemann, 1998, 2005). In other words, teaching a structure that is too far beyond the current level of the second language learner will not cause a change in the developing interlanguage system. Likewise, it is widely agreed that one key goal of language instruction is to develop the ability to communicate. This means that methods that do not provide opportunities to create original language and negotiate meaning are likely to fail to meet this objective.

Leaving differences in linguistic theoretical accounts of language acquisition aside, we can see that instruction might have an impact on development in various ways. First, instruction might have an impact on the way in which we attend to input. It will be recalled that we might view this type of approach as relatively theory-neutral, in the sense that it does not require that linguistic information take a given form because the effect of instruction is believed to impact processing of information prior to its entry into the developing system. The research by VanPatten and colleagues on input processing and processing instruction is the best known example of this type of instructional intervention. Processing instruction has been studied for second language English, French, Spanish, and Italian, to name a few, and has been shown to foster better conversion of input into intake as well as lasting positive effects on development (Benati, 2001, 2004; Cadierno, 1995; Lee, Cadierno, Glass, & VanPatten, 1997; Sanz & Morgan-Short, 2004; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten & Oikkenon, 1996; Wong, 2004). This line of research is particularly
effective because it systematically demonstrates that enhancing or helping learners with the processing of input can positively impact a range of structures in many different second languages. To date, however, this method has primarily been used to teach categorical structures, rather than socially variable ones; thus, as we explore the instruction of sociolinguistic competence, questions are likely to remain.

Other instructional methods that are intended to impact the developing system itself have also been explored. Some are theory internal, such as the concept of creating an “input flood” through which sufficient examples enter the developing system in order to trigger a change in parameter settings (Trahey & White, 1993). Others, especially those that provide metalinguistic knowledge (i.e., knowledge about how something works in a language) about the use of a given grammatical structure, are less theory dependent and, in fact, have led to considerable debate about the relationship between metalinguistic knowledge, or conscious knowledge, and the developing system, which is viewed as subconscious. Some accounts claim that metalinguistic knowledge is learned, whereas acquisition must take place at the subconscious level and, consequently, learned knowledge may only be used when there is sufficient time to do so (Krashen, 1982). More recently, however, it has been proposed that metalinguistic knowledge might serve additional functions, such as raising the learner’s awareness of a gap in their knowledge or directing his or her attention to a given element in the input. This awareness of the gap, in turn, might have an impact on the developing system (Gass & Varonis, 1994; Long, 1996; Philp, 2003; Pica, 1994). Related to these issues are studies of explicit and implicit learning and inductive and deductive learning. It is the diversity of approaches and methods in this line of work that has led us to recognize that we simply cannot assume that “if we teach it, they will learn”. Instead, as language instructors we must be mindful of the method employed, the structure taught, the proficiency level of our students, and likely a host of additional factors. As we explore how sociolinguistic competence might be developed in the classroom, we must continue to remind ourselves of this fact.

Finally, there are some methods of instruction that target the output learners produce. To be fair, many of these approaches argue precisely that the creation of output does, indeed, affect the developing system. Nevertheless, we might view these methods as similar to those that focus on input processing in the sense that they do not, by definition, dictate the form of the developing system. For example, ease in production may be a reflection of strengthening connections or of automatization of a rule, depending on the linguistic theory upon which the work is based. Notable examples of this type of work have been advanced by Merrill Swain (1995, 2000) and, within a processing instruction framework, by Drew Farley (2004). The importance of output may be linked back to theories of interaction mentioned earlier (e.g., Long, 1981), to the
idea of consciousness-raising and noticing (e.g., Leow, 1998, 2002; Robinson, 1995; Schmidt, 1995; Sharwood Smith, 1993; Tomlin & Villa, 1994; VanPatten, 1994), or to psycholinguistic approaches that focus on neural connections and motor routines employed in production. This last category contains extensive work on phonetic training, which seems to be quite effective in the short-term, but evidence of lasting effects is scarce (Goto, 1971; Lively, Pisoni, Yamada, Tohkura, & Yamada, 1994; but see Bradlow, Pisoni, Akahane-Yamada, & Tohkura, 1997 for an exception). To our knowledge, this work has done very little to incorporate social factors into the design or to explore the effects of production practice on the development of sociolinguistic competence. Thus, we will return to these issues later in the volume.

SOCIAL FACTORS IN SLA: NOW THAT WE KNOW THAT THEY MATTER, WHAT TO DO?

The discussion of the basic principles of second language acquisition, and most recently, instruction, show that the field is diverse in its understanding of the form that learner language takes, the way linguistic knowledge is stored, how such knowledge changes and develops over time, and the degree to which our knowledge of language is affected by social factors. Although it is agreed that there are common paths that learners follow in acquiring a second language, interlanguage also exhibits a great deal of variability. Learner output is not the same for all learners, nor are learner grammars employed the same way by a single learner in a single interaction. Instead, learners may show unique patterns that are different from learners with similar levels of ability, and they may also appear to have acquired a rule at one point and then violate that same rule immediately after. Following the lead of sociolinguists, researchers in the field of second language acquisition have sought to analyze the contextual variables, both linguistic and social, as well as the individual variables that might explain these differences within and between learners.

The research documenting the impact of social factors on learner language is extensive. Ethnographic studies have focused on speech acts, and the various factors that interact to determine language use (Saville-Troike, 1989). For example, the purpose of the speech act, the location in which the speech act takes place, and the relationship between the participants in a speech act all influence learner output. One theory that focuses specifically on the participants in an interaction proposes that speakers aim to accommodate to their interlocutors and that this can explain variation from one setting to another (Beebe & Giles, 1984). Studies of this sort acknowledge that learners are social beings and that language use does not entail merely grammatical knowledge. In addition to recognizing that the context of a speech act can influence learner output, several studies have investigated the individual characteristics of the language
learner and how these might interact with language acquisition. Examples of such characteristics are the age of the language learner, the gender of the language learner, a learner’s motivation for acquiring the language, and the strategies that a learner employs in the process of acquisition. It has been found, for example, that younger learners are different from older learners (Birdsong, 1999) and that learners do not all approach the task of second language acquisition with identical strategies (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990). Although there are accounts that claim that social factors, and variation in particular, are uninteresting, peripheral, or related only to performance (e.g., Gregg, 1990), at present this extreme position seems to be the minority. Instead, it might be more accurate to claim not that social factors have been ignored in second language acquisition research, but rather that even though we recognize their importance, we have much ground to cover in terms of integrating these effects into our existing models of linguistic knowledge and use.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, second language acquisition researchers have succeeded in applying sociolinguistic research methods to incorporate individual and contextual variables, such as those mentioned earlier (e.g., age, relationship of participants, etc.), into studies of the acquisition of linguistic structures. Such studies also incorporate linguistic variables, such as the effect of word order, or syllable boundaries, on the use of a particular structure. Thus, a single research design can investigate the effects of the characteristics of the speech act, the characteristics of the individual participants, and the linguistic characteristics of the context in which each token appears. An example of this type of study showed that Chinese and Czech learners of English varied in their use of the English plural morpheme –s according to situational context, proficiency in English, semantic, syntactic and phonemic environment, and redundancy within the linguistic context (Young, 1991). This type of research represents the most productive area of inquiry that applies the interests of sociolinguistics to the study of acquiring second languages. The current volume will lay the foundations of sociolinguistic inquiry, especially for those readers who have no prior background in that area. The middle section of this volume provides an overview of several approaches to second language acquisition that incorporate social factors in some way. This section of the volume also includes an in-depth account of variationist work (i.e., following mainstream sociolinguistic research methods), paying careful attention to include examples from multiple second languages and across various learning contexts. The third and final section of this volume explores the implications of research on sociolinguistic competence in second languages, including discussions of Heritage speakers as well as classroom learners. The overarching goal of each of these chapters is to help readers to see the importance of making connections between linguistic variation and social factors, second language acquisition and use, and classroom instruction.
READ BEYOND THE TEXT


COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION

A. Comprehension

1. What is sociolinguistic variation?
2. According to Canale and Swain (1980), what are the three types of abilities that form communicative competence?
3. What is geographic variation?
4. What sort of social information about the speaker is conveyed in his/her message?
5. What central ideas are associated with Behaviorism? How are these seen in the Audiolingual Method?
6. How does Generative theory differ from Behaviorism?
7. What is input? What is the role of input in acquiring a second language?
8. What is interlanguage? What are some characteristics of interlanguages?
9. How does input differ from intake?
10. What does Connectionism claim?
11. What does the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis predict?

B. Application

1. Although sociolinguistic variation is not limited to greetings and leave taking, those are good ways to start thinking about all of the choices that you make when you speak. How many different ways to say ‘goodbye’ can you list in your native language? Would you use all of them? Are there some that you would only use under certain circumstances?
2. Are all three types of communicative competence necessary for successful performance in the second language classroom? What types of classroom activities might teachers include to encourage the development of skills in certain areas? Is it possible to focus only on one competence at a time, or are all three connected?

3. How should second language speakers use sociolinguistic information in their own speech? Should they use forms that are associated only with a particular geographic area? Is it important for them to reflect their own age, gender, and level of education appropriately? Does it matter if second language speakers know how to use informal language?

4. In your own teaching experience, can you think of times when you were caught off guard by a question related to sociolinguistic variation? What types of information would have been helpful to know? How might you handle the situation differently now?

5. In your own experience as a teacher or language learner, what evidence have you seen that learner language is systematic? What have you said or heard in a second language that shows evidence of having rules in place, even if they are not target-like?

NOTES

1. For now we use the word “rule” in quotes to acknowledge that the notion of rule is generally associated with innatist approaches, whereas constraints in general might be better called patterns or tendencies under other theoretical approaches.

2. Attention itself has been defined in a variety of ways and also constitutes a related and productive branch of second language research (Leow, 1998, 2001, 2002; Robinson, 1995; Schmidt, 1993, 1995; Tomlin & Villa, 1994).
Introduction to Sociolinguistic Variation

In Chapter One the importance of sociolinguistic variation for second language learners was explored, and it was seen that the ability to vary one’s speech from one situation to another and to properly interpret the subtle linguistic cues present in the language produced by others is an essential part of being a competent language user. We further explored the basic components of second language acquisition theory and established the foundation for integrating social variation into our understanding of the process of acquiring a new language. In that chapter, we took as a working definition of sociolinguistic variation “the choices a speaker makes when selecting the forms necessary to convey a message that is appropriate in a given context.” The goal of the present chapter is to explore this definition in greater depth by providing an overview of the most important principles of sociolinguistics as well as the recent developments in that field that have had a significant impact on research on variation in second languages.

WHAT IS SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION?

When we study sociolinguistic variation, we seek to understand the correlation between a range of social factors and the linguistic forms used in a given context. In other words, we identify two or more forms that are used in the same context and set out to identify those factors—linguistic, social, or individual—that correspond to a given pattern of use. Each member of this group of two or more forms is called a variant. For example, we might notice that there are two variants of word final –ing. Sometimes a speaker may produce words with an –ing ending as ‘–in’ (e.g., ‘swimmin’”) and sometimes as ‘–ing’ (e.g., ‘swimming’). In this case ‘–in’ and ‘–ing’ are variants of the sociolinguistic variable –ing. After a careful analysis we might discover that the variant ‘–in’ is more likely to occur in verbs, is more frequent in male speech, and is more
likely to be associated with informal speech contexts (e.g., Trudgill, 1974). Thus, sociolinguistics is the study of language in its social context. Social context can be understood to encompass factors related to the speaker, the hearer, the sociopolitical context, the historical context, factors of the immediate situation, and so on. A careful study of the sociolinguistic variable –ing requires an evaluation of the patterns of use of the variants ‘–in’ and ‘–ing’ as they relate (or do not relate) to factors of social context across all of these dimensions. In sum, the study of sociolinguistic variation requires a careful examination of patterns of language use as well as an interpretation that involves connecting these patterns to factors in the social context.

When people think of the differences that arise across speakers of the same language, geographic variation is often the first type of variation or difference that comes to mind. Along these lines we might say that speakers from a given region speak a certain dialect of a language. Nevertheless, the term “dialect” often carries negative associations in its common use and is sometimes used to refer to speakers who do not speak a standard variety of the language (see Chapter Nine for more on norms and standards). Linguists, however, are interested in variation across all speakers and do not associate variation with an evaluation of the quality of a particular manner of language use. In fact, through the study of sociolinguistic variation we become aware that all speakers vary from one situation to another and that it is as important to manage informal language as it is to manage formal language. In contemporary research, we use the term variety to refer to the language spoken by a particular group of speakers. That group of speakers may be defined by level of education, gender, or ethnicity, among other factors, as well as by geographic region. Building on our definition of sociolinguistic variation, a variety is simply the manner in which language is used within a particular social group. The reader will note that the term “variety” does not carry the potential negative connotations that the term “dialect” does; in addition, a social group may be defined along any of the dimensions mentioned in our earlier description.

As is clear from the range of factors that constitute social context, the work of sociolinguists can help us to understand how a given individual or group of speakers uses a variant and how this might change from one situation to another, one speaker to another, one geographic region to another, and so on. One additional contribution of sociolinguistic research is that it helps us to see how these patterns change over time. Most language speakers are aware that language changes over time, at least to the extent that we know that something happened to move us from Latin to Spanish or French, for example. What is less commonly recognized, however, is that language is constantly changing. In fact, for many speakers, the list of “pet peeves” with today’s grammar can often be traced to language change. Consider the sentences in Example 2.1:
Example 2.1 contains a list of sentences that may sound perfectly fine to some readers and wholly unacceptable to others. For most, however, they likely fall somewhere in the middle as things we know we say (or some speakers say) in casual contexts but do not include in formal writing. Each is, in fact, a good example of a form that is currently undergoing change and for which the newer variant still does not enjoy the same level of prestige as the older variant. Sociolinguistic research that uncovers patterns of use that connect variants such as ‘was/were’ in Example 2.1b (to factors such as age, level of education, gender, and others) helps us to understand how use of these forms changes over time. In sum, a sociolinguist seeks to understand which factors are connected to the use or non-use (or change in frequency of use) of a given form. The careful study of variation helps us to understand the patterns of use for a given set of forms as well as the way those patterns change over time.

KEY CONCEPTS IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Using the definitions of sociolinguistic “variation”, “variant”, and “variety” from the preceding section, there is one additional concept that has been mentioned but deserves further attention. This is the sociolinguistic variable. A sociolinguistic variable is precisely the structure that demonstrates variation. That is, it is the structure for which more than one variant is available. Many of the most important concepts in sociolinguistics have to do with how a sociolinguistic variable is identified and described, how the context in which it occurs is evaluated, and the research methods that have been developed to study such variation. In the section that follows we explore these ideas in greater depth, establishing some of the necessary foundations for understanding the research examples provided later in the chapter and for applying these concepts to the study of the acquisition and use of a second language.

Ways to Think About Variation

It is not surprising that one of the primary interests of sociolinguists in general is to find ways to describe and explain variation. It was mentioned earlier that a sociolinguistic analysis involves the careful study of the factors—individual,
group, situational, and so forth—that correspond to the use or non-use of a given variant. In order to unify the findings across studies, early sociolinguists developed a mechanism called the **variable rule** (Labov, 1969). Labov (1969), for example, first introduced the idea of the variable rule in his discussion of the contraction and deletion of the English copula (i.e., *be*) in Standard English and what would today be called African American Vernacular English. These rules were developed to describe the contexts in which each variant occurred, and the rules sounded something like “variant A occurs when context Y is present, whereas variant B occurs in context Z.” For example, Labov (1969) described that contraction of the copula was favored in contexts with a following vowel and a preceding pronoun. The function of this type of rule was to connect contemporary linguistic theory, which described syntactic transformations using similar notation, to language variation and to provide a principled manner in which to describe not only categorical rules of use but also those that determined the constraints on forms that were sociolinguistically variable. To be sure, the number of theories that now attempt to account for variation as well as the mechanisms for noting constraints on use of variable forms are increasingly numerous and diverse. For example, many theories now include features, such as lexical frequency, and their approaches stem from a range of psychological and linguistic theories of language. The approaches to this issue that are most relevant for second languages will be dealt with in considerable depth in Section Two of this volume. For the present, however, the reader need only recognize that sociolinguists have long sought to demonstrate that variation is rule-driven (i.e., constrained) and that this variation can be described effectively following a careful analysis of language use by a given speech group. While the form of the variable rule has evolved, sociolinguists continue to view sociolinguistic variation as something that is governed by factors related to individual characteristics, group characteristics, and characteristics of the interaction itself.

Another feature of early work on sociolinguistic variation was that the variables studied (i.e., the structures that varied) were generally found at the level of the sound system. In fact, the definition of ‘sociolinguistic variable’ held that a variable was comprised of two or more forms that expressed equivalent meaning. In our earlier example of the possible realizations of ‘swimming’, where the final ‘g’ can be reduced in certain social and linguistic contexts, it is easy to accept that ‘swimming’ means ‘swimming’, regardless of how it is pronounced. Nevertheless, in the examples that appear later in the current chapter, we can see that variation can occur at many levels of the grammar, not just in the sound system. For example, I might vary in my use of who/whom, as in ‘who did you hear?’ and ‘whom did you hear?’ and, while we recognize that these two forms are filling the same “spot”, we also see that there may be subtle meaning differences between the two. Likewise, my choice between ‘I’m
going to swim’ and ‘I will swim’ may be constrained by social and linguistic factors, but these two variants may also communicate subtle differences in meaning. The evolution from same-meaning variants at the level of the sound system to same-function variants (but perhaps slight meaning differences) for other variable structures has led to extensive debate in the field of sociolinguistics (e.g., Lavandera, 1978; Romaine, 1984). Fortunately, these disagreements have also led to very productive developments in our view of a sociolinguistic variable. At present, sociolinguistic variables beyond the level of the sound system abound and are important to the field of sociolinguistics in general. Additionally, work by researchers like Schwenter and Torres-Cacoullos (2008) and Aaron (2010) has pushed the field to view sociolinguistic variants as forms that fulfill a common function, rather than limiting research to only those that express identical meaning. In fact, Schwenter and Torres-Cacoullos (2008) argue that all of the forms that fulfill a given function at a particular point in time for an entire speech community must be considered, even in cases where individuals do not employ that full range of forms. This move beyond meaning equivalence has been described in Tagliamonte's recent work as a sort of weak complementarity in which we find that in a given context one form occurs with greater frequency and another occurs with lesser frequency (see Tagliamonte [2012] for a good discussion of this issue). What is most important for the reader of the current volume is an appreciation for the evolving definition of the sociolinguistic variable as well as the validity of the study of variation beyond the sound system, both in first and second languages.

A final area of great interest for second language researchers that has seen important theoretical development over time in the field of sociolinguistics is the concept of the envelope of variation (Labov, 1972a). The envelope of variation is one of a handful of terms coined over the years to describe the context in which variation occurs. In order to adequately describe sociolinguistic variation, we must have an understanding of where such variation occurs. This “where”, or the context of potential variation, is likely best described as a combination of linguistic, social, and individual factors. One widely studied example of sociolinguistic variation in Spanish (and other languages) is that of the alternation between overt and null subject pronouns, as in yo hablo español compared to hablo español. Both are grammatical, and the presence or absence of the overt form may be a function of a host of factors, including the country of origin of the speaker; the age, gender, and level of education of the speaker; the type of verb used; the extent to which the referent has been mentioned previously; the tense and aspect of the verb form; the formality of the context; and so on (Cameron, 1992; Otheguy, Zentella, & Livert, 2007). Nevertheless, the most powerful analysis of this alternation will focus exclusively on contexts where variation might actually occur. This means, for example, that contexts like relative clauses, where an overt form is ungrammatical, should not
be included in the analysis. Oftentimes, the best way to find out where variation might occur is to identify those contexts in which it cannot occur and then proceed with an analysis of the contexts that remain. The upshot from the discussions regarding the envelope of variation (or other similar terms) is that “context” is not a monolithic concept. Instead, we must view context as a “place” that can only be described in terms of multiple factors, each of which might exert an influence on language use. As we explore sociolinguistic variation, it is helpful to remember that context cannot be a function of an individual lexical item or syntactic structure but, rather, should be viewed more holistically as the cross-section of a series of social, individual, and linguistic factors.

Ways to Study Variation

As we consider the view of variation described above, particularly the role that social factors and context of interaction play in language use, it becomes clear that investigations of language use must be carefully planned. This is because the mere presence of a researcher will, in fact, influence the language used in a given situation. Much of the early work on sociolinguistics discussed the role of vernacular speech (i.e., casual, informal speech) in revealing the true nature of language variation (Labov, 1972a). In fact, this informal language was identified as the true object of study for sociolinguists because more formal speech would represent a greater level of awareness of formality and diminished use of any forms that were stigmatized or associated with marginalized social groups. The contrast between the sociolinguist's objective of studying vernacular, unmonitored speech and the fact that the mere presence of a researcher would make this impossible is known as the Observer's Paradox. In short, what we hope to observe will not occur if we are there to observe it! This has led to careful thought on how best to approximate vernacular speech as well as informal speech settings in order to overcome the paradox.

In thinking of how one might study informal language, it is possible, of course, to record speech without the knowledge of the speaker. At the time when sociolinguistic research methods were in their infancy, doing so required intentional deceit and was considered to be unethical by most. In countries like the United States, many forms of such recording were also illegal (although laws varied from one state to another). Thus, researchers sought to find ways to attain speech samples that were good examples of informal speech and, at the same time, were not collected without the knowledge of the speaker. Some researchers made good use of a method called participant observation, which entails getting to know a certain speech community, participating in activities there, and then, after time, analyzing samples of speech collected through such participation. A favorite professor of mine played basketball with a group
of young men several times a week in order to become part of their speech community. He was able to find an activity that he genuinely enjoyed and a positive means for gaining access to the group. Another good example of methodological creativity, which is now quite famous, is William Labov's study of /r/ production in New York City (1972b). Labov conducted his research in department stores with differing price points (taken as an indicator of social class) and rode in the elevators, asking directions to certain departments. For example, he asked 'where are the women's shoes?' and the desired response was 'fourth floor'. This response gave him two tokens of the /r/ he sought to study and, by asking for a repetition, he could elicit a second production, which differed in attention to speech from the first. In that study, Labov gained access to the speech of numerous strangers from a variety of social backgrounds in a context that was not overly formal. Methods such as participant observation or Labov's more specialized use of random sampling are good examples of attempts to get at casual speech and minimize the influence of the researcher.

Perhaps the best-known example of sociolinguistic research methodology, also made famous by Labov, is the sociolinguistic interview. This interview, unlike other types of interviews, manages the topics of conversation in order to gain access to less formal and less monitored speech. To conduct a sociolinguistic interview, a researcher begins by chatting with the participant about current topics and personal background. From there, the interviewer can introduce topics that bring speakers into a conversation in which they are thinking more about what they are saying than how they are saying it. For example, participants might be asked about a time when they were in great danger or nearly died or a time when they were particularly happy or sad. The intent behind the questions is to help the speaker get lost in the event itself and “forget” about the presence of the researcher. Depending on the speech community, this topic may vary quite a bit, and generally researchers benefit from knowing about the community before beginning the interviews themselves. In my own dissertation research with second language speakers, I found that questions about the upcoming prom, which is the biggest social event of the year for many American teens, often led participants to lose themselves in the details of planning for the event. What remains constant across studies using this method is that they seek to elicit casual speech that is meaning-focused, rather than producing careful speech in which speakers are more mindful of the form of their speech.

A final area of research that is of central importance for understanding sociolinguistic variation, but requires an entirely different methodological approach, is research on language attitudes. In the case of this area, researchers must not limit themselves to knowing what a speaker says they do, regardless of the context in which this is asked. This is because there can be stigma
Section I: Principles

associated with holding negative attitudes and, as humans, we often feel pressure to present ourselves in a positive light. What is more, sometimes we are quite unaware of the associations we hold, particularly when it comes to our reaction to features of language. Thus, we may know that if we hear the word ‘ain’t’, many listeners will have a negative impression of the speaker, but, for example, how many times might a speaker produce ‘swimmin’ instead of ‘swimming’ before we associate him or her with a lower social class or lower level of education? These are questions that generally cannot be answered consciously, even with a good deal of introspection. That said, there are ways to investigate implicit individual attitudes toward a given variant. One excellent example is the **matched guise test**. Tests of this sort ask participants to respond in some way to a speaker who uses different variants, while holding the physical appearance, voice, and other characteristics constant. So, a participant might listen to an utterance or a few sentences and then be asked to evaluate that speaker in some way, such as by asking what type of employment the speaker might be qualified to do or how friendly they sound. A task of this sort will include several examples of a variant and contrast those examples with additional items that do not contain that variant but are otherwise equal. A statistical analysis of the differences in the evaluation awarded to speakers who do or do not use a given variant tells us a great deal about the attitudes that participants hold toward that variant, even when these attitudes are subconscious and hard to articulate. Understanding how speakers evaluate a given variant goes a long way toward adequately describing the use of a given form as well as the change in the use of that form (see Chapter Three for more about the role of prestige in language change).

A final aspect of research methodology in sociolinguistics that is important to understand is the use of quantitative analysis to identify patterns in the data. Such methods can work with a range of elicitation techniques, including those mentioned here. Thus, we mean to address ways to analyze the data once they have been collected, rather than a competing means of elicitation. Once the data have been collected, sociolinguists take each instance of the variable structure under consideration (i.e., all variants that are produced to fulfill the function of the sociolinguistic variable) and assess the relevant linguistic and social factors for that instance. This means that for every instance of ‘–in’ or ‘–ing’, the researcher also codes the occurrence for the word class in which the token occurred, the topic of conversation, the gender of the speaker who produced it, and so on. Each factor is an **independent variable** that can be assessed for influence on the variants produced. These variants can also be referred to as categories of the **dependent variable**, just as the varying conditions for the influencing factors (e.g., male or female speaker) can be referred to as categories of the independent variables. Coding a variable effectively entails understanding the correlates of such use identified in previous literature and, at times,
identifying new, relevant features through this coding process. For example, the utterance in Example 2.2 comes from data examined for Spanish subject pronoun expression in Geeslin and Gudmestad (2008b) and was uttered by a native speaker of Spanish. Each of the three instances of the dependent variable subject (non)expression can be coded for the independent variables switch reference, tense/mood/aspect of the verb, and the person/number of the reference.

The coding of the three utterances is presented in Table 2.1.

Once each token is coded for all of the independent variables believed to be related to the use of the forms of the dependent variable, they can be entered into a statistical analysis. One of the most common forms of analysis is a regression analysis, which can simultaneously consider the effect of several independent variables on the dependent variable. Sociolinguists often conduct these analyses using a program called Goldvarb (e.g., Sankoff, Tagliamonte, & Smith, 2005; earlier versions were referred to as Varbrul). This program identifies the independent variables that are important in predicting the use of a given variant, and they also provide a factor weight. The factor weight tells the researcher quite a bit about the magnitude of the influence of a given independent variable on the dependent variable and also about the direction of that effect. One additional benefit of this and related statistical analyses is that it provides a model that can be compared across studies, across speech communities, across elicitation tasks, and so on. We will see in Section Two

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**EXAMPLE 2.2.** Subject expression in Geeslin & Gudmestad (2008b)

_Mi padre ha llegado . . . ¿Cuándo ha llegado? . . . Ha llegado el sábado._

My father arrived . . . When did (he) arrive? . . . (He) arrived on Saturday.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null/overt</th>
<th>Switch/same reference</th>
<th>Tense, mood, and aspect</th>
<th>Person/number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mi padre ha llegado</strong></td>
<td>Overt</td>
<td>Switch (based on previous context)</td>
<td>Present perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>¿Cuándo ha llegado?</strong></td>
<td>Null</td>
<td>Same (same referent as previous verb)</td>
<td>Present perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ha llegado el sábado</strong></td>
<td>Null</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Present perfect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY

Thus far we have come to appreciate the sociolinguist’s view of linguistic variation as well as some of the tools used to investigate this variation. We know now that sociolinguists view variation as something that is rule-governed in the sense that it is constrained by multiple linguistic, social, individual, and situational factors. It is clear that methodological concerns present interesting challenges, and, in response to these challenges, sociolinguists have developed creative methods for attaining the data that best serves their research goals. Finally, the research questions asked by sociolinguists require methods of analysis that allow us to examine the influence of many factors on a single variable at the same time, and this need has led to the development of sophisticated statistical tools. With these basic concepts in mind, the remainder of the chapter is dedicated to exploring some of the ways in which language varies with a particular focus on the range of variants that exist, from the sound system and beyond, to every other level of the grammar.

HOW DO LANGUAGES VARY?

Although the earliest work in sociolinguistic variation dealt primarily with features of the sound system that varied across social settings or across speech communities, languages vary at all levels of the grammar. This includes variation in verb forms, in word choice, in terms of politeness, in sentence structure, and so on. As was discussed previously, the inclusion of additional cases of variation has led to modifications in how we identify sociolinguistic variables and the contexts in which they vary. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to the exploration of several examples of language variation. Each was selected to provide a clear example of language variation at differing levels of the grammar. Through each example we can also see the many social correlates that explain this variation as well as the methods that were used to investigate each case. Clearly this handful of cases does not represent the wealth of research currently available on each variant, each language, or each speech community. Nevertheless, they allow us to put the previous concepts into practice and to see how languages vary across groups of speakers.

Case 1. Phonological Variation in the Arabic of Saudi Arabia

Among the many great examples of research on phonological variation is a study of Najdi Arabic by Al-Rojaie (2013). This variety of Arabic is spoken
in the Qaṣīm province of Saudi Arabia, and the investigation examines the phoneme /k/ and the process of affrication in lexical stems (e.g., [aʃil] ‘food’ or [barkih] ‘cistern’) and/or in the suffix form of the second-person feminine singular object [–ki]. In the variety examined by Al-Rojaie, the phoneme /k/ can be realized as [ts] or [k]. The data analyzed come from sociolinguistic interviews, of the type described earlier, completed by 72 speakers of Arabic from this region. To ensure that only potentially variable contexts were included, tokens that occurred in borrowed words, from Modern Arabic or from other European languages, were excluded. This yielded a total of 2,396 tokens. In order to learn more about the patterns of use of these two variants of /k/, several different independent variables were examined to determine their relationship to use. Looking at the linguistic context, each token was analyzed for the phonological environment and coded for factors such as whether there was an adjacent front vowel. Additionally, Al-Rojaie analyzed several speaker characteristics, including age, gender, and level of education.

An analysis using the statistical program Goldvarb, which conducts a specific type of regression analysis also known as a variable rule analysis, identified several constraints on the use of the two variants of /k/. For example, the variant [ts] was most frequent when adjacent to high front vowels, followed by adjacency to low front vowels, and then by contexts that contained no front vowel. The weights produced by the Goldvarb program assigned a weight of 0.92 to the first condition, 0.62 to the second, and 0.09 to the third. Thus, we can see that the first two conditions favor affrication and the last strongly disfavors it. There were also significant effects for age, gender, and level of education. The analysis showed that older speakers were most likely to produce [ts] and the younger speakers were least likely. Additionally, men favored affrication more than women. Finally, affrication was most likely to occur in the speech of speakers with lower levels of education and least likely with college-educated speakers. Despite the variation in /k/ in lexical stems, when this segment was part of the feminine suffix for second-person singular objects or possessives, it was realized as [ts] all of the time. In other words, this context is not part of the envelope of variation for this sociolinguistic variable. Although we will touch on these issues in greater depth in the next chapter, this study shows that for this dialect of Arabic, educated younger women appear to be leading a change in the direction of deaffrication of /k/.

This study demonstrates some of the methodological practices described earlier in this chapter, such as the sociolinguistic interview and the use of Goldvarb for data analysis, and provides a nice example of sociolinguistic variation at the level of phonology. The details of this study are summarized in Table 2.2.
Case 2. Morphological Variation in Spanish

As mentioned previously, the debate surrounding meaning equivalence and the phonological variable soon led to investigations of sociolinguistic variables beyond the level of the sound system. Our second example comes from a research investigation by Barnes (2012) on variation in the second-person singular preterit form (i.e., past time reference with perfective aspect) in Spanish. Whereas most second-person forms in Spanish end in the morpheme –s (e.g., comes ‘you eat’, comías ‘you ate’ (imperfect) and comerás ‘you will eat’ for the verb comer ‘to eat’), the preterit form does not contain an ‘s’ at the end (i.e., comiste ‘you ate’) in formal varieties of Spanish. Nevertheless, forms with an –s ending are produced in some speech communities and can be considered a variant of this sociolinguistic variable. The data analyzed by Barnes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sociolinguistic variable</td>
<td>/k/ in Arabic spoken in Qaṣīm province of Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variants</td>
<td>[tʃ] and [k]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The envelope of variation</td>
<td>All words that are NOT borrowings and contain /k/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent factors</td>
<td>Phonological environment (adjacent vowel), age, gender, level of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data elicitation method</td>
<td>Sociolinguistic interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of analysis</td>
<td>Goldvarb (regression analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>Affrication (i.e., [tʃ] rather than [k]) is more common adjacent to high front vowels in lexical stems for speakers who are older, male, and have lower levels of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to issues in sociolinguistics</td>
<td>We see a typical pattern of language change in these results in that for this variety of Arabic, there is a change toward deaffrication (i.e., production of [k]) led by younger, female, educated speakers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
come from three different corpora, together containing interviews and other speech samples from several different geographic regions where Spanish is spoken. For the purpose of her analysis, Barnes was able to extract sufficient tokens from the Spanish of Venezuela and from Spain; other dialects were grouped together in order to provide sufficient tokens for analysis. Only some of the verbs exhibited variation between the two forms (with and without final \(-s\)), and this led Barnes to exclude 37 verbs from the analysis, along with instances of formulaic utterances and metalinguistic comments, all of which fall outside the envelope of variation. Even with this approach, Barnes was able to extract 854 tokens of second-person preterit forms from the three corpora.

The focus of Barnes’ (2012) analysis was on the relationship between the linguistic contextual factors and the use of final \(-s\) on second-person preterit forms. To this end, she coded each token for several independent factors, including the presence of a pronominal subject, the specificity of the subject, the semantic class of the verb, the conjugation class of the verb, the frequency of the preterit form of each verb and the following phonological context. Additionally, she indicated the regional variety of the speaker who produced each form. Her analysis of the distribution of the forms showed that for both Spain and Venezuela, about 13% of the tokens were marked with final \(-s\). For the remaining varieties, the figure was slightly higher (16%). Barnes then conducted a Goldvarb analysis, which showed that, of all the factors included in the analysis, the frequency of the verb form and the following phonological context were the two that significantly constrained variation. An examination of these factors showed that \(-s\) marking is favored in low frequency verbs and when the verb form is followed by a vowel. The details of this research project are summarized in Table 2.3.

The investigation by Barnes (2012) is a good example of the extension of a variationist sociolinguistic analysis to a morphological phenomenon. Additionally, the study has important implications for usage-based approaches, such as that of lexical diffusion (Bybee, 2002), which affords an important role for lexical frequency. This model will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five, but for the purpose of the current discussion, it is sufficient to recognize that the process of analogy employed when final \(-s\) marking is extended to preterit forms in the second-person singular shows the strongest early effect with low-frequency forms. For researchers working on Spanish in particular, this study also provides an interesting counter example to the wealth of studies that demonstrate /s/-weakening in other contexts. Finally, this research shows that no single variety of Spanish is characterized by this phenomenon; rather, it is present in several regional varieties of Spanish.
TABLE 2.3
Summary of details of Barnes (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sociolinguistic variable</td>
<td>The second-person singular preterit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variants</td>
<td>Preterit forms with and without final –s (e.g., dijiste and dijistes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The envelope of variation</td>
<td>All instances of second-person singular preterit with verbs that exhibited variation (i.e., for which there was at least one token of each variant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent factors</td>
<td>Presence of pronominal subject, subject specificity, semantic class of the verb, type of conjugation (-aste or -iste), frequency of the preterit form (using <em>Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual</em>, or CREA, values), regional variety (Spain, Venezuela, other), and following phonological context (i.e., vowel, consonant, or pause)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data elicitation method</td>
<td>Three Corpora: CREA (spoken Spanish), Davies Corpus, and Habla Popular Mexican Spanish corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of analysis</td>
<td>Goldvarb (regression analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>(1) Frequency: –s marking favored in low-frequency forms and disfavored with high-frequency forms (2) Following phonological context: –s marking favored with a following vowel, disfavored with a following consonant or pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to issues in</td>
<td>Bybee’s lexical diffusion model: the analogical change of adding –s affects least frequent verbs first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sociolinguistics</td>
<td>Analogy not limited to a single variety of Spanish (geographically)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case 3. Syntactic Variation in Chinese

Moving from morphology to sociolinguistic variation in syntax, one of the most prominent examples of variation of this type is in the expression of subject forms across several different languages. Research on this topic in Spanish, for example, is extensive and is the focus of numerous research articles and edited volumes (e.g., Carvalho, Orozco, & Shin, in press). Some languages, for example Mandarin Chinese and American Sign Language, have just begun to
see investigations into null and overt subject forms. The third case we examine in this chapter is a study of the expression of subjects in Mandarin Chinese by Li, Chen, and Chen (2012), and it is the first of its type to examine this phenomenon in a non-inflectional language. The data analyzed by Li, Chen, and Chen came from 20 speakers of Mandarin produced in sociolinguistic interviews, a story-telling activity, and in classroom discourse. The speakers ranged in age from 18 to 65, and there were 12 females and 8 males. The story-telling activity is another popular elicitation method that uses a video or a wordless storybook to enable each participant to narrate the same story. In the case of this study, the popular Pear Story video (Chafe, 1980) was used to provide the basis for narration. These three tasks together provided the researchers with 8,507 tokens of subject forms in variable contexts.

The analysis of the distribution of forms produced by the Mandarin speakers in Li, Chen, and Chen (2012) showed that 47.2% of the tokens included an overt pronominal form, and the others were null. Each token was also coded for a series of independent linguistic factors, such as person and number of the verb form and specificity of the referent, as well as social factors, such as age, gender, and occupation. One additional contribution of this study is that it includes an analysis of differences related to discourse style as indicated by the three tasks used to elicit the speech from the participants. Each of these factors was included in a Varbrul analysis to determine the degree to which they predicted the realization of overt subject forms. The results showed that several of the linguistic factors, including switch reference, person, number, and specificity of the referent, were related to subject form expression. Likewise, Li, Chen, and Chen found that older speakers and female speakers were more likely to express overt subject forms. Additionally, the analyses showed that the predictive factors differed somewhat for students as compared to teachers. The details of this research study are summarized in Table 2.4.

As mentioned earlier, one of the important contributions of the research by Li, Chen, and Chen (2012) is that it extends a vibrant strand of research on subject form expression to a non-inflecting language. What is more, the analysis shows that similar factors are at work in constraining the use of subject forms in Mandarin Chinese as those that constrain other, more widely researched, languages, such as Spanish. Likewise, it appears that linguistic factors play the greatest role in influencing use of this variable structure. Another interesting connection is that the authors link the differences between teachers and students to the differing purposes for which they use language and the types of language produced to fulfill those purposes. For example, teachers may use shorter utterances in an effort to elicit greater production from learners, and learners may, in turn, produce longer narratives. We will see that the features of the elicitation tasks themselves are an important factor for understanding variation in second languages as well.
TABLE 2.4
Summary of details of Li, Chen, & Chen (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sociolinguistic variable</td>
<td>Subject forms in Mandarin Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variants</td>
<td>Null and overt pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The envelope of variation</td>
<td>Contexts where both null and overt subject pronouns are possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent factors</td>
<td>Linguistic: Person and number, coreference (i.e., switch reference), specificity of referent, sentence type (statements, questions, and imperatives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social: Age (five groups: 20 and below, 21–30, 31–40, 41–50, above 50), occupation (student or teacher), gender, formality/discourse context (classroom speech, information conversation, or retelling of Pear Story)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data elicitation method</td>
<td>Sociolinguistic interviews, a story-telling activity, and classroom speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of analysis</td>
<td>Varbrul (multivariate analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>Linguistic factors (differed somewhat between students and teachers): null is favored by same reference, plural, and inanimate referents and imperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social factors: null is favored by younger speakers (under 40) and males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to issues in sociolinguistics</td>
<td>Subject expression in Mandarin generally constrained by the same factors as in other languages/studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differences between students and teachers related to their different roles and the types (and purposes) of the discourse they produce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case 4. Pragmatic Variation in Spanish

Another level of the grammar, and one that is often treated separately from other levels, is pragmatics. The basic unit of analysis in pragmatics is the speech act. In this sense all of the various linguistic tools that are used to complete a given act are examined. Examples of speech acts include requests, invitations, refusals, and compliments. In the case of all of these speech acts, there
are several possible ways to express the intended meaning, and speakers vary their lexical items, verb forms, word order, address forms, and so on in order to achieve their communicative goals in an appropriate and contextually sensitive way. One good example of this type of research is a study of compliments in Mexican Spanish conducted by Nelson and Hall (1999). Their analysis of how speakers compliment others was based on interview responses from 80 native speakers of Mexican Spanish, divided nearly evenly between males and females and ranging in age from 16 to 30 years old. In total they collected 240 compliments, and they analyzed these according to which attributes were praised, what the form of the compliment was (e.g., adjective-based vs. noun-based), what the genders of the giver and recipient were, and what the relationship between the giver and recipient was.

Throughout the analysis, Nelson and Hall (1999) compared the percentage of compliments that corresponded to each category of each independent variable. They found that three of the most common attributes complimented were overall appearance, appearance enhancers (e.g., clothes or jewelry), and natural appearance (e.g., hair, eyes). Their analysis of the types of expressions used to form a compliment revealed a number of strategies, including adjective-based compliments (e.g., ¡Que bonito vestido! ‘how pretty your/the dress’) and noun-based compliments (e.g., Eres un angel ‘you are an angel’), and also that the adjective-based compliments constituted a full 73% of all compliments. The researchers further examined each type, seeking to determine, for example, what types of items were modified by an adjective in the adjective-based compliments. They identified several different syntactic structures within each category of compliment. Looking at the results for gender of the giver and recipient of the compliment, they showed that men strongly favored complimenting women (84% of the time) over complimenting other men (16% of the time), whereas women complimented men and other women at equal rates. Finally, they showed that the greatest number of compliments was directed at acquaintances, with strangers and those they knew closely receiving fewer compliments. The findings of this study are summarized in Table 2.5.

One important result of research of this type is that we can see the relationship between forms of giving a compliment and linguistic as well as social factors. In this way, it is perfectly reasonable to view pragmatic variation as another case of sociolinguistic variation. The study by Nelson and Hall (1999) further demonstrates that a careful analysis of a given speech act can provide essential information about the target language for second language acquirers as well as identify the various factors that must be manipulated in order to use that speech act in a native-like way. The findings from this study in particular also indicate that a closer examination of the differences between men and women is warranted and of interest to the field at large.
### Table 2.5

**Summary of details of Nelson & Hall (1999)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sociolinguistic variable</td>
<td>Compliments in Mexican Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variants</td>
<td>A range of syntactic structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The envelope of variation</td>
<td>Any attempt to praise an attribute of another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent factors</td>
<td>Linguistic: compliment base (e.g., adjective, noun, etc.) and syntactic structure (e.g., verb phrase + adjective (noun) as in <em>tienes bonitos ojos</em> ‘you have pretty eyes’) Social: gender of giver, gender of receiver, degree of intimacy between giver and receiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data elicitation method</td>
<td>Sociolinguistic interviews, including questions about compliments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of analysis</td>
<td>Analysis of the distribution of types across a sample of 240 compliments produced by 80 speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>Adjective-based compliments constituted nearly 3/4 of the sample and were formed using 6 different syntactic structures; men complimented women with dramatically greater frequency than other men (86% vs. 16%), whereas women complimented men and other women at equal rates; compliments were given with greatest frequency to acquaintances (vs. intimates or strangers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to issues in sociolinguistics</td>
<td>Variation at the level of pragmatics is a function of linguistic and social factors; in this particular case, gender seems to play an interesting role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Case 5. Lexical Variation in American English**

Some of the earliest examples of research on linguistic variation take into account the differences we find in the lexical items used to denote certain objects or concepts. As second language learners we are quickly aware of these differences. For example, in Spanish, we learn that there are two ways to say ‘peach’: *duraño* and *melocotón*. Both are acceptable and their distribution is largely a function of geography. There are, of course, excellent studies of the type mentioned above that take into account the variation in lexical terms that
is constrained by social factors such as age, gender, or ethnicity. Nevertheless, the most predominant examples are studies of geographic variation, and the results of the findings are reported in the form of language maps. Such maps were the mainstay of classic dialectology and continue to be the focus of linguistic atlases. Additionally, they often capture public interest and appear in newspaper articles and on various social media sites. Thus, instead of including an example of a typical sociolinguistic research study here, we have opted to include a sample map from research by Joshua Katz, a statistician at North Carolina State University. At the time this chapter was written, his maps were included in articles ranging from the Boston Globe (Hartnett, 2013) to the Huffington Post (Kleinman, 2013), and the full collection was available on his own web site (Katz, n.d.). Figure 2.1 shows Katz’s map for the distribution of words for carbonated beverages in the United States (taken from http://spark.rstudio.com/jkatz/SurveyMaps/).

CONCLUSION

The second half of Chapter Two has been devoted to the exploration of several different examples of research on sociolinguistic variation. The overarching goal of this approach was to illustrate several of the concepts introduced in
the early part of the chapter while at the same time demonstrating variation across levels of the grammar. We have seen cases of variation in the sound system, in verbal morphology, in subject expression, in compliment strategies, and in word choice. In every case the research presented here has explored the linguistic and social constraints that influence speaker choices of these variants. What is more, these studies provide examples of the common methods of elicitation and analysis used in contemporary sociolinguistic research. In Chapter Three we will explore the social correlates of this variation in greater depth, and in the remainder of this volume we will see that these same methods can be (and have been) applied to second language learners.

READING BEYOND THE TEXT


COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION

A. Comprehension

1. What are variants and sociolinguistic variables?
2. What is a variety?
3. How do variable rules work?
4. What is an envelope of variation?
5. What is the Observer’s Paradox?
6. Describe Labov’s study of /r/ production in New York City.
7. What do matched-guise tests require of participants?
8. How do dependent and independent variables differ?
9. In Barnes (2012), what two factors significantly favored preterit –s marking in Spanish?
10. In Li, Chen, and Chen (2012), what linguistic and sociolinguistic factors significantly affected subject form expression in Chinese?
11. In Nelson and Hall (1999), what were the most common compliment strategies in Spanish? Which gender gave more compliments? Which gender received more compliments? Who received more compliments: friends, acquaintances, or strangers?

B. Application

1. You have read that word final –*ing* is sometimes reduced in English. Tomorrow take note of every word that you hear that ends in –*ing* and write down whether the person produced the –*g* on the end or not. Also, take note of what part of speech the word was and if you think the word is common. You should also write down the speaker’s sex, age, estimated socioeconomic level, as well as the situation in which and to whom he or she is speaking. At the end of the day, see if you notice any patterns in your data.

2. As you have probably begun to notice, there are many sociolinguistic variables in the world. Think about the words you use for various household items. Do you know of any other words that exist for certain items? Who uses those words? Does that person differ from you by age? Geographic origin? Sex? Socioeconomic level? Think of as many examples as you can and what social variables correspond with different responses.

3. What variety do you speak? Is that the most common variety at your university? What other varieties do you hear there? Are you aware of language attitudes (positive or negative) toward any of the varieties? What are they? What sorts of features do people make comments about with respect to your variety or other varieties?

4. Think of a time when you were interviewed. What was the setting? Class project? Newspaper article? Doctor’s visit? A study? How did you feel while you were being interviewed? How do you think your language differed in that moment compared to how you would normally speak with your friends?

5. You read about the study performed by Barnes (2012) where speakers extended the use of –*s* to mark second-person singular forms on past tense verb endings in Spanish. In English, do you ever hear anyone say anything that differs from what you would read in a grammar book? What does the person say? What does the grammar book say? Do you see evidence of a “rule” in that person's head that caused them to produce that form? Can you think of examples from music, television, or movies?
The Role of Social Characteristics in Language Variation

In the previous chapter we saw that languages vary at all levels of the grammar, and we explored examples, ranging from variation in the sound system to variation at the level of pragmatics. In each case, we noted that there were features in the linguistic context, or linguistic factors, which could be used to describe and predict the use of a given variant. In several of the studies we also saw that characteristics of individual speakers or a group of speakers could be related to linguistic variation. The goal of the current chapter is to explore in greater depth these personal or group characteristics that are linked to variation. The motivation for doing so, of course, is to better understand not only what must vary in language in order to communicate effectively but also what such variation says about the speaker, as an individual and as a member of a group.

WHAT IS INDIVIDUAL VARIATION?

For second language speakers and native speakers alike, the way we say things (or write things) gives hints about who we are (whether we intend to do so or not). We reveal characteristics of our age, gender, social class, ethnicity, and so on, each time we produce language. In turn, each of these reflects certain cultural and sociohistoric characteristics of the societies, regions, and time periods that have shaped our identities. What is more, we understand these things in the language we comprehend as well. In some cases we are aware of the clues that let us know about a speaker, but in others, our judgments are subconscious (but no less powerful). It is important to state from the outset that these individual characteristics have to do more with the group with which a speaker identifies than with biological facts. For example, some men may appropriate female speech and some women may appropriate male speech for a variety of reasons, including sexual orientation, workplace norms, and social connections. Likewise, we may know speakers who appropriate the language
of a younger social group than their chronological, biological age would indicate. In each of these cases, the upshot is that as language users, we provide information about our position in society and about the groups with which we have contact in our daily interactions.

We have also described in earlier chapters that the way we speak may indicate our geographic background. The way we use particular linguistic variants across all levels of the grammar provides information about where we have lived, worked, and spent time. We are likely able to quickly point to differences in vocabulary across geographic regions where the same language is spoken (see Chapter One for a list of examples and Chapter Two for links to dialect maps in the US), but it is actually the case that variation at all levels of the grammar can be influenced by geography. Taking this in concert with the characteristics mentioned above, we can see that the language we produce identifies the groups with whom we identify and have contact as well as our geographic past. Once again, we all know speakers who wish to cease using a regional, home variant (at least in certain contexts such as a job interview or academic paper) and have done so; thus, regional variants reflect speaker identity as much as historical facts. With all of these types of variation in mind, we can see that individual variation, simply put, is the way that a single speaker uses language to reflect a range of characteristics. When we refer to the way a single person produces and interprets language, the term used to describe this variety of language is idiolect. An idiolect is the variety spoken by a single individual.

HOW DO WE STUDY VARIATION IN GROUPS OF SPEAKERS?

It can be interesting to determine how a given individual uses language, and it is certainly important to understand how the language of an individual reflects that speaker’s own identity. Nevertheless, classic research in sociolinguistics is generally interested in the “social” aspect of language (e.g., Labov, 1972a)—in other words, the general tendencies of multiple individuals in a given society or place. Likewise, second language acquisition researchers and language instructors are interested in helping learners use language that reflects the tendencies of a target group, not a particular individual. Thus, both lines of inquiry tend to focus on groups of speakers, rather than individuals. Perhaps one of the most widely discussed concepts in sociolinguistics is precisely what this reference group might be called, how it can be identified, and how its influence might be studied. In fact, our view of social groups has been said to evolve in “waves”. During the first wave of sociolinguistic research, the primary preoccupation was to describe how linguistic and macro-level social factors described the use of a given linguistic variant (Tagliamonte, 2012). For example, we might have examined how social class influenced the variable production of /r/ in New
York City English (Labov, 1972b). In order to carry out this type of investi-
gation, a sociolinguist might have studied a relatively large group in which
individuals were sub-categorized by social group. In other words, the group
might be divided into several subgroups that include members over 60 years
of age (group 1), those ranging in age from 40–60 (group 2), others from
20–40 (group 3), and those under 20 years of age (group 4). This type of sub-
categorization could be applied to social class, to age, to gender, to ethnicity,
and so on. By comparing the patterns of use across these subgroups, linguists
were able to identify differences according to social factors and describe these
differences accordingly. This led to important work identifying language
change in progress as well as theories about which groups lead in language
change and which groups lag behind (see later sections in this chapter for more
detail). Early sociolinguists, such as Labov (1972b) and Gumperz (1968) iden-
tified the groups of speakers to be included in this type of study as those con-
stituting a speech community. Members of a speech community are said to
share the same norms of communication. To be clear, this should not be taken
to mean that all speakers in the group use linguistic forms in the same way.
Instead, the idea was that members of a speech community shared the same
norms for evaluating the use of these forms (or that the use of each form was
clearly associated with a specific subgroup within the speech community). In
other words, all members of a speech community shared the same definition
of prestige, or positive evaluation of a given form, even though some speakers
used these positively evaluated forms more frequently than others. Over time,
the concept of shared norms as well as the very definition of speech com-
munity has evolved. Nevertheless, even in recent work the notion of a unified
set of sociolinguistic norms remains central (Labov, 2007, p. 347). Although
the definition of speech community has evolved over time, the approach to
studying variation across categories of social variables of this type remains
important today, and corpora continue to be built and studied using these
traditional social categories (e.g., Bentivoglio & Sedano, 1987).

Despite their continued importance, it was also noted that there are some
limitations to the traditional approach to speech communities. Perhaps one of
the most significant confounds is that there seem to be several cases in which
the notion of a widely agreed-upon evaluation of prestige and, more spe-
cifically, the idea that social class determines prestige, does not hold (e.g., Le
Page & Keller, 1985; Lippi-Green, 1989; Rickford, 1986). Complications of this
sort led to a shift in focus from macro-level social characteristics to the type
and strength of connections an individual holds within a community. These
connections, or ties, are known as social networks, and the researchers most
closely associated with this concept are Jim and Leslie Milroy. The Milroys
sought to connect theories in anthropology and sociology to the study of lan-
guage use and language change. One fundamental difference in their approach
was the belief that multiple norms of use could coexist in a single community such that a single variable, such as prestige, was insufficient to explain the complexity of the interaction between social ties and language variation (see Milroy [1987], Milroy & Gordon [2003], or Milroy & Milroy [1985] for details). In other words, the focus of their study was not comparisons among groups of speakers but rather the relationships, or social ties, of individual speakers to other members of a community. To this end, researchers working within a social network framework often come up with detailed accounts of the types of interactions an individual may have and the strength of connections between a given individual and subgroups within a community. The stronger the tie, the more likely a speaker is to reflect the norms of that group, regardless of whether that group’s patterns of use are consistent with external prestige norms. Among the many examples of research in which the social networks approach has been employed is Lippi-Green’s (1989) research on Grossdorf, an Austrian village in the Alps with only 800 inhabitants. Her investigation yielded a complex scale based on 16 different indicators of community involvement, accounting for facts such as connections through the workplace and with outside communities. Using this metric she was able to show that through this complex approach, one could identify certain gender-specific trajectories that would not have otherwise been apparent. In other words, a simple categorization of speakers by age, gender, social class, and the like would have failed to identify these patterns of use.

A related strand of research to that which focuses on social networks are the studies of smaller groups, known as **communities of practice**. These groups do not include the full range of gender, age, social class, and ethnic categories that a speech community does. Instead, they are smaller groups that come together around a particular enterprise (Eckert, 2000, p. 35). The community of practice is the site of the interaction where social meaning is indexed by linguistic elements and social meaning is co-constructed by the members of each group. Some of the most famous research on communities of practice has been carried out by Eckert (2000) and focuses on teenagers in Detroit at a suburban high school. The well-known communities of practice among these teens are the jocks and the burnouts, with the former group appropriating suburban norms and the latter appropriating urban norms to a greater degree. What makes this research unique is that it connects linguistic variation to other social behavior, or practices, such as participation in school activities, smoking, fashion choices, achievement of popularity, academic success, and the like. In other words, this research demonstrates how the use of a range of linguistic variants is one piece of an individual’s identity and can be best understood in the context of additional practices that mark that identity (see also work by Fought [1999] and Mendoza-Denton [2008] on gang membership, for good examples). Together with the research on social networks, this
body of work constitutes a shift in sociolinguistic research because of its focus on speaker-defined categories (e.g., female nerd) as opposed to macro-level social groups (e.g., upper-class males).

A related strand of sociolinguistic research, which represents a further shift toward the individual, focuses on the behavior speakers use to mark identity or construct personality. Of interest in this third wave is any linguistic behavior that serves a social purpose, rather than examining language change or regional variation. This approach further views styles of speech as directly connected to individual identities and is concerned with how speakers go about constructing their own personalities. Examples of this research include studies of linguistic behavior of gays in California (Podesva, 2011) and “yuppies” in Beijing (Zhang, 2005), among many others. What is clear from simply naming the groups under focus is that the identity constructed is specific to gender, geography, and also additional categories that depart from the traditional sociolinguistic variables but are equally important in constructing identity.

What makes the development of how groups are viewed over time somewhat different from other issues in the fields of linguistic inquiry is that the analysis of speech communities, of communities of practice, and of individuals as identity makers are all still productive approaches to sociolinguistic variation. In many ways, they simply represent an increasingly evolved focus on different aspects of language use and language change. In this sense we can see how age-old concepts such as covert prestige (Trudgill, 1977), or the positive evaluation some speakers afford to non-prestige varieties of a language, is quite consistent with an examination of social ties to social groups that are not associated with the mainstream, such as the burnouts in Detroit. Likewise, we can see how a focus on individual identity construction or on social ties to a given professional network is consistent with concepts such as the linguistic market, which was identified to study the way in which a given speaker’s profession influences his or her speech (Sankoff & Laberge, 1978). For the purposes of second language acquisition research, the key insight to be gleaned from this discussion as a whole is that there are likely many factors that will influence language use, and these include macro-level social characteristics, the full range of social connections a language learner has, and also characteristics of that individual speaker’s identity. Thus, we must be mindful of the fact that social factors may come to bear on language use in second languages in a variety of ways. What is more, it is quite possible that identities and social networks are quite different for second language speakers, and, thus, we cannot expect to find identical access to prestige and non-prestige norms, nor can we anticipate that learners will reflect these norms in the same way that native speakers do.

As we move toward a discussion of models of language acquisition that incorporate social factors in the upcoming chapters, we will see that a variety of models have been developed to incorporate this range of insights.
As has been mentioned many times thus far, sociolinguists seek to analyze not only language variation, but also language change. To that end, there have been detailed accounts of the role of social characteristics, such as age, social class, or gender, in the process of language change. Language change can be seen through the adoption of a new form or the loss of an existing one. Additionally, we might see change in the range of contexts in which an existing form is used or a modification of the meaning associated with a given form. These changes can occur at all levels of the grammar.

Although changes may be led by different social groups, proceed at differing rates, and have linguistic or social motivations, they have been broadly divided into two categories (e.g., Labov, 1994). Change from below refers to change that originates from within the linguistic system itself. In other words, this type of change is often said to have linguistic motivations, and it represents a change that is spontaneous and unconscious, at least in the beginning stages. It may include processes such as generalization, extension, or analogy. Once the change takes hold it may begin to have social motivations as well, but the initial stages are said to have system-internal causes. An example of change from below is the vowel change in American English often described as the Northern cities vowel shift (Labov, Yaeger, & Steiner, 1972), in which the raising and tensing of /æ/ set off a chain shift in the articulation of vowels in Great Lakes region. In contrast, change from above is said to involve the adoption of features that originate outside the speech community (and outside the linguistic system of that speech community). As a result, speakers are aware of these changes and they are socially motivated (see Tagliamonte [2012] for additional discussion). These changes are most often led by the highest status group, as well as females and highly educated speakers. These “innovative” (or newly incorporated) variants are often found in formal styles and are used most often by young adults because they are in positions of employment that demand greater sensitivity to prestige variants. Labov’s (1972b) description of /r/ in New York City (described in the previous chapter) is an example of a change from above. The variant [ɹ] was reintroduced into the speech first among speakers determined to be of higher social status (according to the department store in which they were shopping), whereas speakers from lower socioeconomic classes continued to omit the consonantal [ɹ] sound in words like “fourth”. In sum, the type of change in progress is directly linked to certain social groups within a speech community (or certain types of social ties within a social network).

Not only is there a connection between social factors and the type of change in progress, the path of this change and current state of variation are also linked to social factors (including sociopolitical, sociohistorical, and migratory
patterns of a community). For example, a change in progress is generally characterized by greater frequency of use among women. In the case of change from below, this means that women use innovative forms at higher rates than men and in the case of change from above, this is indicated by a higher rate of adoption of diffusing forms. In both cases, women are said to lead the change. In contrast, in cases where variation is already present among the different groups in a speech community but there is less use of a stigmatized variant by women overall, we might conclude that this is a case of stable variation. To be sure, the role of women in language change has met with several counterexamples, and, what is more, it should be viewed as one of many factors that interact to determine the path of language change. For example, any account in present-day sociolinguistics of language change would be remiss to ignore the roles of social class and age, along with gender. Thus, the important point for our purposes is not to see gender as the defining characteristic of all language change but rather to recognize the importance of the influence of a host of social factors on language change. We will see when we turn to the context of second language acquisition in later chapters that these factors may be equally relevant but may pattern in entirely different ways.

**HOW ARE SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS REFLECTED IN LANGUAGE VARIATION?**

We have seen thus far that language varies across levels of the grammar and that it also varies as a function of several different social characteristics. Each characteristic with which a speaker or group of speakers identifies is reflected in the language produced. As was the case in the previous chapter, we have selected a handful of examples of this type of research to examine in greater detail. Each was selected because it demonstrates variation that is conditioned by one of the social or identity factors we have explored in this chapter. It is worth repeating that this is an active and growing area of research, and our examples do not illustrate the breadth or depth of this field of inquiry. Instead, we hope they provide models for understanding related research as we move forward in our discussion of second language learners in later chapters.

**Case 1. The Role of Gender in Language Variation**

Over time, sociolinguists have built a corpus of studies that demonstrate that men tend to use a greater number of nonstandard variants than women. In other words, women use prestigious or standard forms more frequently than men. This was seen in early work by Trudgill (1972), for example, who showed this to be the case for speakers of British English in urban areas of Norwich, regarding their use of a handful of phonological and phonetic variables. The
differences between men and women have also been linked to linguistic change. For example, as early as 1905, Gauchet suggested that women were initiators of sound changes, and since that time careful work has been done to document the role of men and women in the process of incorporating new forms into speech (see Labov [2001] for a discussion). Women may, in fact, lead changes from both above and below the level of consciousness. As noted earlier in the context of assessing social networks, the predicted role of women is not always borne out in the data, and, thus, as we continue to talk about gender as an influencing factor, it is important to remember that there are no absolute rules when it comes to the influence gender may or may not have on language use. One important connection between gender and language change may be the interaction of gender with age, such that we see the greatest segregation of genders in early adolescence, but these differences, although lessened to some extent, proceed into the adult workplace (Cameron, 2011). Thus, in addition to being mindful of counterexamples to the role of gender in language use and language change, it is also important to remember that this single factor should not be viewed in isolation but rather as part of the multiple influences present in a single context of language use. With these two notes of caution in mind, we provide an example of a case where the role of gender was found to be important in explaining language use.

Lauwereyns’ (2002) study on the use of hedges in Japanese analyzes biological gender in addition to other social factors. The study also examines the role of the age of the speaker and the context of speech, distinguishing between casual speech produced in a conversation between participants matched for age and gender and more formal speech produced in a conversation with the investigator. The participants in the study are 40 native speakers of Japanese from Tokyo, each categorized by age and gender. The hedges, or constructions used to lessen the strength behind an utterance, examined are 26 words and phrases that express vagueness. The results of Lauwereyns’ analysis showed that two expressions, toka ‘or something’ and nanka ‘like’, were especially frequent in the dataset, whereas the other expressions were more evenly distributed. A comparison of the rates of use of hedges demonstrated that younger speakers used hedges twice as often as older speakers, and that women used hedges significantly more than men. One interesting result is that the researcher found more hedges in the interview task, which was counter to the prediction that hedging would be more frequent in informal contexts. Finally, Lauwereyns found an interaction between gender and age such that younger female speakers were significantly different from all other groups. The details of this research are summarized in Table 3.1.

The research conducted by Lauwereyns (2002) on hedges in the Japanese spoken in Tokyo demonstrates that previous assertions that younger female speakers are freer to break standard norms (e.g., Yonekawa, 1998) find support
TABLE 3.1
Summary of details of Lauwereyns (2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sociolinguistic variable</td>
<td>Hedges in the Japanese of Tokyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variants</td>
<td>Presence and relative frequency of 26 expressions that denote vagueness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The envelope of variation</td>
<td>Any instance in oral speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent factors</td>
<td>Sex, age (Group I: 17–18; Group II: 50–69), formality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data elicitation method</td>
<td>Recordings of conversations (between participants) and interviews (with the researcher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of analysis</td>
<td>Identification of each instance of 26 different hedges; statistical differences assessed for each independent factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>Two expressions, <em>toka</em> ‘or something’ and <em>nanka</em> ‘like’, were the most frequent (1,385 of 3,802 tokens); younger speakers used hedges twice as much; women used hedges more than men; more hedges in interview than in chats; the effects of each social variable varied across hedge types; when all factors were considered in interaction with one another, young females were different from young males, older males and older females; these results were consistent with and without inclusion of the two most frequently used hedges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to issues in sociolinguistics</td>
<td>Results show that the unique role of younger speakers and of gender differences is confirmed; hedges can be seen to indicate politeness or indirectness; finally, the differences between conversation types are complex and may be linked to additional characteristics of the task, such as quality of information exchanged, rather than just the formality of the context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in this analysis. In general, although counterexamples abound, it does appear that biological gender is a factor worthy of consideration. The interaction with age, however, further shows that the effects of gender on language use, and language change can only be properly understood when considered in conjunction with other factors, such as age. Likewise, the result for task formality,
which is different from the direction predicted by the author, is worthy of further examination. The author proposes that this might have to do with the nature of the tasks, in that the interview required a greater amount of “information exchange”. We will see in our discussion of the discourse context in a later case that multiple studies have shown that a division of tasks into “formal” and “informal” rarely captures the complexity of task-based differences (see Geeslin [2011b] for discussion). What is immediately clear from this first case is that when examining the social correlates of language use, there are likely multiple factors worthy of study, including age, which is the focus of the second example included in the current chapter.

Case 2. The Role of Age in Language Variation

As was the case for gender, the influence of speaker age on language use and language change has been the focus of extensive research. One basic finding about age, which is likely already clear from the discussion of gender above, is that if younger speakers are the innovators of sound changes, older speakers will show the least innovative speech, either through the lack of use of given form or a lower frequency of its use. This means that we might expect that any comparison of older speakers to younger speakers would tell us something about language change, with younger speakers showing where language is going and older speakers showing where it has been (Labov, 2001), at least in the case of ongoing change. In other words, the systematic observation of different age cohorts allows us to infer facts about language variation and change, ultimately determining whether a given variant is stable or not in a specific speech community (Cameron, 2011). In fact, this type of comparison is called an apparent time comparison, and it has often been used instead of or in addition to longitudinal work in documenting language change.

In addition to all of the cases where, in fact, older speakers do show more conservative speech, there are several other ways in which age might interact with language use or language change. For example, age differences can also indicate patterns of stable variation, whereby use of certain forms is simply associated with older speakers. In other words, those same speakers would not have used those forms at earlier stages of their lives. The opposite might also be true, where younger speakers use a given form and then this use diminishes over time. In cases where there is stable variation but we find differences according to the age of the speaker, we might suspect that there is age grading. This phenomenon refers precisely to the changing patterns of use of a given variant in the same speaker over his or her lifespan. We can see that using an apparent time research design might make it difficult to distinguish between age grading and a change in progress. Eckert (1984) refers to issues of this sort as the “ambiguity of age effects” where, using only apparent time data, we
cannot distinguish a change in progress from stable variation by looking only at age comparisons of this sort.

In fact, there is a long history of accounts of the ways in which age may interact with language, including classic discussions such as that by Birren and Renner (1977), in which several types of age are identified and distinguished (e.g., biological, psychological, functional, and social). All of these types or operationalizations of age are said to mediate one’s relationship to the larger social order. Even in contemporary work, we continue to see the complexity of age as a variable. For example, in Otheguy, Zentella, and Livert (2007), a study of subject form expression in the Spanish of New York City, we see that the age of arrival of the immigrant participants is an important predictor of rates of subject form use. Age of arrival, however, likely interacts with the age of the speaker (i.e., the older you are, the longer you are likely to have been in the US, and the older you will be upon initial exposure to the Spanish community in NYC, and possibly the older you are for the onset of acquisition of English). These potential interactions require a careful analysis so that incorrect inferences are not made and so that the effect of age is not reduced to a single explanatory factor. Along these lines, Cameron (2011) distinguishes aging from age and concludes that the effect of age is best studied at the intersection of its interaction with other social factors, such as gender, ethnicity, class, social network, religion, or other community-specific categories. Thus, as we continue the discussion of age as a social variable, two important caveats must be kept in mind. First, age may have several different relationships to language use and language change depending on the phenomena studied and how we define age; second, like gender, age is likely to interact with other social categories in such a way that no explanation based exclusively on age will fully capture the patterns of use or change associated with a given language or group of speakers.

The case selected for our purpose of highlighting the importance of age in language use and language change was designed to tease apart the effects of age in stable variation and age in language change. Specifically, Wagner and Sankoff (2011) sought to examine the patterns of use of the periphrastic future form and the inflected future form in the French spoken in Quebec and how these patterns had changed over time. Their data come from interviews conducted in 1971 with 59 speakers (Sankoff-Cedergren corpus of Montreal French [Sankoff & Cedergren, 1971]), who were then interviewed a second time in 1984 (Thibault & Vincent, 1990). These two sets of interviews yielded 3,658 tokens of contexts with unambiguous future reference. The data were coded for a range of linguistic and social variables and analyzed using a multivariate analysis in Goldvarb X. The type of subject (i.e., grouping nous ‘we’, vous ‘you all’, and nominal to compare against others) was shown to be related to the verb form produced, and the authors interpreted this as stylistic difference because, for example, nous and vous are used in more formal speech and, thus,
were more likely to occur with the inflected form. Additionally, in the presence of *quand* ('when') contexts, the inflected future form occurred at a rate of five times more than the rate for other types of contexts. It was further shown that the rate of use of the inflected form increased over time between interviews and that the older speakers were actually more likely to use the inflected form than the younger speakers. A careful analysis of inter-speaker differences showed that the number of categorical users of the periphrastic form dropped from 20 down to 4 in the time between interviews and that the percentage of the tokens predicted by the age factor alone decreased from 28% down to 11% between interviews. By looking at these effects in conjunction with the socioprofessional status of the speakers, the analysis showed that in the earlier corpus, the effects for age held across social class, such that the use of the inflected form was associated with middle-aged and older speakers, perhaps as a marker of adulthood. In the second series of interviews, when all of the speakers had reached adulthood, the effect for age was lessened and, instead, socioprofessional status was a better predictor of the trajectory of inflection form use over time. Specifically, those in the upper socioprofessional status group showed a sharper increase in the use of the inflected form. What is especially interesting about these findings is that despite the overall historical trend toward greater use of the periphrastic form, Wagner and Sankoff (2011) showed an age-grading effect in the opposite direction, such that individual speakers increase their use of the inflected form over their own lifespans. The details of this study are summarized in Table 3.2.

As mentioned previously, the research by Wagner and Sankoff (2011) is an important measure of the differences between apparent time trends and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sociolinguistic variable</td>
<td>Future time reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variants</td>
<td>Periphrastic and inflected (morphological) future (IF) forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The envelope of variation</td>
<td>Unambiguous future contexts (excluded: gnomic and volitional futures and negative contexts, which were almost categorically IF)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
only through an analysis of this sort is it possible to determine that although use of the inflected form is decreasing over time (i.e., a change in progress), the inflected form also appears to be a marker of adulthood, particularly for those in higher socioprofessional jobs. In this sense, the authors note that age grading may actually operate as a brake on language change because speakers revert to the more conservative pattern as they age. Another interesting finding is that adult speakers are shown to make changes in their own patterns of use during adulthood. This can be taken as an especially encouraging finding, given that second language learners must undergo a similar process if they

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**TABLE 3.2 (Continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent factors</td>
<td>Linguistic variables: temporal distance, imminence (impending vs. non-impending event), adverbial specification (co-occurrence with a temporal adverbial phrase), contingency (contingent: apodosis of <em>si</em>; contingent: <em>quand</em>/temporal adverbial + token in subordinate clause; contingent: <em>quand</em>/temporal adverbial + token in main clause; contingent: other; independent, noncontingent), grammatical person, address pronoun (<em>vouvoiement</em>; <em>tutoiement</em>; uses <em>vous</em> and <em>tu</em> interchangeably; does not use address pronouns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social variables</td>
<td>Social variables: socioprofessional status, age, speaker sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data elicitation method</td>
<td>Interviews conducted with 59 speakers in 1971 and again in 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of analysis</td>
<td>Multivariate Goldvarb X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>Effects found for linguistic factors: subject type (<em>nous</em>, <em>vous</em>, and nominals together favor inflected future), contingency: five times more IF in <em>quand</em>-related contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to issues in sociolinguistics</td>
<td>Effects for social factors: year of recording (increase in IF over time), age (older = more IF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apparent time data alone are insufficient and can be mediated with experimental or longitudinal elicitation tasks; the link between style and subject forms indicates an important avenue for future research (on the relationship of style to change); speakers do change patterns of use across a lifespan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
are to acquire the norms of sociolinguistic variation in a language acquired in adulthood.

**Case 3. The Role of Ethnicity in Language Variation**

Although it has been mentioned several times in this chapter, the studies reviewed thus far have not included ethnicity as a predictive social variable. Nevertheless, this factor may be just as important for understanding patterns of language use. In order to illustrate this, we turn to the study by Hoffman and Walker (2010), which examines the English spoken by Chinese and Italian residents of Toronto. The two variants examined in their study are $t/d$ deletion and the Canadian vowel shift. These two variants were selected because the former is stable and the latter is a change in progress. Thus, an analysis of both allows for an examination of the status of the variant itself as well as the way in which each might be tied to social correlates of the speaker, such as ethnic identity. The participants were 60 speakers of English, divided by ethnic origin (Chinese or Italian), immigrant generation (first or second/third), and gender (male or female). A group of 20 speakers with British/Irish ethnic origins were also included as a comparison group. In addition to completing a sociolinguistic interview, all participants also filled out an ethnic orientation questionnaire, geared toward assessing features related to ethnic identification, such as language choice, language attitudes, and social ties within and outside of that ethnic group. The analysis of the data gleaned from the ethnic orientation questionnaire showed that the Chinese group had a stronger ethnic orientation and that overall, first generation participants had a stronger orientation than second and third generation speakers. In looking at the first sociolinguistic variable, the deletion of $t/d$, there was little difference found between the Italian group and the British/Irish group, both of whom disfavored deletion. However, the Chinese group favored deletion, with first generation informants showing a much higher favoring effect. The linguistic constraints on deletion differed by ethnic group and by generation. The analysis of the vowel shift showed higher rates of shifting (use of innovative forms) for the British/Irish group and the Italian participants and very little shifting among the Chinese participants, especially those with the highest ethnic orientation scores. The conditioning of this variant based on the linguistic factors, however, was similar for all groups. Thus, these findings demonstrate an important effect for ethnic orientation and also a role for the status of the change under examination. The details of this study are summarized in Table 3.3.

The work conducted by Hoffman and Walker (2010) has several implications for the field of sociolinguistics as well as for second language acquisition. First, we see that when examining ethnicity, one must assess varying degrees of ethnic orientation within a given community or group. As has been the case with other variables discussed thus far, we clearly see that ethnicity is not a monolithic
## TABLE 3.3
Summary of details of Hoffman & Walker (2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sociolinguistic variable</td>
<td><em>t/d</em> deletion and vowel shift in Canadian English in Toronto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variants</td>
<td><em>t/d</em> deletion = presence/absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel shift = 3 sound changes known as Canadian Vowel Shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The envelope of variation</td>
<td>All contexts in spoken production data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent factors</td>
<td>Ethnicity (Italian or Chinese), immigrant generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(first or second/third), gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linguistic factors particular to each of the two dependent variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data elicitation method</td>
<td>Sociolinguistic interview and ethnic orientation questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of analysis</td>
<td>Analysis of differences between groups as well as multivariate analyses for each of the two variants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>Ethnic orientation scores are higher for first generation and higher for Chinese group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>t/d</em> deletion: Chinese group favors deletion at higher rates, especially first generation; conditioning factors differ across groups by ethnicity and by generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel shift: higher rates of participation for British/Irish and Italian groups; same constraining factors across groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to issues in</td>
<td>Explanations that consider ethnicity are equally as important as those linked to first language transfer or incomplete acquisition; within the category “ethnicity” the degree of ethnic orientation must be considered; the status of the sociolinguistic variable examined must be considered as this study shows differing results for a stable change vs. one that is in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sociolinguistics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

category, and it, too, must be considered in conjunction with other social factors, such as immigrant generation. In the case of the Chinese participants in their study, the authors note that their patterns of immigration are more recent, and they constitute a more visible ethnic group than the Italian group to which they were compared. They further argue that differences between these two
groups cannot be traced to incomplete acquisition or to language transfer, and instead it is worthwhile to consider the role of ethnic identity. This argument is strengthened by the evidence of generational differences as well as differences within these ethnic groups. An explanation that was purely linked to first language would predict similar effects for all speakers within a given ethnic group. Consequently, researchers working in the field of second language acquisition should anticipate variability within their participant groups, making an examination of individual patterns of language use essential.

Case 4. The Role of Socioeconomic Factors in Language Variation

A fourth social variable, which has already played a role in the analysis of some of the sociolinguistic variables explored earlier in the current chapter, is that of socioeconomic class. Although social class is often difficult to define, it can be taken to be a function of several related characteristics, such as level of education, employment, income, neighborhood status, and the like (Ash, 2013; Labov, 1972c; Trudgill, 1974). One of the most challenging facts about social status is that while we understand that it is linked to language attitudes, these can be difficult to observe or to study. Thus, the case study selected to explore this variable serves an additional function of highlighting innovative research methodology that allows us to take important steps toward understanding the link between language attitudes and social status. Squires (2013) studied the lack of verbal agreement between ‘singular NP + don’t’ and ‘there’s + plural NP’ among English speakers in the United States, where the former is relatively infrequent and associated with lower social status, and the latter is relatively more frequent and not necessarily stigmatized. The study reports on the results of two experiments, one to examine what speakers perceive in oral input and the second to investigate how these forms were evaluated.

The first experiment included 40 undergraduate participants who were primed with photos of high-status speakers (as indicated by clothing and backdrop) in conjunction with standard variants and low-status speakers in conjunction with nonstandard variants. Following this priming, participants were asked to identify the subject of the verb form they heard when these forms were paired with low and high status photos. In both the priming and the target conditions the verbal subject was masked by white noise, and participants were asked to choose a photo (singular or plural images) that corresponded to what they had heard. The results showed that participants were more likely to interpret targets as ‘there’s + plural’ if they had been exposed to these in the priming condition, but no such priming effect was found for nonstandard don’t sentences. Thus, this experiment showed that there were no effects of social priming. Another interesting result was that the social class of the participants (divided into lower class and upper class) mediated this effect such that those in the upper class group logged more nonstandard responses.
The second experiment conducted by Squires (2013) sought to explore how the use of these forms was evaluated. Forty-one different undergraduate participants, again divided into upper and lower class groups, completed this experiment. The methods for the second experiment were similar except that the subject of the verb form was not masked, and participants were asked to select the picture that corresponded with the speaker most likely to have uttered the sentence. Again, the pictures differed according to the professional dress of the speaker and the background, showing their home or surroundings. From the analysis of the results of this experiment, two interesting patterns emerged. First, there was evidence of a strong connection between nonstandard don’t and lower status speakers. Likewise, an equally quick and strong connection was shown between standard ‘there’s + singular NP’ and higher-class speakers. These findings demonstrate that when an association between a form and a particular social group is sufficiently robust, there is a strong social cue to perception. Furthermore, it was shown that the social class of the participants also mediated their responses. The details for these two experiments are summarized in Table 3.4.

The research conducted by Squires (2013) illustrates the importance of innovation in research methodology as a tool for examining language attitudes. What is more, the structural priming methods used in that project allowed Squires to demonstrate the complex relationship between certain standard

**TABLE 3.4**

Summary of details of Squires (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sociolinguistic variable</td>
<td>NP + don’t; there’s + NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variants</td>
<td>Standard vs. nonstandard (singular NP + don’t and there’s + plural NP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The envelope of variation</td>
<td>N/A; experimental task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent factors</td>
<td>Experiment 1: social class of participant; priming condition (standard vs. nonstandard with photos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiment 2: social class of participant; standard or nonstandard variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data elicitation method</td>
<td>Priming tasks: Experiment 1 tests the effect of social priming on perception of (non)standard forms, and Experiment 2 tests the effect of (non)standard forms on evaluation of speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key features</strong></td>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of analysis</td>
<td>Statistical analysis of varying conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>Responses are mediated by social class of participant; social priming only exists when the association is sufficiently strong between social class and a given (non)standard form; there is an association between nonstandard <em>don’t</em> and lower social class and standard <em>there’s</em> and higher social class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to issues in sociolinguistics</td>
<td>Experimental research methods are essential for research on language attitudes; structural priming research can be extended to socially variable grammatical forms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or nonstandard forms and social class, both of the speaker and the evaluator (or participant). What is abundantly clear is that social class does not have a single, monolithic role in predicting language use (or perception or evaluation). Instead, we see that its effects differ from one structure to another and are mediated by other social factors. In keeping with the findings of the studies reviewed earlier, each set of findings attests to the importance of examining multiple social and linguistic factors and to assessing the manner in which these factors interact to influence language use and perception.

**Case 5. The Role of Level of Education in Language Variation**

It was stated immediately prior to the example of research on social class that this construct is often difficult to define and that level of education can be considered to be a part of the social class measure. Nevertheless, there are also several examples of research studies that examine the effect of level of education separate from social class. One excellent example of this type of research comes from Campbell-Kibler (2009), who uses an open-ended interview and a matched-guise test to examine the perceived level of education of speakers as a function of the degree to which their production of English *–ing* is variable. In Chapter One we referred to this example as the alternation between ‘–ing’ and ‘–in’, but the current study explores three variants (listed below), giving two options for the form that results from the reduction of word final *–g*. The study reports on the comments and evaluations made during interviews conducted with 55 participants in groups ranging from one to six people, as well as answers to questions about eight speakers from the southern and western US completed by a different group of 124 speakers after listening to a speech sample from each of
the eight speakers. The speech samples in this second task were manipulated according to the presence or reduction of ‘–ing’ in 2–6 tokens embedded in the speech sample, and participants were asked to evaluate characteristics such as perceived masculinity, outgoingness, level of education, and intelligence. In both the qualitative and quantitative analyses, there was an association between less frequent use of ‘–ing’ and lower levels of education, with one important caveat: this was only true when the speakers were not believed to be from the South or of the working class. In the case of those two factors, lower rates of use of ‘–ing’ were not taken to indicate lower intelligence or lesser education of the speaker. The details of this study are summarized in Table 3.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary of details of Campbell-Kibler (2009)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key features</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sociolinguistic variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The envelope of variation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent factors and dependent variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data elicitation method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to issues in sociolinguistics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research by Campbell-Kibler (2009) is another good example of the use of experimental methods in the study of language attitudes. As a result, like the research by Squires (2013), we see that the question of the link between social characteristics and use of a given form is approached from the opposite direction: using the presence or absence of a variant to determine the degree to which such a feature indicates an association with a given social factor, such as social class or level of education. More specifically, Campbell-Kibler’s work explores how listeners incorporate social information into their perception of speaker characteristics. What makes this all the more interesting is that these perceptions vary based on the presence or absence of a single sociolinguistic variable in a very short speech sample. Thus, we have good indications that the associations between social characteristics and linguistic forms are quite powerful. Another important result of this study is the finding that these evaluations are context dependent, such that knowledge of another characteristic of the speaker, such as geographic origin or social class, mediates the evaluation of the level of education or intelligence of that speaker. Thus, we add this example to our growing cohort of studies demonstrating the importance of the relationship not only of social factors to linguistic forms but also the interrelationship of these social factors themselves.

Case 6. The Role of Discourse Context in Language Variation

The final case to be considered in this chapter is somewhat different from the earlier ones, which all investigate the effects of the characteristics of people. The variable explored in this final case is genre, a characteristic of the discourse context, rather than the speaker. More broadly, we can imagine factors such as where an interaction takes place, what the topic of discussion is, and the like, all having important effects on the language produced. We have seen in earlier cases that the dichotomy between formal and informal contexts does not fully explain the multifaceted nature of the discourse context, nor does it account for the many variables that may influence language use within a single context. Most recently these factors have been investigated under the construct of style (Bell, 1984; Coupland, 2007; Eckert & Rickford, 2001; Schilling-Estes, 2004), but research on single factors within the context of speech also abound. It is fitting that we began our sample cases with Lauwereyns (2002), an investigation of hedges in Japanese, which documented the fact that predictions of formal and casual contexts are not always borne out, and that we end here with our final sample study, which takes a closer look at some of the differences between conversations and narratives without identifying one as more “formal” than the other.

The research conducted by Travis (2007) focuses on the use of overt and null subject forms in first-person singular contexts in two different tasks: spontaneous narratives and sociolinguistic interviews. Thus, genre in Travis’ work refers to the type of discourse produced. Her data come from a corpus of
recorded interviews from New Mexico, from which she selected 11 for analysis, and a corpus of spontaneous conversations recorded in Colombia, from which she selected 15 conversations involving 22 speakers. The variable use of subject forms in Spanish is a widely studied sociolinguistic variable, and the constraints on use are well known. Although these two forms of speech production occurred with speakers from different countries of origin, Travis claims that the fact that there is no loss of pragmatic constraints for the US-based group and that the linguistic constraints on rates of use are the same for both groups are sufficient evidence to dismiss geographic variation as a source of differences in these two datasets. The linguistic variable under focus in Travis’ analysis is that of linguistic priming, or the tendency for the presence of one element to prime the use of that same element again in a subsequent utterance. Travis found that there was a higher rate of use of null subject forms in the conversation data even though the linguistic variables in the study showed the same constraints on patterns of use for both datasets. When looking specifically at priming effects, Travis showed that the effects of priming held across a greater number of intervening clauses in the interviews as compared to the conversations, where the effect was prevalent only with one or no intervening clauses between a form and its preceding co-referential subject pronoun. Finally, whereas the interview data showed priming effects only for null forms, the conversation data showed priming effects for both null and overt forms. The details of this study are summarized in Table 3.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sociolinguistic variable</td>
<td>Subject pronoun forms: null or overt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variants</td>
<td><em>yo</em> ‘I’ vs. null</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The envelope of variation</td>
<td>All finite verbs with first-person singular subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(New Mexico = 1,210; Colombia = 1,182)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent factors</td>
<td>Linguistic variables: semantic class of the verb; tense, mood, and aspect of the verb form; distance from previous mention (up to 10 clauses); realization of previous mention (expressed or unexpressed); clause type (main or subordinate); relationship with previous tense, mood, aspect (TMA) (same or different); position in the turn (initial or medial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional factor: genre</td>
<td>conversation vs. interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This last profiled study demonstrates the importance of examining the linguistic constraints on a sociolinguistic variant in the context of the effects of discourse type. The careful comparison of the manner in which a single variable, linguistic priming, operates across two types of discourse demonstrates that the effects may be differential across categories of the dependent variable (i.e., the variants of the sociolinguistic variable) and may be mediated by other linguistic constraints, such as the distance between co-referential subject forms. These differing effects can then be explained in light of the characteristics of the particular genre examined. For example, Travis (2007) claims that the greater priming effects for null forms in the narratives, as compared to overt subject pronouns, may be the result of the higher level of subject
continuity found in narratives in general. This type of explanation allows for a greater degree of precision than a contrast based on formality alone, for example. Thus, in connecting this case to the others reviewed in this chapter, we see that not only must each individual social characteristic of the speaker be interpreted in relationship to other social factors, but also that we can anticipate important relationships between the context of the discourse, the type of discourse, and the linguistic constraints on use. In sum, we continue to see that sociolinguistic variation is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that requires sophisticated research methods and analytical tools in order to fully appreciate the multiple influences on the language we produce and perceive.

HOW DOES SOCIAL VARIATION RELATE TO COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE?

Throughout this chapter we have explored the many ways in which extralinguistic factors, such as characteristics of a speaker, a listener, or a speech context can influence the language we perceive and produce. Some of the most widely researched social variables, such as age and gender, have been illustrated through case studies, and we have seen how these speaker characteristics have been linked to language variation and change. Perhaps the most important insight from this chapter is that the way individuals identify themselves and the groups with which they have contact influence their patterns of language use. What is more, we see that no single factor explains these patterns. Instead, we know that a careful analysis of several social and situational variables, both in terms of the effect each has on language use as well as the manner in which these factors interact to influence patterns of use, will be the most profitable. As we turn our attention back to second language learners for the remainder of this volume, we conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of what these sociolinguistic findings mean for second language acquisition.

In Chapter One we saw that many decades ago the term “communicative competence” was coined to describe all of the types of knowledge, or all of the abilities, a learner must have in order to be a competent user of a given language. The definitions of this term have evolved over time, but one ability that remains central to nearly every account is the ability to vary language according to a host of factors, including the characteristics of the speaker, the hearer and the interactional context. From the examples of research on sociolinguistics we see that very subtle details in the language around us convey social facts about our own identities and the company we keep. For the second language learner one important challenge will be to reflect the appropriate social information in their own production as well as to develop sensitivity to this information in the language to which he or she is exposed. Thus, we now move from a discussion of how these characteristics are reflected in the language of native
speakers to how learners develop the ability to incorporate social information into their own comprehension and production. We will see that the degree to which social information is believed to interact with and influence developing grammars will vary considerably, as will the manner in which this information is represented and believed to develop. What will remain constant, however, is our goal of understanding how learners come to develop this particular aspect of their own interactional competence.

READING BEYOND THE TEXT


COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION

A. Comprehension

1. What is an idiolect?
2. What do members of a speech community share?
3. What contribution did the Milroys make to the study of social networks?
4. How do communities of practice differ from speech communities?
5. What is covert prestige?
6. How do change from below and change from above differ?
7. According to numerous studies, which gender uses more nonstandard variants?
8. In Lauwerereyns (2002), which three independent factors were significant? What effect did they have?
9. What is an apparent time comparison? What would age-grading show in such a comparison?
According to Wagner and Sankoff (2011), what was the effect of socio-professional status at the second time of data collection?

What role did ethnic orientation have in Hoffman and Walker (2010)?

What differences did Travis (2007) note with respect to the effect of discourse context on subject pronoun expression in Spanish?

B. Application

1. You have read about studies that have shown significant effects of gender on language, including Lauwereyns (2002). Think about when your mother asks you to do something (i.e., makes a request) versus when your father does. Does the language they use when they make requests differ? Write down your intuitions about what differences may or may not exist. Then, during your next telephone conversation with them, make note of something that they ask you to do and how they make that request linguistically. Did you notice any differences? Any similarities? Were the results similar to your intuitions?

2. You have also read that speakers often pattern together based on gender identity. What possible effects are there when a man's speech has feminine traits? When a woman's has male traits? Think of a character from a movie or television whose speech you would associate more with the opposite sex. How is that character perceived by others in his/her scenes? Do other characters seem aware of connections between gender and speech patterns?

3. In this chapter, the concept of covert prestige was introduced. Why do you think that speakers would choose to give prestige to a form that other members of society stigmatize? Can you think of examples from the world around you in which a linguistic form that some people actively avoid becomes popular for others?

4. Jennifer and Monica both work at the same clothing store and both live in the same city. When they speak, however, they “sound” very different. Based on what you have learned in this chapter, hypothesize as to what other social factors might affect them linguistically and cause them to use different linguistic forms.

5. Think about the first impression that you give off when you meet new people. Where do people usually think you are from originally? Are they typically correct? What traits in your speech make the person think that? Do you produce certain vowels or consonants in a specific way? Do you use certain lexical items (i.e., vocabulary) that “give you away”? Are there other aspects of your speech that people associate with a particular region? If people do not associate you with a particular region, think of someone you’ve met (or someone famous) whom you instantly knew was from a certain area.
6. Read the following two sentences: (1) “There’s two boxes of cereal in the pantry”. (2) “He don’t care if you go or not”. If you had to rate these sentences, would you say that they sound the same? Does one sound “better” to you? Does one sound “worse”? Ask a couple of your friends. Do you all agree? What is different about the two sentences? After answering this, can you think of other sentence pairs that differ (or do not differ) in degree of acceptability? If you were to follow Squires (2013) do you think a study of those sentences would demonstrate similar findings? If not, how would your findings differ?
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Section II

Approaches to the Study of Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition
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Social Approaches to Second Language Acquisition

The first chapter of this book provided an introduction to communicative competence and the concept of sociolinguistic competence. We saw that to be fully competent users of a language we must be able to properly interpret and produce the elements in language that vary from one speaker to another, one context to another, and one geographic region to another. Likewise, Chapters Two and Three provided an overview of the field of sociolinguistics and the types of inquiry undertaken in that field. We saw that languages vary at all levels of the grammar and that the manner in which we produce language is influenced by a host of individual and group factors. In fact, the very group with whom we identify and how this group is defined has been the focus of extensive research and theory building. What is clear from work conducted in the field of sociolinguistics is the unifying focus on social aspects of language. In other words, sociolinguistics views language use as a social activity that allows speakers to relate to one another in a variety of ways and accomplish a range of communicative tasks. For the remainder of this volume we turn our attention back to second language learners and the many ways in which knowledge of sociolinguistics may improve our understanding of second language acquisition.

WHAT IS A SOCIAL APPROACH TO SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION?

What may not have been clear from the introductory chapters is that despite the widely recognized multifaceted nature of communicative competence and the focus on social elements in sociolinguistics, the dominant tradition in research on second language acquisition has tended to focus on the linguistic elements of mental grammars. Such approaches are generally known as cognitive approaches to language acquisition, as a result of their focus on cognition...
and mental structures (Atkinson, 2011a). Specifically, cognitive approaches focus on linguistic knowledge as an independent system, generally believed to contain innate linguistic information, and on the internal, mental processes of language acquisition, which are ultimately understood to be a product of human cognition. These approaches are often contrasted with social approaches, which might be broadly understood to include any approach that incorporates social factors in its account of linguistic knowledge and language acquisition. Nevertheless, we use the term “social approaches” in the current chapter to denote those approaches that place social elements of language learning and language use at the forefront and prioritize the examination of the influence of social context on language.

Despite the abundance of research mentioned in Chapter One that points to the importance of social factors in influencing second language acquisition and use, studies that focus on the connection between models of learner language, acquisition, and use, on the one hand, and the effects of various social factors, on the other hand, are quite scarce. In fact, in their 1997 seminal article, Firth and Wagner noted that the predominance of cognitive-oriented perspectives in second language acquisition research has led to bias or “imbalance” in the application and development of theoretical frameworks and methodologies in the field. Their claim was that social factors had been neglected, and their work served to foster additional research on the social aspects of language learning. Their paper met with a wealth of response, some sympathetic and some contrary, but all of which led to insightful expansions of what may now be known as the cognitive-social debate, or more dramatically, the cognitive-social divide (e.g., Block, 2003; Gass, 1998; Hall, 1997; Kasper, 1997; Long, 1997). Perhaps the most important result of their work, however, was that it led to greater interest in the many ways in which social contexts and social characteristics may influence language learning and language use. Ten years later, a special volume of the *Modern Language Journal* (2007) was published to assess the degree to which the state of research on social approaches to second language acquisition had changed. Authors in this volume note several important accomplishments, such as the prioritization of sociocultural and contextual factors in many studies (Swain & Deters, 2007), a growing body of empirical evidence on the relationship between social context and second language use and acquisition (Tarone, 2007), and a reconceptualization of the learner as a legitimate user of the target language (Mori, 2007). Nevertheless, there were still many who voiced concern at the lack of change in certain areas, including the integration of social approaches into the second language classroom (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007) and the surface-level conceptualization of learner identity (Block, 2007).

It is clear that while sociolinguists share a common set of goals in exploring language use, second language acquisition researchers have multiple goals, and these can, at times, appear to be in conflict. The goal of the current chapter
is neither to provide an in-depth account of any single social approach nor to weigh in on the debate about the social-cognitive divide. Instead, we seek to examine the scope of social theories of second language acquisition, their contribution to our knowledge of language learning in general, and the shared characteristics of these approaches as a whole. Finally, it is important to point out that the range of social theories included is quite broad and these theories are not necessarily limited in scope to the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence or of sociolinguistic variation.

**EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL APPROACHES TO SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

As stated previously, the current chapter highlights models or approaches that place social influences on language learning at the forefront. In some cases, the examples selected are viewed as classic cases that serve as the foundation for current research, and in other cases they remain highly productive strands of research. For each approach, we provide an overview, identifying the ways in which that model accounts for the impact of social factors and the claims made under each framework regarding the role of social (in addition to other) factors in learning a second language. Next, we provide a snapshot of the manner in which research on second language acquisition was conducted under each approach. The review concludes with a critical evaluation of these models.

**The Acculturation Model**

Long before Firth and Wagner’s (1997) call for more research investigating the social dimensions of second language acquisition and use, some researchers were already turning to the “social side” in search of more comprehensive explanations of differential success among learners. For example, John Schumann’s work led him to develop the Acculturation or Pidginization Model of second language acquisition (1978a, 1978b). Schumann (1978a) observed that over the course of 10 months, one untutored Spanish-speaking learner demonstrated minimal success in the development of the English negative, wh-questions, inversion of yes-no questions, inflectional morphology, and auxiliaries of differing functions (e.g., do-support, progressive, perfect, modal). This learner, Alberto, became the focus of an extensive case study carried out by Schumann (1978a) to examine both the linguistic and the extralinguistic aspects of Alberto’s acquisition of English. From the linguistic analysis, Schumann showed how Alberto’s simplified and reduced English shared several features with pidgin languages. One example was the tendency for Alberto to use no to create negative utterances. Another was the lack of inflectional morphology. This type of cross-linguistic comparative analysis
led Schumann to conclude that Alberto spoke a pidginized English, but the question remained as to why Alberto’s English was simplified and reduced.

Drawing on Smith’s (1972) work related to pidginization and language socialization, Schumann (1978a) proposed that Alberto’s use of English was “restricted” to the fulfillment of basic communicative functions, and this led to the development of a simplified and reduced variety of English. Schumann further pinpointed the origin of this “functional restriction” as Alberto’s social and psychological distance from speakers of the target language community. In other words, Alberto’s lack of acculturation to the target language group served as the reason why his English showed minimal development. Schumann (1986) defined acculturation as “. . . the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language group” (p. 379). In his model, social and psychological factors have the potential to influence contact between the learner and speakers of the target language group. What is more, the integration of both sets of factors is essential for acquisition of the target language. In other words, successful acquisition is dependent on acculturation to the target group both socially and psychologically.

One essential element of Schumann’s model is how he characterized this social and psychological distance. The factors related to social distance in the model have their origins in the field of sociolinguistics as well as work related to bilingualism and ethnic relations (cf. Schermerhorn, 1970). Schumann (1978a, 1986) identified several constructs, such as patterns of social dominance, as factors that could potentially influence the degree of contact between the learner and speakers of the target language group. The full list of factors included in his model is summarized in Table 4.1, along with a definition of each.

Schumann (1986) generated hypotheses for second language learning based on each of the factors summarized in Table 4.1. For example, Schumann (1986) hypothesized that the tighter the cohesion of a learner group, the less likely learners within that group would be to mingle with speakers of the target language group. Opportunities for contact with the target language group would be minimized, which in turn would limit interaction with speakers of the target language and ultimately impact the extent of acquisition of the second language. It is important to note that these factors do not necessarily operate in isolation from each other, nor are they absolute. Instead, each lies on a continuum, for example, from more to less dominant or subordinate (in the case of patterns of social dominance) or from having a more positive to a more negative attitude toward the target language group. These factors collectively determine the degree of social distance between the learner and members of the target language group.

Among the psychological factors Schumann (1986) proposed were language shock, culture shock, motivation, and ego permeability, all of which have the potential to influence contact between the learner and the target language
TABLE 4.1
Factors believed to impact social distance
(based on Schumann, 1986)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patterns of social dominance</td>
<td>How the learner and target language groups are positioned politically, culturally, and economically in relation to each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration strategies</td>
<td>Include assimilation (i.e., adoption of the lifestyle and values of the target language group), preservation (i.e., rejection of the lifestyle and values of the target language group in favor of one's own), and adaptation (i.e., simultaneous adjustment to the lifestyle and values of the target language group and maintenance of within-group lifestyle and values).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enclosure</td>
<td>The extent to which social institutions (e.g., schools, churches) and professions are shared by the learner and members of the target language group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
<td>How close-knit the learner is with other learners in his or her group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>The size of the learner group in relation to the target language group, which affects how often members of the learner group are in contact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congruence</td>
<td>How similar the culture of the learner is to that of the target language group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Measured by Likert-type questionnaire items such as I think American people are friendly/unfriendly, smart/stupid, etc. or How much do you like American people? (Schumann, 1978a, pp. 179, 181)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended length of residence</td>
<td>How long the learner intends to live in the area of the target language group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ego permeability is similar to the notion of an affective filter as proposed by Krashen (1982; see also Chapter One), and the term captures the idea that inhibitions about aspects of the second language may lower one’s “openness” to available input, which affects one’s ability to acquire the language. Like social distance, psychological distance lies along a continuum, and the relevant factors taken together determine the degree of distance that exists between the learner and members of the target language community.
Returning to the Acculturation Model as a whole, we recall that the integration of the social and the psychological, each containing their own “cluster” or set of factors, is essential for acquisition. Schumann (1986) envisioned the outcome of second language learning in a naturalistic context as the result of the extent of acculturation to a target language group. In essence, acculturation influences both the quality and quantity of input and interaction available, and this, in turn, influences language learning. Thus, the Acculturation Model affords an essential role to social factors in the process of second language acquisition.

**Research Methods and the Acculturation Model**

To account for development in the linguistic structures of interest, researchers who had adopted this model employed a mixed elicitation methodology. More controlled elicitation tasks such as imitation and the Bilingual Syntax Measure (Burt, Dulay, & Hernandez-Chavez, 1975) were used, in addition to less controlled elicitation methods, such as spontaneous conversations. Schumann’s (1978a) seminal study also included preplanned sociolinguistic interactions. During these preplanned interactions, Schumann accompanied Alberto to a variety of social encounters, such as ordering food at a restaurant, and observed his use of the grammatical structures under study. In addition to collecting examples of speech produced under varying conditions, the social and psychological factors of interest were measured as well. Generally, a combination of fieldwork observations and results from detailed questionnaires completed by each participant were examined. Questionnaires were often specifically aimed to gauge learners’ attitudes toward members and practices of the target language community as well as their motivation for learning the language.

One key challenge for researchers interested in acculturation was determining how to assess the factors proposed to influence psychological distance between the learner and the target language group. Schumann (1986) pointed out that creating measures for notions such as language or culture shock and ego permeability presented a major obstacle for researchers attempting to characterize these factors empirically. Masgoret and Gardner (1999) detail an attempt to measure “acculturative stress”, or the degree of difficulty immigrants in Canada experienced as a result of their move from their home country (Spain). This measure, assessed via a written questionnaire using 19 Likert-type statements, showed that only length of residence correlated with acculturative stress: Those who had been living in Canada longer had lower levels of acculturative stress. Acculturative stress was not reported to correlate with other variables, such as self-reported and objective measures of language proficiency, assimilation, or integration. This study therefore offered
evidence that, contrary to Schumann's model, stress associated with acculturation to the target language community does not appear to relate directly to language contact and, subsequently, to language acquisition. In response to Schuman's hypothesis, a wealth of studies were conducted, some lending support (e.g., Kitch, 1982; Maple, 1982) and others providing counterevidence to the hypothesis (England, 1982; Kelley, 1982; Schmidt, 1983; Stauble, 1981). Although this hypothesis is not generally used in contemporary research, it did provide the foundation for investigations modeling the relationship between cultural identification and development of second language pronunciation (Lybeck, 2002) as well as the characterization of intercultural interaction and its relationship to attitudes toward the second language among sojourners or temporary residents (Culhane, 2004).

**Accommodation Theory**

Like the Acculturation Model, *Speech Accommodation Theory* attempts to account for the ultimate success that second language learners demonstrate in the acquisition process. More generally, Speech Accommodation Theory is a sociolinguistic theory that explores why individuals adjust their speech during social interaction. As described in earlier chapters of the current volume, speakers modify the language they produce according to, among other factors, the characteristics of the person to whom they are speaking. For example, most people would not talk to their grandmother the same way they would speak with a sibling. Proponents of Speech Accommodation Theory add an additional layer of complexity. That is, speakers also adjust speech (or not) to that of their interlocutors in response to a wide range of contextual and/or psychological variables. For example, a graduate student instructor may adjust aspects of his or her speech to distance or dissociate him or herself from a student he or she is speaking to. In Speech Accommodation Theory, this type of communicative strategy is called divergence. Alternatively, the same graduate student instructor may adapt or accommodate aspects of his or her speech to be more similar to that of the student, in which case he or she is said to display convergence. Convergence and divergence may also be characterized by nonverbal behavior (e.g., nodding, smiling), although the bulk of previous research on this theory has focused on linguistic speech accommodation.

Speech Accommodation Theory has its origins in the field of social psychology, most notably in the work of Howard Giles. It is important to note that language is studied as an interpersonal phenomenon by social psychologists. This means that the focus is on how the linguistic behavior of one individual influences that of his or her interlocutor, and vice versa. This is a different perspective of language study from what has been adopted by most sociolinguists, who study language as an intrapersonal phenomenon, or how the linguistic behavior
of one or a group of individuals is influenced by characteristics or aspects of the linguistic environment of the utterance itself. In one of his earliest studies, Giles (1973) had naïve listeners rate how different speakers’ accents and grammar changed in interviews conducted with a speaker of the standard British variety (i.e., Received Pronunciation, which has higher social prestige) versus with a speaker of a regional variety (Bristol-accented). He found that speakers accommodated their speech more during the interview conducted by the standard variety interviewer. This study was pivotal in the development of Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1977; Giles & Powesland, 1975; Giles & Smith, 1979; Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1973), and subsequent research sought to investigate in detail those factors influencing linguistic convergence and divergence.

Giles (1973) originally posited several factors that influenced the degree to which an interlocutor was accommodated by a given speaker. These included accent loyalty, social attitudes, and cognitive styles (p. 102). He noted that some speakers are just more or less likely to modify aspects of their speech in the presence of others whose speech differs in some way, regardless of perceived differences in age, social status, or other attributes of the interlocutor. Additionally, social attitudes, defined as the degree of ethnocentrism of an individual, may also influence speech accommodation to the extent that an individual views him or herself as being part of the same group or linguistic community as his or her interlocutor. The extent of an individual’s perceptual involvement in the social interaction, or field independence, may also affect the degree of speech convergence. Convergence has been studied not only in terms of adjustment(s) made to speech but also in terms of language choice. For example, Giles, Taylor, and Bourhis (1973) found that Montreal English speakers were more likely to respond in French upon listening to a French speaker providing information in English, and they also considered the French speaker to be more “considerate” and willing to “bridge the gap” between English and French Canadians. The body of research investigating speech accommodation has demonstrated how social factors, particularly speakers’ perceptions of both social and linguistic aspects of their interlocutor and the surrounding social setting, may influence variability between speakers during social interaction (see also Beebe, 1977; Bourhis & Giles, 1977; and Bourhis, Giles, Leyens, & Tajfel, 1979).

Although Speech Accommodation Theory was not initially developed to account for language learning, we include it here because of its applications to the study of second language acquisition, and particularly to the study of variability in second language performance. Its application to second language acquisition has been developed empirically and theoretically most notably in the work of Jane Zuengler. The basic premise of such research remains the same: learners (do not) adjust their speech to that of their native-speaking or nonnative-speaking interlocutor to minimize or emphasize differences in
speech during interaction. An important difference, however, is that modifications made to speech are understood as ranging from more accurate or target-like to less accurate or non-target-like, in response to the degree to which a learner desires to accommodate their speech during interaction (e.g., Zuengler, 1982, 1991). Much of the previous work investigating second language speech accommodation has focused on ethnic identity as a potential social factor affecting variable second language performance. For example, Beebe (1981) found that Chinese-speaking child learners of Thai pronounced their vowels in a more Thai-like manner when speaking with a Thai interviewer than when speaking with a Chinese interviewer. Zuengler (1982) revealed that when faced with ethnically threatening statements made by a native English-speaking interviewer, second language speakers of English demonstrated either convergence in their pronunciation to provide an objective response or divergence in their pronunciation to provide a more subjective or personal response to the statement. In a study of second language learners of English, Young (1988) revealed that ethnicity, along with other attributes of the native-speaking interlocutor such as age, sex, and occupation, explained speech convergence demonstrated by Chinese-speaking learners of English. Overall the application of speech accommodation theory to second language acquisition data has highlighted a means for examining the link between social and psychological factors and variable second language accuracy and use.

Research Methods and Accommodation Theory

Studies conducted under the Accommodation Theory approach have used interviews as the central means for eliciting learner speech. In order to be able to measure the convergence and divergence in linguistic behavior occurring between the learner and his or her interlocutor, the learner generally played the role of interviewee and the native or more skilled user of the second language played the role of interviewer. This interview design facilitated the examination of not only how linguistic aspects of the interviewer’s speech influenced convergence or divergence by the learner but also how extralinguistic aspects such as age, sex, and perceived ethnic identity were related to patterns in language produced by the learner. The methods of data analysis are consistent with those in mainstream sociolinguistics (see Chapters Two and Three) where social factors can be assessed as individual influencing variables on language use.

Sociocultural Theory

One of the best-known social approaches to language learning is Sociocultural Theory. What makes this a social theory is the manner in which cognitive processes and language are viewed. Under this framework, human thinking
or mental activity is seen as having an external or social origin, and language is viewed as a tool that is used for social purposes. The Soviet developmental psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, whose translated works provided the guiding principles underlying this theory, observed that, in early stages, children must rely on interpersonal interaction with their caregiver(s) to solve problems and carry out tasks or activities because they lack the internal strategic resources necessary to do so alone (cf. Wertsch, 1980). The process of relying on a caregiver or a generally more skilled individual to carry out a task or activity is called other-regulation. A key feature of other-regulation is the use of language to mediate what is going on in one’s thinking (i.e., internal or cognitive processes) with what is going on in the outside environment (i.e., external or social processes). Under this view, language is a symbolic tool used in the process of mediation and also in a supportive capacity to direct attention to key features of the social context. This attention direction is called scaffolding. As part of the scaffolding process, the caregiver or skilled individual determines the potential developmental level of the child via collaborative talk. The distance between the child’s actual level of development and his or her potential level of development is called the zone of proximal development. Eventually children learn how to complete tasks or activities on their own, by taking into their own consciousness the knowledge and skills acquired during social interaction. This process of internalizing information gained through social interaction is called appropriation. Appropriated knowledge and skills allow individuals to control their own mental activity which, in turn, allows them to complete tasks or activities by themselves. The ability to complete tasks alone is known as self-regulation. An important point to bear in mind is that even skilled individuals are not solely guided by self-regulation. On the contrary, when faced with a cognitively difficult task or activity, skilled individuals may rely on other individuals or objects in the surrounding environment (i.e., object-regulation) to guide their mental activity. The reliance on individuals or objects for assistance in completing difficult tasks is called continuous access, and such access serves to aid skilled individuals or adults in regaining or reverting back to self-regulation. In general, this theory views learning as the process of internalizing information gained through social interactions in order to reach a state of self-regulation, and this process can be repeated in any context where a difficult task is encountered.

The extension of Sociocultural Theory to second language acquisition research, historically credited to James Lantolf, has been expansive. Research under this framework is described in numerous edited volumes (e.g., Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) and papers describing studies in which theoretical principles are tested with second language learners from a wide variety of first language backgrounds. Work on mediation and self-regulation has demonstrated that learners are able to use the second language to control the
task at hand. For example, in a study of 21 intermediate learners of English as a second language from a variety of first language backgrounds (Arabic, Chinese, French, Japanese, Spanish, etc.), Frawley and Lantolf (1985) sought to examine how learners used second language discourse to gain self-regulation in the completion of a story narration task. Attempts to self-regulate were observed in the form of naming participants and events in the pictures as well as in the use of the progressive aspect.

Two additional concepts that are important in Sociocultural Theory are private speech and inner speech. Private speech (Flavell, 1966) refers to the external articulation of speech used to complete a task or activity. When children talk aloud to themselves to solve a problem, this is understood to be a form of self-regulation. Similarly, second language learners may talk aloud to themselves to control or regulate their completion of a task or activity. Talking aloud represents an externalization of inner forms, and this strategy is used to control or regulate a difficult task. Eventually children and second language learners are able to self-regulate without the external articulation of speech. This self-regulation is called inner speech and represents a more autonomous phase of thinking. Similar to the notion of continuous access, adults and second language learners may return to using private speech when completing a difficult task or activity to maintain self-regulation.

Returning to the concept of mediation, previous research suggests that learners may not always develop the ability to use the second language to mediate thinking. For example, Darhower (2004) showed that the use of native language dialogue journals served to mediate English-speaking learners’ use of second language Spanish target structures and also to express their experiences related to Spanish language learning. This expression of language learning related experiences allowed Darhower to highlight the learners’ active role in the learning process. The study as a whole provides a good example of object-regulation—in this case, the use of native language dialogue journals to guide thinking in a second language. Related work on private speech in second languages has been conducted with classroom learners (e.g., Centeno-Cortés & Jiménez-Jiménez, 2004; Frawley & Lantolf, 1985; Lantolf & Yáñez-Prieto, 2003; McCafferty, 1992; Ohta, 2001) and with naturalistic learners (e.g., Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Itoh, 1973). Overall, the findings of this research tend to demonstrate learners’ use of private speech to gain and/or maintain control of a task at hand. Additionally, these studies show increased use of private speech alongside increased task difficulty. Finally, the use of the first language in private speech has also been shown to facilitate task completion.

A second strand of research conducted within this framework explores the zone of proximal development in second language learning. For example, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) studied three ESL learners from distinct first language backgrounds (Japanese, Spanish, and Portuguese) during tutorial
sessions. Learners wrote an in-class essay (originally a course assignment) and then met with a tutor to review it. Reviewing the essay included a multi-step process representative of scaffolding. First, before beginning the tutorial session, the tutor read the essay without providing any corrective feedback. Next, the learner was instructed to read the essay privately and to underline and/or make any corrections. Finally, the learner and tutor reviewed the essay sentence by sentence together, at which point the instructor drew the learners’ attention to errors not caught by the learner. Drawing attention to the errors was a gradual process. The tutor started broadly by asking the learner if he or she noticed anything wrong in the entire text. Later, if necessary, the tutor directed the learner’s attention to the incorrect form and/or provided hints as to how to correct the errors. This study showed that the quantity and quality (i.e., implicit or explicit feedback) of mediation varied by individual learner. In addition, it was claimed that development could be characterized by a shift from a more explicit to a more implicit form of mediation (Lantolf, 2011). Nassaji and Swain (2000) note that research into mediation should take into account the individual learner’s needs and his or her zone of proximal development.

Research aiming to examine development within the zone of proximal development is generally subsumed under work on dynamic assessment, motivated by the work of Poehner (2005, 2008). Dynamic assessment is a form of integrated instruction and assessment that allows us to determine what learners can do with the second language alone and with mediation. Poehner (2008) found that, over four months, advanced learners of French demonstrated variable rates of development in their ability to describe movie scenes of increasing complexity. Importantly, learners were able to use appropriated means gained from mediated interaction during less complex narratives and apply them to more complex narratives. Research on dynamic assessment has focused on the development of listening comprehension (e.g., Ableeva, 2010), morphosyntax (e.g., Lantolf & Poehner, 2011), and placement testing (e.g., Antón, 2009). Although the individual focus of each of these studies differs, all support the observation that dynamic assessment aids learners in second language development. Likewise, they demonstrate that second language development through mediation varies across individual learners.

Research Methods and Sociocultural Theory

Research on mediation, regulation, and second language development in the zone of proximal development necessitates a methodology that provides opportunities to observe learners using the second language to complete tasks
and solve problems. For mediation and regulation in particular, researchers often present learners with a task that is just beyond their current level of development so that their behavior during the problem-solving activity can be directly observed. The focus on the examination of processes while they are occurring is called the genetic method (Vygotsky, 1978). With regard to length of study, research designs may employ a one-time task and compare the activity across learners, or they may employ several tasks and compare a single learner or smaller group of learners across tasks that are organized by level of difficulty. Regarding the study of development in the zone of proximal development in particular, learners’ use of the second language during a given activity type might be examined over several meetings or extend for several months (e.g., Poehner, 2005, 2008). Regardless of the elicitation methodology employed, this body of research seeks to observe the behaviors believed to be central to the process of development, such as the use of inner speech or object-regulation, while they are occurring in real time.

Identity Approach

The Identity Approach to second language acquisition adopts a distinct perspective on the relationship between the learner and the external, social environment. Under this approach learners are connected to the learning context via social identity(ies). The central figure leading theoretical and empirical work on the Identity Approach is Bonny Norton (1997; Norton Pierce, 1995), who defines identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2000, p. 5). Two principles are central to this approach: (1) the social identity of language learners is complex and dynamic, and (2) socially structured relations of power affect learners’ opportunities to interact with speakers of the target language community. Our discussion of this approach will demonstrate how these two principles help to develop an account of language learning that takes into consideration individual and contextual pressures on access to opportunities for interaction.

Norton’s conceptualization of social identity in second language learning comes from Weedon’s (1987) poststructuralist theory of subjectivity. Social identity, or subjectivity, is described as multiple, a site of struggle, and something that changes over time (Weedon, 1987). The description of social identity as “multiple” indicates that subjects or individuals are conceptualized as dynamic, decentered, and often contradictory beings at the core. They are not viewed as fixed, centered beings that can be characterized in a dichotomous manner (e.g., motivated/unmotivated, introverted/extroverted). Social identity is also described as a site of struggle because subjectivities are contradictory and dynamic. In other words, the contradictory and ever-changing nature
of identity means that the process of developing one’s social identity is one of struggle, in the sense that it requires continuous reevaluation and development. Subjects are constantly struggling to position and/or reposition themselves in discourse, and this discourse is structured by external relations of power. Lastly, because social identity is multiple and contradictory, it changes over time. In this sense we see that Identity Theory represents significant development in the degree of complexity with which we view social identities and their role in language use and acquisition.

Another important concept in Identity Theory is investment. Investment refers to “...the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 75). Investment is not equivalent to motivation (cf. Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Rather than wanting to learn a second language to get a better job (i.e., instrumental motivation) or become a member of the target language community (i.e., integrative motivation), identity theorists argue that learners invest in the second language to increase the value of their cultural capital (e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977[1970]). Cultural capital is defined as “knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms, with differential exchange values” (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 75). In other words, learners invest to get a good return or to get access to resources that impact the value of their cultural capital. When learners do not believe they are getting a good return on their efforts to acquire a language, this will impact the investment they make in the process. Likewise, learners who view their efforts to interact in the target culture and language as profitable will continue to invest energy in doing so in the future.

The relationship between investment and second language learning was explored in Norton Peirce’s (1995) seminal study of immigrant women learning English in Canada. In that study, all five of her participants demonstrated high motivation for learning English. Even so, in certain social situations they expressed discomfort speaking English. For example, Martina—a mother from Czechoslovakia—was motivated to learn and practice English in order to take on more tasks as the primary caregiver in the family. These tasks often involved interacting with members of the surrounding community to accomplish goals such as finding schools for her children, and these interactions made Martina feel uncomfortable and inferior. Over time Martina sought out more opportunities to practice English, and to learn about Canadian society and how to function within it. Martina's investment in the language, therefore, increased over the yearlong study in response to her desire to change her relationship with the target community. This changing relationship ultimately had a positive impact on her acquisition of the English language.

Investment has also been researched in the context of classroom learning. In a case study conducted with two Canadian learners of Japanese (one
a Canadian of Japanese descent and the other an Anglophone Canadian), Haneda (2005) demonstrated how differing investment in writing in Japanese reflected their multiple memberships in different communities and also their differing goals. For the Japanese Canadian, Jim, writing in Japanese appeared to be influenced by his ties to his heritage community. Jim wanted to become a “fuller” member of this community by improving his mastery of the language. Jim also saw himself as a good writer in English and hoped to extend that attribute of his identity to his heritage language. This led to a high degree of investment in second language writing. For the Anglophone Canadian, Edward, a lesser investment in writing in Japanese was reflected in his desire to become a successful businessman. This is because he did not view writing well in his second language as an essential skill for meeting his professional goals (relative to the importance of speaking and reading in Japanese). Haneda (2005), therefore, showed that investment is linked to self-perception and to the construction of social identity. Her study also demonstrated how real and/or imagined membership in the target language community influenced Jim and Edward’s approaches to writing in Japanese. We will return to these findings after a brief discussion of the concept of imagined communities.

**Imagined communities**

are a central concept in Identity Theory. Norton and McKinney (2011) define imagined communities as “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination” (p. 76). Norton extended Wenger’s (1998) proposal that participation in communities of practice can occur through engagement (i.e., direct involvement) and/or imagination to affect the context of second language learning. This extension allowed her to account for instances of non-participation and resistance in the classroom. Having a sense of community with members of a community not yet met or soon to be met, as well as the degree of affiliation with that community, are hypothesized to impact trajectories of language learning. Additionally, they are believed to influence identity (real and imagined) and investment in the second language. Returning to Haneda’s (2005) study, the two learners’ participation and membership in real and imagined communities influenced their investment in writing. Jim’s participation in an academic community of writers as well as in the local Japanese community played a strong role in his investment in writing. Jim wanted to write better in Japanese to maintain his sense of identity as a strong writer overall. At the same time, he hoped to improve his use of the Japanese language for current and future or imagined participation with family, friends at school, and relatives in Japan. Edward’s investment in writing extended directly from how he imagined he would communicate with Japanese speakers. As a future businessman, speaking and reading would be more important than writing among the professional community in which he envisioned himself participating. Thus, these differing imagined communities and manners of
(non)participation appeared to influence each learner’s investment in writing in the second language.

Overall, the focus on social aspects of language learning of the Identity Approach can be seen as an integration of those factors relating to the learner (e.g., investment) and those relating to the learning context (e.g., communities, physical and imagined). These concepts are ultimately understood as socially constructed, just like language, and reflect relations of power that may have an impact on learning. Thus, an Identity Approach to learning a second language views learning as a sociocultural practice, specifically “a relational activity that occurs between specific speakers situated in specific sociocultural contexts” (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 79). Development in the second language reflects increasing participation in the target language community, real or imagined, and additional experience with the social and cultural practices that characterize that community. This process is called legitimate peripheral participation, occurring between learners or “newcomers” and established members or “old-timers” of the given community. Learning is always situated (i.e., occurring in a specific social context), and the degree of periphery to or marginalization from the target language community influences participation in associated practices. This participation ultimately has an impact on the opportunities for learning to which each individual has access.

Research Methods and the Identity Approach

Because the Identity Approach is concerned with growing participation in a target language community, many studies tend to be longitudinal in nature (at least one year in length). This longitudinal approach is consonant with studies that attempt to document how identities change over time. Additionally, the complexity of individual and social relationships, as well as how power is structured in society, makes it important to capture a detailed account of the experiences of the participants. For that reason, identity researchers often focus on narratives, either by conducting several interviews with participants (e.g., McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000) or examining existing autobiographies and biographies (e.g., Pavlenko, 2001a, 2001b, 2004). Many studies employ a mixed-methodology approach, using narratives, questionnaires, diaries, and observations from field notes. Although distinct methods or combinations of methods may be used, they always reflect a qualitative approach to the examination of the experiences of learners.

Language Socialization Approach

The Language Socialization Approach to second language acquisition is centrally concerned with learners’ development of linguistic, cultural, and communicative competence (Duff & Talmy, 2011). From the outset we note that
acquiring knowledge of the second language under this approach is seen from a much broader perspective, in that acquisition involves knowledge of culture such as “stances of morality or respect” as well as social knowledge, or “how certain types of language practices produce and reflect social stratification, hierarchy, and status marking” (Duff & Talmy, 2011, p. 95). Other social aspects that are examined by researchers adopting a Language Socialization Approach include ideologies, epistemologies, identity, and affect. Thus, social aspects related to both the learner and the learning context are investigated within this approach.

Looking in greater detail at aspects related to the learner, we see similarities to the Identity Approach in that learners are understood to play an active role in their learning of the second language and the second language culture. Learners develop their knowledge of the language, culture, and social practices of the second language by being socialized by more knowledgeable or proficient users and members of the target language community. Socialization involves interaction and exposure to the linguistic and cultural norms of practice, occurring in a variety of contexts, for example at home, in the workplace, at school, or even among a group of friends. However, not only are learners socialized by members of the target language community, but also members themselves are socialized by learners. The latter is unique to the Language Socialization Approach, and socialization itself reflects a process that endures over a lifetime.

Research on second language socialization reflects the broad range of factors believed to play a role in the learning of a second language. Previous studies have investigated how access to the target language community and participation within that community directly influence opportunities for learning and practicing the second language (e.g., Morita, 2004; Poole, 1992; Toohey, 1998). Studies have also examined how learners come to understand the complex interplay of sociocultural meanings, language, and language practices (e.g., Friedman, 2001), as well as how socialization relates to pragmatic and grammatical development (e.g., Ohta, 1994, 2001; Siegal, 1994, 1996). Although studies on second language development in relation to socialization exist, the principal focus of this work is on learners’ developing knowledge of social practices and associated meanings, rather than on the development of specific linguistic forms. Researchers have examined development in this manner in both classroom and naturalistic settings, focusing on pragmatic development (e.g., requests; Li, 2000) and how learners’ interactions with their interlocutors (i.e., others students and instructors) develop over time (e.g., Duff, 1995; Duff & Kobayashi, 2010; Kobayashi, 2003, 2004). The work of Agnes He, who has studied the socialization of Chinese American children into Chinese as a Heritage language represents a notable research contribution made under this approach. She has examined the organization and impact of teachers’ directives (e.g., He, 2000), the use of subject pronouns and instances...
of repair to construct distinct identities, and the function of codeswitching within turn constructions (e.g., He, 2013). Her work has not only adopted principles from Language Socialization, but the influence of Identity Theory and Conversation Analysis is also evident in her studies. Thus, through the discussion of Language Socialization we see not only that this particular approach views the process of acquiring a second language quite broadly, but also that in so doing, it provides important avenues for cross-disciplinary research on the topic.

Research Methods and the Language Socialization Approach

Language Socialization researchers generally employ ethnographic methods of data collection. This means that researchers spend a significant amount of time in the field to acquaint themselves with the norms and practices of the community. Over time, researchers gather data from a variety of sources, including recorded interviews, audio and/or video of a variety of social interactions, physical resources related to the study site, and observations recorded in field notes. The time spent in the study site is necessary not only for gathering the relevant data and better understanding the cultural and social practices of the community but also for documenting socialization process(es) over time. Language Socialization studies therefore tend to be longitudinal in nature, with the understanding that socialization is a dynamic, lifelong process. The data analysis conducted by second language socialization researchers tends to focus on social practices or speech events and often examines the linguistic and cultural behaviors observed within those practices or events. This approach applies to classroom and naturalistic learners. Thus, linguistic development can serve as the focus of a second language socialization study, but it is always viewed in relation to the external, social setting.

Conversation-Analytic Approach

Conversation Analysis is a social approach to language acquisition that has as its central goal the examination of “the methods ordinary people use to participate and make sense in their daily life” (Kasper & Wagner, 2011, p. 117). Participation and sense making form the basis of social order, and language facilitates participation and sense-making during everyday social interaction. One central component of Conversation Analysis is the examination of social interaction in daily life. Two key concepts related to social interaction that are essential for Conversation Analysis work are the interaction order and interactional competence. Interaction order (e.g., Goffman, 1983) refers to the orderliness of interaction between participants. In other words, orderliness includes the practices participants come to know and systematically use to
engage in and manage social interactions. For example, the practice of ordering a coffee at Starbucks is comprised of a specific set of patterns and behaviors, to the extent that the employee waiting to take my order expects me to indicate what size I want—tall, grande, or venti—and assumes that I know to provide that information at the same time I indicate my beverage choice. If I do not, with a long line of people behind me, my actions may be deemed unacceptable in some way and even signaled as being so (e.g., tone of impatience as the employee asks me what size). This example illustrates the notion of moral order in social practices, where interruptions in the flow of such practices are seen as “violations of moral norms”, and participants must be held accountable for their actions (Kasper & Wagner, 2011, p. 118). Like the previous two approaches to language use and language learning, Conversation Analysis clearly extends well beyond the linguistic elements of the conversation.

The second important concept mentioned earlier was interactional competence. This construct refers to the group of practices through which individuals involved in an interaction produce and understand particular behaviors during that interaction. This concept is comprised of both the competence necessary to interact effectively and the available competence in a given interaction (e.g., Mehan, 1979). Simply put, effective interaction requires competence at the level of the individual as well as at the level of all participants involved in the interaction. Returning to the Starbucks example, effective interaction not only requires that I know how to interact to carry out my drink order but also that the employee assisting me knows. Further, “knowing” how to interact in this situation involves shared assumptions of interaction order. Knowledge of interaction of this type at a coffee shop chain may vary from one culture, region, or country to another, such that “knowing” how to interact may not necessarily transfer so easily from one culture, region, or country to the next. Conversation analysts therefore attempt to uncover the linguistic and nonlinguistic aspects underlying the everyday social interaction of a particular community of practice.

The Conversation-Analytic Approach to second language acquisition views interactional competence as both the means and the ends for learning. Learners learn through interaction but also need to acquire the practices and conduct necessary to participate effectively in their interactions with members of the target language community. This process, although nonlinear, may appear straightforward; however, knowledge of the practices and conduct necessary for learners to participate effectively is greatly hindered by their sometimes limited and developing knowledge of the language. Language, from a conversation analytic perspective, includes those linguistic resources used to carry out activities and generally interact in a given social environment. Conversation analysts examine the use of these linguistic resources as they are present in naturally occurring conversations. More specifically, they investigate how these linguistic resources shape and influence social order and social interaction.
An additional point related to the use of linguistic resources in conversational interactions is the idea that different languages have different linguistic means of organizing social interaction. Likewise, the Conversation Analysis Approach states that grammar organizes social interaction, while at the same time social interaction organizes grammar (Ochs, Schegloff, & Thompson, 1996). For example, English word order consistently follows a subject-verb-object configuration, which facilitates turn-taking in conversation: Once a speaker hears the subject of the utterance, he or she knows what type of syntactic element will follow and more generally how the interlocutor’s turn is progressing. This is very different from languages with more flexible word order and syntactic elements that are often not realized in speech (e.g., subjects and objects). Conversation Analysis researchers investigating Japanese, for example, have uncovered self-initiated repair (Fox, Hayashi, & Jaspersen, 1996) and collaborative completions (Hayashi, 2004) as two different linguistic means speakers use to organize social interaction. These strategies may be understood to reflect elements of the structure of the language in which they occur. In fact, Fox, Hayashi, and Jaspersen’s (1996) investigation of the relationship between syntax and repair in two syntactically distinct languages, Japanese and English, demonstrated several differences in the structure of repairs between these languages. Among other examples, structural differences in repair were found to be linked to cross-linguistic differences in verb morphology marking (e.g., instances of repair to verb endings were found in the utterances of Japanese speakers but not English speakers) and the syntactic structure of “filler” phrases (e.g., Japanese speakers started with a demonstrative pronoun to hold their place in the conversation, whereas English speakers “recycle” portions of the previous phrase).

Kasper and Wagner (2011) categorize research adopting a Conversation-Analytic Approach to second language acquisition into two general strands of inquiry: (1) those studies investigating language learning as social practice and (2) those investigating the development of interactional competence. Studies investigating language learning as social practice focus on how second language users learn as a result of their participation in social interaction on a daily basis. This learning via social interaction has been accounted for both inside of the classroom (e.g., Markee, 2005) and out (e.g., Theodórsdóttir, 2011a, 2011b, with learners of Icelandic). These studies demonstrate how learners create and engage in social interaction for the central purpose of learning, whether that involves demonstrating knowledge of turn-taking and repair during classroom tasks (e.g., Markee, 1994, 2000) or making an effort to use the second language instead of the first to create more opportunities for learning and practice in daily life (Theodórsdóttir, 2011a, 2011b).

Within the group of studies that investigate the development of interactional competence, researchers have explored the development of patterns of
participation and use of linguistic resources both in the short-term and over time (e.g., Marke, 2000). Short-term developmental studies examine different instances within a given activity while learners complete the activity. For example, M. Ishida (2006) traced the use of modal expressions by a learner of Japanese over the course of a ten-minute-long task. Studies examining development over time lean heavily toward a longitudinal design (e.g., Brouwer & Wagner, 2004; González-Lloret, 2008; Ishida, 2009; Nguyen, 2006, 2008), although Kim’s (2009) study of learners’ use of two Korean discourse markers adopted a cross-sectional design. Although these studies span a large range of interactional contexts, findings always relate learning to social interaction and participation in social practices. Learners are shown to expand use of linguistic resources to other contexts and to more effectively order talk in social interaction as they develop interactional and linguistic competence.

Research Methods and the Conversation Analysis Approach

As previously mentioned, conversation analysts are interested in ordinary, everyday conversations in order to study how individuals participate in and make sense of the surrounding social world. Therefore, data are naturally occurring conversations, and analysts employ ethnographic techniques to gather these data. Because the interest lies in the everyday and the ordinary, conversation analysts do not establish the topic of investigation beforehand. Instead, they examine the naturally occurring practices of interaction that emerge during their analysis of the data, a process called “unmotivated looking” (Mori, 2004). These practices may be presented as single instances or a collection of relevant instances, where the former is intended to reveal practices and the latter attempts to uncover how participants shape knowledge of order in talk.

A distinctive feature of Conversation-Analysis-based methodology is the convention for transcribing recorded conversations. The level of detail captured in transcriptions following Conversation Analysis conventions serves to provide a descriptive and accurate account of the interaction moment(s) of interest to readers, both temporally and spatially. A sample of Conversation Analysis transcription conventions is offered in Table 4.2, and Example 4.1 provides a sample transcription using Conversation Analysis–style conventions. It is important to note that all Conversation Analysis studies may not necessarily follow these exact transcription conventions. Some may be taken out, added in, or modified according to the specific details of the interaction(s) the researcher attempts to highlight for readers.

Researchers working on second language acquisition within a Conversation Analysis Approach are also concerned with making the manner in which conversations are “second language” in nature visible to the reader. Thus, one methodological challenge faced under this approach is identifying means
TABLE 4.2  
Example of Conversation Analysis transcription conventions  
(based on Markee & Kasper, 2004, pp. 499–500)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity of speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T: teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1: identified learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL: several or all learners talking simultaneously</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simultaneous utterances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[L1: yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[L2: yeh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervals within and between utterances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(0.3) a pause of 0.3 second</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of speech delivery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>? rising intonation, not necessarily a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>! strong emphasis, with falling intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes. a period indicates falling (final) intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so, a comma indicates low-rising intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggesting continuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go:::d one or more colons indicate lengthening of the preceding sound; each additional colon represents a lengthening of one beat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO capitals indicate increased volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alright degree sign indicates decreased volume</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commentary in the transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>((coughs)) verbal description of actions noted in the transcript, including nonverbal actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(radio) single parentheses indicate unclear or probable item</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

through which to indicate foreign accent in transcriptions without compromising the character of the second language learner in some way. In general, transcriptions are not modified to reflect foreign accent, particularly if it does not influence the interaction in any way. From this description, it is clear that the data elicitation method for Conversation Analysis is common to many different approaches, but the means of analysis of that dataset are quite unique.
EXAMPLE 4.1. Transcription following Conversation Analysis conventions (Ishida, 2009, p. 360)

Excerpt 3, Fred’s host sister (FR5, 3/3/2005, 2’11”)
Fred (FR) and his friend, Gordon, are in Gordon’s host mother’s (GM) house. Gordon’s host mother is talking about Fred’s host brother and sisters based on what she has heard from Fred’s host mother. After talking about Fred’s host brother, she begins to talk about one of Fred’s host sisters (line 1).

01 GM: oneesan wa suisu ka dokka ni
older sister TP Switzerland or somewhere in
02 iru deshoo.
live I suppose
‘The older sister is in Switzerland or somewhere, isn’t she?’
03 (0.7)
04 FR: [un n,
yeah
‘Yeah.’
05 GM: [“musume-san°
daughter
‘The daughter of your host mother.’
06 (0.4)
07 FR: soo desu ne
right CP ne
‘That’s right’
08 GM: hnn,
mm
‘Mm.’
09 (0.8)
10 FR: shitte iru
know
‘I know that.’

Sociocognitive Approach

The final social approach to be considered in the present chapter is the Socio-cognitive Approach, most often associated with Dwight Atkinson. As the name suggests, a Sociocognitive Approach to second language acquisition considers both social and cognitive aspects of second language learning. These social and
cognitive aspects, however, do not exist in isolation from each other. Instead, they interact within a dynamic, integrated system comprising the mind, body, and world (Atkinson, 2011a). It is because of the connection between the cognitive and the social that this approach is included in the present chapter. One distinctive feature of this approach is the embodied, embedded nature of cognition (Atkinson, 2010a, 2010b). Embodied cognition means that cognitive activity is “grounded in bodily states and action” (Atkinson, 2010a, p. 599). Cognition is adaptive, which means that thinking and thought processes change and evolve to facilitate development and survival in the world. Cognition is viewed as embedded in the physical world. Atkinson’s (2011a) “cognition-for-driving” example supports this assertion. He claims that we do not have to rely on cognition very much to arrive at the nearest supermarket because the roads and routes do most of the routing or “thinking” for us. Cognition therefore is “functionally integrated” with the surrounding environment; that is, it exists in the world, rather than exclusively in our own minds (Atkinson, 2011a, p. 145).

Under this approach, integration occurs not only between mind and world but also between mind and body. Synchronized human behavior (e.g., Atkinson, 2010a, 2011a) and learning through imitation are examples of mind-body integration and serve to facilitate adaptation and cooperation in the social environment. Additionally, the integration of mind and body at the level of the individual is not believed to exist independently from that of other individuals during joint social action; rather, individuals align to one another. This alignment is fundamental to the concept of social cognition, which is dynamic and sensitive to constant changes in the physical and social environment. Under this view social cognition occurs when individuals are aligned to one another through interaction. Such alignment is not limited to linguistic aspects of the interaction, as it might be under an approach like Accommodation Theory, but rather it includes physical behavior, such as posture and gestures.

The conceptualization of language and learning are also distinct under this approach. Atkinson describes language as a tool for social action (2011a, p. 146). In other words, language is used for (joint) social action and facilitates human behavior and interaction with and within the surrounding social environment. Language itself is adaptive and includes both verbal and nonverbal elements (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, etc.) of communication. Nonverbal elements have received growing attention in the sociocognitive literature (e.g., Kinsbourne & Jordan, 2009; Yu, Ballard, & Aslin, 2005), and associated researchers argue that nonverbal activity further facilitates cooperative social action. Learning is living and individuals constantly learn simply by participating in life activities. In other words, learning is understood as a natural product of interacting in the surrounding social environment. Applying this understanding of learning to second language acquisition means that aspects
of language learning cannot be separated from the surrounding environment, be it the physical environment of the target language community or a classroom setting. Instead, learners are active participants in the surrounding adaptive world, and language learning occurs as a result of participation in and alignment with the social environment (human and nonhuman).

The Sociocognitive Approach is the most recent approach among all that we have covered, and, unlike others, it can be fairly described as still in its early stages of development. Empirical research thus far has focused on alignment (Atkinson, Churchill, Nishino, & Okada, 2007; Mori & Hayashi, 2006) and use of symbiotic gestures (Churchill, Okada, Nishino, & Atkinson, 2010). In their work on alignment, Mori and Hayashi (2006) examined interactions between first language and second language speakers of Japanese, specifically extracts from a language table meeting representing embodied completion, or the use of gestures to complete an utterance left verbally unfinished. Mori and Hayashi found that the first language speakers’ use of gestures helped facilitate mutual understanding with second language speakers with limited linguistic competence in Japanese. Use of gestures then was interpreted as a means of adapting to the social environment, in which learning or mutual understanding could then occur. Atkinson, Churchill, Nishino, and Okada’s (2007) study provides several examples of the notion of alignment in the Sociocognitive Approach. Using videotaped interactions of a tutoring session between Ako, then a 14-year-old Japanese-speaking learner of English, and Tomo, aunt and tutor to Ako, their analysis demonstrated how Ako coordinated her actions (i.e., posture, eye gaze, gesture, verbalizations, etc.) to Tomo and to objects in the surrounding environment (Tomo’s dining room) to align herself more closely to the physical world. The authors argued that this alignment is essential for developmental activity to occur and, thus, should be understood to be essential to human life. The study conducted by Churchill and colleagues (2010) is also based on interactions between English learner Ako and her aunt and tutor Tomo, but focuses instead on the use of symbiotic gestures by Tomo. The researchers based their assertions about symbiotic gestures on the work of Goodwin (2003), defining them as “gesture, talk, physical orientation/movement, and the material structures of the environment that are used to establish and organize the interlocutor’s domain of scrutiny” (Churchill et al., 2010, p. 236). They argued that Tomo used gestures to make grammar visible during the selected tutoring sessions they analyzed. Specifically, Tomo made a particular gesture (a small circle with her pencil in the air) when offering the correct of two options related to tense in one excerpt, a gesture that is repeated with other examples to serve as a cue for Ako. The researchers argued that these gestures not only make grammar visible but also connect interactions related to the same topic (choice of tense during the grammar exercise) to facilitate participation by the learner. From this brief survey of
recent research conducted under the Sociocognitive Approach, we see that it is the proposed connection between the physical world and cognition, in this case as related to language use and language acquisition, which makes the theory unique.

Research Methods and the Sociocognitive Approach

Because the Sociocognitive Approach is interested in mind, body, and world integration, all interactions and relevant tools (physical and symbolic) must be included in the research design. The first and leading studies undertaken within this framework (e.g., Atkinson et al., 2007; Churchill et al., 2010) have used videotaped interactions to capture the level of detail necessary to account for alignment and use of symbiotic gestures. As part of the analysis, the researchers tend to include video screenshots to accompany prose descriptions. Researchers also examine all of the tools involved in the interactions, including worksheets and pencils, as well as how participants interact with and use those tools as they complete the tasks or interactions. Because this is a new area, it is likely that the research methods employed will continue to develop and make use of developing technologies to capture the full range of behaviors believed to be related to cognition.

To capture detail in spoken interaction, studies adopting a Sociocognitive Approach also often employ the analytical tools developed in Conversation Analysis. We conclude this section with Example 4.2, which shows the first three lines of the first excerpt from the study by Mori and Hayashi (2006, pp. 201–202). The example shows the transcription conventions from Conversation Analysis along with indications of the gestures that accompanied the linguistic aspects of the interaction.

**EXAMPLE 4.2.** Excerpt from Mori & Hayashi (2006)

1 Toru: nanode:: (1.0) hurui:: () kuruma wa:: (0.2)  
   so old car TP
2 nedan ga:: [(0.4)  
   price SP [  
   \(\rightarrow\) [[[moves open right hand downwards repetitively,  
   \(\rightarrow\) [while gazing intently at Alan; Fig. 1])  
   ‘So::, (1.0) as for o::ld () ca::rs, (0.2)  
   their pri::ces ((hand gesture follows))’  
3 Alan: u::::n ((while nodding several times; David also nods))  
   ‘I:: see:::.’
SUMMARY

The goal of the present chapter has been to provide an overview of some of the most widely known, most promising, or foundational approaches to language learning as a social phenomenon. What these theories or approaches have in common is their view that social factors related to both the learner and the learning context play a role in language learning. Specifically, each of the theories reviewed here conceptualizes language use and language learning as activities that are heavily influenced by the context in which interactions take place. Because they share certain assumptions and differ in others, we provide a summary of these theories in Table 4.3. The table provides a brief description of which social factors are considered under each approach and how these are defined, and it also addresses whether (and sometimes how) language learning has been subsumed under that particular approach. Finally, we indicate whether there is research to date on the second language acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. Even in the cases where the answer is negative to this last question, the approaches have been included because they hold promise for expansion into this area in the future.

EVALUATION OF SOCIAL APPROACHES

Table 4.3 identifies the individual contributions of each of the theories reviewed in the current chapter. Nevertheless, the first and most important implication of this body of work as a whole is that language learning is not limited to the second language grammar or to the linguistic influences on the process of learning a second language. Instead, researchers must acknowledge that language use happens in a social context, and a host of social and psychological factors come to bear on the process of learning a second language. The manner in which these factors are characterized varies from one approach to another, but at the core of each approach is the role that they afford to the interactional and social context in the process of language learning. An important implication of this body of work is that research on second language acquisition will benefit from a closer look at individuals, rather than an exclusive focus on groups. This is because the experiences of individuals differ and any account that recognizes the role of context in second language acquisition must have a mechanism for evaluating the changing and individualized nature of those contexts.

There are certain characteristics of the research described in the current chapter that will not extend to the approaches explored later in this volume. For example, these approaches are unique in their focus on practices and behaviors (cultural or otherwise) that are related to language use but extend beyond the linguistic system. In other approaches, even those that recognize a role for social factors in language use and language learning, it is rare to see an account of cultural norms or practices. Another prominent difference, although it applies in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model/theory/approach</th>
<th>Second language learning</th>
<th>“Social” factors considered</th>
<th>Sociolinguistic competence examined?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation Model</td>
<td>Integration of the social and the psychological, which mediate acculturation and subsequently language learning</td>
<td>Psychological and social factors related to the learner; sociocultural and historical context of target language community</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Accommodation Theory</td>
<td>No account of language learning</td>
<td>Social characteristics of learner and his/her interlocutor; characteristics of the speaking task</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Theory</td>
<td>Not a theory of learning, but increasing self-regulation in the second language corresponds to development</td>
<td>Individual differences among learners (in terms of documenting variable speech performance); characteristics of the speaking task</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Approach</td>
<td>Appropriation of sociocultural practices</td>
<td>Social characteristics (dynamic) of learner and his/her interlocutor; social, cultural, and historical structure of learning context</td>
<td>No relevant research to date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Socialization Approach</td>
<td>Mediated by social agents and characteristics of the learning context; examines linguistic development and other forms of knowledge (culture, ideologies, etc.)</td>
<td>Identities and subjectivities of learners; characteristics of community and its members with which learners communicate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation-Analytic Approach</td>
<td>Emerging participation in interaction using grammatical resources of the second language</td>
<td>Learners’ participation in social interaction; identities of learners; characteristics of interactional context</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocognitive Approach</td>
<td>“Natural, adaptive process of ecological alignment” (Atkinson, 2011a, p. 144)</td>
<td>Sociocognitive alignment across participants and external affordances of the second language speech event</td>
<td>No relevant research to date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
various degrees to the theories described in the current chapter, is the decreased attention to the linguistic details of language development relative to the social component. For example, the general goal of analysis of the theories reviewed here is not to detail the manner in which grammatical rules change over time. Instead, development is often viewed holistically, and success might be defined in terms of increased effectiveness in interactions or even greater access to interactions. Aside from this sort of difference, however, what is more apparent is that there is no clear social-cognitive divide. The “social theories” described here also deal with elements of language, with mental grammars, with cognition, and so on. In other words, these are not purely “social” theories but rather theories that give prominence to the social side of cognition, language use, and language learning. As we continue our discussion in Chapter Five we will see that the “cognitive” approaches we review were selected precisely because they afford some role to the social factors in language use and language learning. We will see that the social-cognitive dichotomy does not properly account for the range of theoretical approaches to the study of language. In fact, we will ultimately argue that the most effective theories are precisely those that account for both cognitive and social aspects of language acquisition.

READING BEYOND THE TEXT


COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION

A. Comprehension

1. What is the focus of cognitive approaches? How do social approaches differ?
2. What imbalance did Firth and Wagner (1997) note?
3. In the Acculturation Model, which factors have an impact on social distance?
4. What does Speech Accommodation Theory seek to explain?
5. How do divergence and convergence differ?
6. What sort of task is usually used in the Speech Accommodation Theory approach?
7. What changes from earlier theory are evident in Speech Accommodation Theory?
8. How does Sociocultural Theory conceptualize mental activity?
9. What is scaffolding?
10. What does dynamic assessment attempt to measure?
11. In its application to second language learning, what is the central premise of the Language Socialization Approach?
12. What principles are central to the Identity Approach? What role do imagined communities play?
13. Within the Sociocognitive Approach, what is the function of language?

B. Application

1. Now that you have read about approaches to language as a social phenomenon, which approach seems most profitable to you? Which aspects of it seem most logical to you? What does the approach you selected explain that other approaches do not?
2. Identify at least three weaknesses of the Acculturation Model. Next, list at least two ways that subsequent approaches have considered additional factors in approaching language as a social phenomenon.
3. Group cohesiveness is one of the factors known to influence social distance. Think about groups of people that you know who have close bonds (e.g., a family, a set of friends, a team, coworkers, etc.). Are there aspects of their language that are similar among group members? What linguistic characteristics have you noticed? Do you see the role of other social factors contributing to linguistic similarities? Which other social factors stand out in that regard?
4. You have seen examples of research that approach data using Conversation-Analytic methods. Using YouTube, find a sixty-second clip of dialogue of one of your favorite scenes from a movie or television program. Transcribe the dialogue, being sure to account for: (1) pauses, (2) overlap, (3) rises and falls in intonation, and (4) turn-taking (who speaks). Next, describe the contexts of the pauses. Why do you think the speaker paused? What effect did this have? In what context did the overlap occur? What did a rise or fall in intonation signify? What evidence do you see in the transcription of one speaker that he or she has understood what the other speaker has said?
NOTES

1. This factor was drawn from the notion of “language ego” developed by Guiora et al. (1972) to explain differential levels of success in acquiring native-like pronunciation of a second language.

2. See the introduction of Beebe and Giles (1984) for a concise overview of theoretical and methodological differences of social psychology and sociolinguistics.
In Chapter Four we began to address the so-called social-cognitive divide, with social theories looking at the context of learning, and those factors outside the learner that might have an impact on learning and cognitive theories focusing exclusively on mental activities and the linguistic structures stored within the learner’s mind. We have already seen that many theories account for both linguistic structures within the learner’s mind and the impact of social factors outside the learner on language development. Thus, the approaches presented in this chapter should not be taken as opposites of those reviewed in Chapter Four. In fact, in some cases one could argue that an approach might fit equally well in either chapter. Nevertheless, what the theories presented here have in common is their focus on mental activities, or cognition. Research on cognition may explore the structure of linguistic knowledge, the study of how this knowledge comes to exist, or of how it is stored and used. This knowledge may, of course, also contain social information. Nevertheless, this body of research is contrasted with those theories that believe that language or linguistic knowledge is co-constructed in the world through social interaction exclusively, rather than taking place through individual mental activity.

EXAMPLES OF COGNITIVE APPROACHES TO SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Without a doubt, there are a wide range of cognitive approaches to language currently employed in acquisition research. Some of these approaches have existed for a number of years and others are relatively new. In addition, they vary widely in the structure they believe that language takes within the mind and, thus, the way this structure is built or changed through the process of acquisition. Given their number and their diversity, it is not possible to include every cognitive approach to language in the current volume. Instead, the
approaches reviewed in the current chapter are those that appear to have the greatest interest in also treating sociolinguistic variation in some way. As a result of work on second language variation within each of these approaches, they are also good candidates for the exploration of the second language acquisition of sociolinguistic competence.

**Optimality Theory**

The first of the cognitive approaches to be reviewed here is a model of language based on a generative grammar. A generative grammar is a system that generates surface forms from underlying representations. Early models of generative grammar (e.g., Chomsky & Halle, 1968; Chomsky & Lasnik, 1977) used rules to explain or predict the forms that would occur in a given language. In other words, the underlying mental structure was predicted to lead to a finite set of possible outcomes cross-linguistically. Nevertheless, one problem that arose was that these rules were often violated due to some pre-existing constraint on surface forms or output in a given language. Thus, at that early stage the importance of constraints was clear, but a means by which to model them theoretically and account for them cross-linguistically was not. This conundrum provided the primary motivation for the development of **Optimality Theory**, originally proposed by Alan Prince and Paul Smolensky in the early 1990s (Prince & Smolensky, 1997, 2008[1993]).

Optimality Theory is a constraint-based method of formal linguistic analysis. The theory operates using four basic components. These include a **generator**, which generates all of the possible candidates (or output forms) for a given utterance. From this list of possible candidates an **evaluator** selects the single output form that matches the actual form of the grammar. This selection process is based on a series of **constraints**, which ensure that the output does not violate two types of restrictions. The first set of restrictions is known as ‘markedness constraints’, which require that the output be well-formed according to linguistic universals. The second set of constraints is known as ‘faithfulness constraints’ and these stipulate that the output selected by the evaluator must resemble the input to the greatest degree possible. In other words, the evaluator must maintain the strongest correlation possible between the input and the output. The final component of every grammar is the **lexicon**, and this is where the language-specific elements that fill the chosen output structure reside.

Optimality Theory captures the idea that mental grammars obey universal principles by claiming that the generator, the evaluator, and all of the constraints exist in the grammar of every language. In other words, the process through which output candidates are generated is the same for all languages. In addition, every constraint exists in the grammar of every language. In order
to capture the differences across the surface forms in all languages, Optimality Theorists claimed that cross-linguistic differences are fully captured by differences in constraint ranking. In essence, the evaluator is designed to favor violations of lower ranked constraints in order to satisfy the restrictions of higher ranked constraints and the differences in the order in which constraints are ranked from one language to another accounts for the differences in the surface forms. The basic components of Optimality Theory are described in Table 5.1 (descriptions taken from McCarthy, 2007).

To capture the manner in which the selection mechanism operates, let us consider a highly simplified example based only on two possible constraints. The first constraint says that syllable onsets with only one consonant are preferable to syllable onsets with two consonants (a markedness constraint). The second constraint states that the onset in the output must maximally resemble the onset in the input (a faithfulness constraint). Because these are universal constraints (i.e., present in all languages) the generator will create candidates that obey both and those that violate both. In a language in which this particular markedness constraint is ranked higher than this particular faithfulness constraint the optimal output candidate may exhibit epenthesis (i.e., the addition of a vowel, in this case for the purpose of breaking up a consonant cluster). For example, in a language where complex onsets are not allowable, a vowel may be used to divide two consonants in the input, producing two syllables of the form consonant + vowel in the output (e.g., su-ki for ‘ski’ in Japanese). In a language where the faithfulness constraint is ranked higher, there will be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5.1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic components of Optimality Theory</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generator (GEN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator (EVAL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraint set (CON)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexicon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
no epenthesis because the onset will more closely resemble the input. This contrast is illustrated in Table 5.2.

Clearly the example in Table 5.2 is highly simplified and in a true Optimal Theoretic grammar there would be numerous constraints, all ranked and in operation at the same time. Additionally, there would be far more than two possible outputs generated by the grammar. Nevertheless, the example serves to show how changing the ranking of a single pair of constraints can account for differences between languages. What makes this theory even more appealing is that it is able to address variation (cf. Coetzee & Pater, 2011) by allowing two constraints to have parallel rankings or by allowing variable ranking of constraints. In this sense, the function of the model is maintained even when variable structures within languages are considered.¹

Moving on to a discussion of second languages, an Optimality Theory approach to second language learning has also been developed, placing constraints at the core of second language grammars. Just as the differences across languages can be accounted for by different rankings of constraints, so too can the process of acquiring a new grammar in a second language. In essence, the task of the second language learner is to change his or her ranking of constraints to best match the constraint ranking of the second language. Development in a second language can be likened to a process of fine-tuning or re-ranking of constraints to best match one's own output to the available input (i.e., the language to which a learner is exposed). Development ends when the learner perceives successful matching of his or her own output to input in the second language.

### Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint rankings</th>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language A</strong></td>
<td>Onsets in output must equal onsets in input</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid complex onsets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language B</strong></td>
<td>Avoid complex onsets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Onsets in output must equal onsets in input</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be-la</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or no longer adjusts his or her own constraint ranking to match that of the second language (cf. Tesar & Smolensky, 1993). What makes this approach even more appealing in terms of its simplicity is that changes in constraint ranking may only happen in one direction. Constraints may only be lowered. This fact is important because it connects acquisition to evidence in the input: when a counterexample to an existing ranking is encountered in the input, learners may demote a given constraint in order to account for the apparent violation in the surface form. If we return to our highly simplified example in Table 5.2, we might expect that a native speaker of Language B (similar to Japanese) who is acquiring Language A (similar to English) would have to demote the complex onset constraint in order to produce the complex onsets common in English.

Research conducted within Optimality Theory has been conducted on a variety of second language structures, across several languages. Some of the earliest work to apply Optimality Theory to second language acquisition was indeed focused on second language syllable structure. Hancin-Bhatt and Bhatt (1997) examined difficulties native Spanish- and Japanese-speaking learners of English as a second language had with complex onsets and codas in English (e.g., /tr/ at the beginning of a word and consonants at the end of a word, respectively). Employing an Optimality Theory analysis, the authors were able to account for developmental and transfer effects beyond standard error rates, showing how language-specific constraint rankings influenced differential resolution of complex English onsets (Spanish learners deleted obstruents whereas Japanese learners deleted glides). The authors also found that both groups of learners were more likely to epenthesize onsets and delete codas, and were able to account for these phenomena through constraint ranking. In a related study with Thai learners, Hancin-Bhatt (2000) found similar effects of language-specific constraint rankings in their second language English production. Substitution in non-Thai-licensed simple codas varied more consistently in terms of native rankings: that is, substitution more commonly involved differences in the features [continuant] and [voice] than in place of articulation of the target sound.

Investigations of second language phonology and phonetics are, in fact, quite prevalent within the Optimality Theory approach. In particular, there has been excellent work conducted on the processes of simplification (e.g., Broselow, Chen, & Wang, 1998) and substitution (e.g., Lombardi, 2003). These studies include learners from a wide variety of first language backgrounds (e.g., Mandarin, Russian, Japanese), and serve to identify the areas of difficulty in second language pronunciation as well as the explanatory power of a constraint-based analysis. Although somewhat limited, this approach has also been applied to second language syntax (Eckman, 2004; LaFond, Hayes, & Bhatt, 2001; Nagy & Heap, 1998; Speas, 2001). Regardless of the area of the grammar investigated, researchers working within Optimality Theory have used their findings to provide support for a constraint-based model of formal linguistic analysis.
Research Methods and Optimality Theory

The approach to data elicitation within the framework of Optimality Theory is not limited to a particular method. In fact, it is the method with which linguistic data are analyzed that is most distinctive. This method might be applied to oral data, to grammaticality judgments and so on, but the common goal across studies is to use the concept of constraint ranking to explain why a given output is selected by the evaluator in a given language, sometimes as compared to another language and sometimes in an attempt to understand the grammar of a single language. To illustrate this, we use Lombardi’s (2003) analysis of substitutions in the production of the interdental fricative /θ/ in English by Russian- and Japanese-speaking learners whose first language does not contain that segment in their phonemic inventory. Lombardi observed that some learners would substitute [s] for /θ/ (in particular, Japanese learners), while others would substitute [t] for /θ/ (Russian learners). Lombardi used an Optimality Theory analysis to account for this difference between learner groups.

There are three constraints that one must understand in order to follow her analysis. The first two are markedness constraints, one stating that fricatives are more marked than stops and the second that the interdental fricative does not exist in the inventory. The third constraint is a faithfulness constraint that claims that the manner of articulation in the input must be equal to the manner of articulation in the output. These three constraints and the notation used to denote them are summarized in Table 5.3.

Making use of the constraints in Table 5.3, Lombardi (2003) explains that whereas the target language would rank the markedness constraint that the interdental fricative does not exist (i.e., *θ) lower than the faithfulness constraint (Ident Manner), learners who do not produce that sound would

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*[cont] &gt;&gt; *[stop]</td>
<td>markedness constraint; fricatives (continuants) are more marked than stops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*θ</td>
<td>markedness constraint; interdental fricative does not exist in inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ident Manner</td>
<td>faithfulness constraint; manner of articulation of input and output are the same</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
rank the markedness constraint higher than the faithfulness constraint, leading to a substitution of that segment. Acquisition would therefore be represented by constraint demotion (making the *θ constraint less important) and eventual production of that sound. What is more, Lombardi was able to explain why some learners made one type of substitution and others made a different one. Specifically, she hypothesized that learners who substitute /θ/ with [t] have a first language that obeys the markedness constraint *[cont] >> *[stop]. In other words, because fricatives are more marked than stops in this language, the learner substitutes the stop [t] for the English sound /θ/. In contrast, learners who substitute the English /θ/ with [s] have a first language that “explodes” the faithfulness constraint into its component features, and then selects the output that does not violate faithfulness to those features. In other words, the faithfulness constraint Ident Manner (i.e., preserve manner of articulation) can be divided into two faithfulness constraints, IdentCont (preserve the continuant feature) and IdentStop (preserve the stop feature). Thus, “Cont” and “Stop” are component features of “Manner”. In the case of this second group of learners, [s] is selected as a substitution for /θ/ because it does not violate IdentCont, which is ranked above IdentStop. In Table 5.4 we summarize the characteristics of the target as well as the two different learner substitution strategies observed in Lombardi’s (2003) study.

What should be clear from this example of how the methods of analysis function within the Optimality Theory approach is that it is possible to explain how output forms produced by second language learners are selected, and to identify the linguistic motivation (i.e., influence of native language constraints) behind the selection of the nonnative forms produced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target (English)</th>
<th>Learner group 1 (L1 Russian)</th>
<th>Learner group 2 (L1 Japanese)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is produced</td>
<td>/θ/</td>
<td>/t/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violation of faithfulness constraint?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Ident Manner]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
The second approach to language use and language learning reviewed in the current chapter is known as **Connectionism**. In fact, this term encompasses a set of models that attempt to demonstrate computationally the **processes** of the human mind and the behavior underlying those processes (McClelland & Cleeremans, 2009). Such processes, or mental activities, include perception, cognition, and information storage and retrieval. Given the focus on cognitive processing, it may come as no surprise that Connectionist models have their origins in cognitive science. However, associated researchers share a particular view of the nature of behavior and mental states within the wider field of cognitive science: “. . . our understanding of behavior and of mental states should be informed and constrained by our knowledge of the *neural processes* [italics our own] that underpin cognition” (McClelland & Cleeremans, 2009, p. 177). Simply put, researchers working under a Connectionist framework are centrally interested in the “how” of information processing in the human brain.

As we explore this theoretical approach, it is important to understand how the brain itself is modeled. The human brain consists of **nodes** and **links**, or connections, between these nodes. Each node is a simple unit, and depending
on the specific model, it may represent letters, words, or features (McClelland, Rumelhart, & Hinton, 1986). Regardless of what each unit represents, the baseline assumption is that the unit is too small to be meaningful on its own. Instead, representations emerge from patterns of association among units, a concept called **distributed representation**. This entire system of nodes and links is collectively called a **neural network**. Within the neural network, the basic function of each unit is to receive input from neighboring units, compute a value based on the input received, and then output that value to other neighboring units. The strength of transmission between units (i.e., the degree to which units affect and are affected by neighboring units) varies, but directly reflects the extent of each unit’s own **activation**. The links or connections between units, therefore, are weighted because they may be weaker or stronger depending on the strength of activation. Taking all of this together, processing occurs through the spread of activation signals among the various units along these weighted connections (McClelland & Cleeremans, 2009). Patterns in language **variation** are accounted for in terms of the configuration among units within the neural network.

Taking this basic description of mental structure and processing, we turn our attention to language learning. First, and more broadly, learning in a Connectionist model involves gradually adjusting the weight of the connections occurring between processing units (or nodes) over time. Recall that connection weights vary depending on the strength of activation occurring between units. Our experiences, specifically our mind’s exposure to stimuli occurring in the surrounding environment, are believed to influence strengths of activation and subsequently patterns of association over time. Returning to language learning, the adjustment of connection weights occurs via repeated exposure to language input. Learners pick up on regularities in the input to which they are exposed, and from these regularities, patterns of language forms are extracted, processed, and learned over time. This way of modeling language learning has been termed **emergent**, in that language emerges or develops in a speaker from the interaction between the environment and general learning capabilities. Further, speakers acquiring a language make use of clues or indicators to help them make inferences or assumptions about language through non-language-specific learning mechanisms (Poll, 2011). The same is true for second language learning, with the exception that second language learners already have knowledge of a language, the first language, with set patterns of association and connection weights tuned for first-language-based input. Researchers adopting a Connectionist model to the study of second language learning posit that patterns of association existing in the first language and the second language (i.e., areas of overlap) represent key areas for transfer (Gasser, 1990). In fact, a related emergentist model, the **Unified (Competition) Model**
(MacWhinney, 2008), posits that the influence of the first language is so strong in learning a second language that it is “. . . impossible to construct a model of second language learning that [does] not take into account the structure of the first language” (MacWhinney, 2008, p. 342). Like Connectionist models, processing and subsequent learning in MacWhinney’s model are based on associative patterns, which are sensitive to the strength and validity of cues present in the linguistic input.

One particularly productive strand of research in second language acquisition that adopts Connectionist models of learning has investigated computerized simulations of morphosyntactic acquisition. We recall that Connectionist models are centrally concerned with capturing and explaining processes of second language learning. Consequently, research in this strand has first used human data to show what adult learners actually do, and then subsequently tested the extent to which connectionist networks are able to simulate learning of the particular structure(s) under study. Given the numerous studies available in this area, we have chosen to highlight three classic studies (Ellis & Schmidt, 1997; Kempe & MacWhinney, 1998; Sokolik & Smith, 1992) and one more recent study (Rosi, 2009) in order to illustrate the type of evidence available for this model as well as the way the model has developed to account for second language learning.

One of the earliest studies on second language within the Connectionist framework is the investigation conducted by Sokolik and Smith (1992), which demonstrated that a computer-based network model could accurately and reliably assign grammatical gender to a set of unstudied French nouns. The computer model was not programmed with rules of any sort, but rather with a set of nouns and patterns of connectivity (i.e., learning experience) that allowed the model to rely on the structure of the nouns themselves to assign gender to newly introduced nouns. A notable methodological strength of this study is the development of a connectionist simulation that more closely resembled that of an adult second language learner. The researchers first ran the model with a zero-state pattern of connectivity, meaning that there was no prior experience encoded in the model. They found that the computer model was able to assign gender with a high rate of accuracy and do so very quickly. Thus, the model provided a good parallel for first language acquisition, given that children have been reported to learn much faster and with a higher rate of success than adult learners. Next, Sokolik and Smith programmed the model to randomly select one of three sets of starting weights in order to represent experience-based biases at the starting point of acquisition. They found that these starting weights interfered very minimally and inconsequentially with the acquisition of French gender. The researchers also lowered the rate of learning to reflect the slower rate of learning that has been reported for adult learners in comparison with children learners, and reported that this did not
result in any notable effect on acquisition. Thus, aside from demonstrating that the learning of French gender assignment is possible to model computationally, their research further provides support for associative mechanisms of learning. Their investigation suggests that these computational models can be configured to capture agreed-upon aspects of adult second language learning.

A second, classic example of the application of a simple, Connectionist model to second language learning is the work conducted by Ellis and Schmidt (1997). Specifically, the researchers sought to determine whether regular and irregular plural affixes of an artificial second language could be learned by adult learners and modeled by a computational associative learning system. Additionally, the researchers wanted to know how frequency influenced the acquisition of morphology in both conditions. Ellis and Schmidt reported that regular affixes were learned faster than irregulars for the adult learners. Higher frequency items were also learned faster than lower frequency items. There was also a significant interaction between regularity and frequency, such that the frequency effect demonstrated a greater influence on irregular plural affixes than regular plural affixes. Interestingly, the Connectionist simulation demonstrated the same results: regular affixes were learned more quickly than irregulars, high frequency items were learned more quickly than lower frequency, and the same regularity-frequency interaction encountered for adult learners was also found. These results suggest that the second language acquisition of plural affixes can be explained and modeled by simple, associative learning mechanisms. The authors claim that these findings support rule-like but not rule-governed behavior for second language learning (Ellis & Schmidt, 1997, p. 158). In other words, second language behavior reflects patterns abstracted from the distributional characteristics of the input.

In related work, Kempe and MacWhinney (1998) examined the acquisition of German and Russian case-marking comprehension by first language English-speaking learners. Specifically, the researchers hypothesized that learners’ interpretation of sentences with object-verb-subject (OVS) word order would be affected by cue validity, such that stronger cues would yield greater processing benefits than weaker cues. Using results from a lexical decision task and a picture-choice task, the researchers demonstrated that, as predicted, learners of Russian used case marking as a cue more successfully in earlier stages of learning than learners of German. Learners of German did, however, demonstrate less reliance on case marking as a cue for marking agenthood as their experience with the language increased. Additionally, both learner groups demonstrated sensitivity to animacy in the selection of the agent (the first noun was more likely to be selected as the agent if it was animate), although this semantic feature had an impact on processing to a lesser extent for learners of Russian than learners of German. This last finding was said to be due to the greater grammaticalization of animacy in the Russian case-marking paradigm. Kempe and MacWhinney
interpreted these results as support for an associative learning approach to second language learning, but further tested this finding by running a Connectionist simulation of case-marking acquisition in second language German and Russian. Not only was the simulation able to reproduce several aspects of the findings encountered with the adult learners successfully, but it was also able to help the researchers pinpoint the variables influencing the patterns of acquisition observed. The primary variables influencing acquisition of case marking were frequency in the input and a combination of cue strength and competition between cues across levels of development. Taken together with those reviewed earlier, this study provides further support that associative learning mechanisms of the type described under a Connectionist framework are a viable explanation for second language acquisition.

Having laid the foundation by describing classic studies that provided substantial early support for a Connectionist view of language learning, we move to a recent study to show that this strand of research continues to be productive today. Rosi (2009) tested a Connectionist simulation for the acquisition of aspect in second language Italian. The human data came from two learner groups, native speakers of Spanish and native speakers of German, who completed oral and written narratives of three scenes from the silent film Modern Times. Rosi's results provided support for the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994) and the Discourse Hypothesis (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995, 2000), given the tendency for learners to mark telic foreground predicates with the past perfective aspectual morphology and atelic background predicates with the imperfective aspectual morphology. Rosi (2009) also reported effects for first language, showing that Spanish native speakers were more successful than German native speakers, and for frequency, finding that less frequent uses of imperfective aspectual forms in input affected use at different stages of development. As in the analysis of the human data, Rosi's Connectionist simulation demonstrated differences in emergence of second language Italian aspect according to first language. Additionally, the model was able to capture the interaction between actionality and grounding such that prototypical associations (e.g., imperfective marked on background states) are marked at earlier stages than non-prototypical ones (e.g., imperfective marked on telic in foreground and background). Again this convergence of human data and Connectionist simulations continues to support researchers who argue in favor of the existence of a cognitive-based, associative learning mechanism for second language learning.

Research Methods and Connectionist Theory

As with Optimality Theory, the sources of the human data can be quite varied and are not unique to this approach. Thus, we may find that oral production
or written elicitation tasks are employed and these are generally designed in similar ways across theoretical approaches. However, the computer simulations employed in investigating the degree to which associative models can capture the facts of second language learning are unique to this approach. Thus, we will use this subsection, and the study conducted by Ellis and Schmidt (1997) described earlier, to exemplify a Connectionist network simulation. In short, we seek to explore the way in which a Connectionist network operates. In order to understand this, we must recall that processing units have different activation values and that the links between units are weighted. In a Connectionist model, activation values range from 0 to 1, and a learning algorithm is responsible for adjusting the strength of links between units. According to Ellis and Schmidt, the most common learning algorithm is back propagation. **Back propagation** refers to the learning process through which the associative network compares its output with the target output on each learning trial. If a difference (i.e., an error) is noted, the network propagates this information back to an intermediate layer, called the hidden unit weights, and this is passed along to the input weights, which causes a reduction in future errors (see Ellis & Schmidt, 1997, p. 155). This is precisely the method used in their study. Because the network model has an input layer, an output layer, and the intermediate layer (i.e., the hidden layer), this is known as a three-layer network.

Ellis and Schmidt’s (1997) model consisted of 22 input units, 32 output units, and eight hidden units. These units represent the information that was provided to the associative model. Of the input units, 20 represented a picture of one of the word forms of the artificial language, one indicated whether the stimulus was a single item or part of a pair, and the last was used for training and pattern generalization. Of the output units, 20 represented the base form of the word forms under study, 10 represented the irregular affix forms, one represented the regular affix form, and the last was also used for training and pattern generalization. The model was trained on word stems and plurals to adjust connection strengths in a way that would simulate experience and increase performance. It is important to point out that in this type of research, several trial simulations are conducted to ensure reliability of the model because connection weights are randomized. Additionally, in order to examine how variables such as frequency influence performance, many combinations of trials are necessary to reflect all possible combinations of low and high frequency forms that may be available in the input, and subsequently in the output. What this research method tells us is whether or not an associative learning model can be programmed to pattern in the way that learners do. When the answer is affirmative, we find good evidence in favor of a model of learning based on this type of associative connection-building.
Usage-Based Models

The third approach to be explored in the current chapter includes what are known as usage-based models. These models of language and language acquisition can be seen to overlap to some degree with the Connectionist models discussed in the previous section. The reason for this overlap is that usage-based and Connectionist models, along with other Emergentist models, Functionalism, and Computational Linguistics, all hold that the linguistic knowledge of speakers is best understood as ever-changing. Additionally, these approaches view linguistic knowledge as an accumulation of language experiences that reflect the statistical nature of form-meaning connections. Specifically, they explore the way that language experience influences the manner in which we connect the sign (i.e., string of phonological forms) with the signified (i.e., communicative intention). This view of language is pervasive throughout the broader field of cognitive linguistics, including the sub-field of cognitive research employing usage-based approaches to language.

In addition to the characteristics shared with other approaches in cognitive linguistics, usage-based models of language in particular focus on the influence of language use on its cognitive organization (Bybee, 1985, 2001, 2006; Langacker, 1987, 2000). Language use refers broadly to a given speaker’s use of language as well as his or her exposure to language in the surrounding environment. Experience with language serves as the basis for linguistic structure in the mind. Within a usage-based model, there are several basic assumptions about the cognitive organization of linguistic structure (see Bybee [2008] for additional detail). For example, the basic unit of linguistic structure under this framework is known as a construction. Constructions may be individual words, or morphemes, or a string of words (such as idioms or conventional expressions) that are built up through experience with language. When a construction is encountered through experience with the language, it is stored in memory and is categorized by a process of mapping. Unlike models that posit specific mechanisms related exclusively to language, usage-based approaches claim that generalized cognitive mechanisms can account for the storage and processing of constructions. Some of these mechanisms include entrenchment (i.e., conservation), categorization, and schema formation. Entrenchment is a process by which repetition of events renders them routine and, as such, these events are easily accessible and stored as a unit, which does not require as much attention in order to perform (Langacker, 2000). Categorization is the capacity to sort and organize events in memory according to identity, similarities, and differences (Bybee, 2006). Lastly, schema formation, also termed abstraction, can be thought of as the emergence of patterns based on the similarity inherent in numerous individual experiences (Langacker, 2000). Categorization and schema
formation, in particular, account for the observation of rule-like phenomena and promote more efficient decoding of language.

Returning to the centrality of language experience, an important observation for usage-based researchers is the fact that our experience with language is biased in certain ways. Specifically, some constructions occur more frequently or are simply repeated more than others. This distributional bias has been shown to impact the representation of linguistic structure in memory. In other words, the way we store linguistic structure reflects the frequency of occurrence of these constructions in the language that surrounds us. As a result, usage-based researchers have tried to uncover the ways in which frequency of use can be seen to influence language structure and change. Under this approach, one important distinction regarding frequency is that between token frequency and type frequency. **Token frequency** refers to the number of times a given element appears in the language we encounter, whereas **type frequency** refers to the number of times a certain pattern appears in a given sample of language (Bybee, 2008, p. 218). Thus, a count of the number of times [b] occurs in the phrase ‘busy bee’, the word ‘thou’ appears in the Bible, or a specific phrase such as ‘how are you?’ is employed all constitute examples of token frequency. In contrast, a count of the number of occurrences of the sequence [tr] in a corpus of a given language (rather than the individual units [t] or [r]) or a count of commonly used morphological patterns, such as regular past tense suffixes in English (–ed), are examples of type frequency. Each of these types of frequency has been associated with different effects on language storage and use.

Three effects of token frequency have been detailed and examined in usage-based research. The first is called the **conserving effect**. This effect is responsible for the resistance of high frequency linguistic forms to change. For example, irregular past tense verbs in English such as ‘kept’ and ‘slept’ are claimed to have resisted regularization (i.e., ‘*keeped’, ‘*sleeped’) due to their higher frequency and subsequent higher accessibility in memory. Other verbs such as ‘leapt’ or ‘wept’, however, have developed regularized forms (i.e., ‘leaped’, ‘weeped’) due to their lower frequency and, consequently, lower accessibility. A second effect of token frequency, **autonomy**, refers to highly frequent sequences whose individual units remain unanalyzed. Some examples include ‘gimme’ or ‘gonna’ in English (cf. Bybee, 2008), _hay_ in Spanish, and the tag question _n’est-ce pas?_ in French. The final effect of token frequency is the **reducing effect**. This refers to highly frequent words and phrases that demonstrate phonetic reduction. A popular example in English is ‘because’ > ‘cuz’. Grammatical structures have also been shown to exhibit this effect, for example ‘would have’ > ‘would[ə]’. This effect is explained by the overlapping of speech gestures that occurs when neuromotor sequences are repeated over time (Bybee, 2008). This repetition and gestural overlap has the effect of increasing efficiency in speech articulation, or reducing speech coarticulation.
Regarding the effect of type frequency, Bybee (2008) explains that the frequency with which a construction is repeated (i.e., applies to a large number of distinct items) is related to the degree to which it is seen to be applicable to new items (p. 221). In other words, type frequency determines the extent to which a construction is productive or allows speakers to use it to parse or interpret other linguistic items. For example, a speaker with knowledge of the words ‘construct’, ‘destruct’, ‘construction’, ‘destruction’, etc. could use the construction ‘–ion’ to parse other words with the same construction (e.g., ‘addiction’, ‘confusion’, ‘location’, etc.). Additionally, the higher in frequency the construction, the stronger the mental representation it is posited to have and therefore the more likely it is to be extended to novel uses (e.g., ‘Californication’, a Red Hot Chili Peppers song title).

Two remaining concepts that are central to usage-based models of language are grammaticalization and prefabs. First, grammaticalization (also called grammaticization) refers to the process through which lexical items, or a combination of lexical and grammatical items, change over time into exclusively grammatical morphemes (Bybee, 2008). This process reflects the assertion that the cognitive representation of language is constantly modified by use. In this particular situation, linguistic items may be used so frequently that they lose aspects of their meaning and/or pragmatic inference and are, consequently, susceptible to changes in grammatical category or semantic function. Arguably the two most popular examples in English are ‘be going to’ (earlier used as a progressive phrase, but now used as a future marker) and ‘will’ (which used to mean ‘to want’, but now it is used as a future marker). This process has received quite a bit of attention in previous research conducted on a variety of languages, and in recent years has been particularly important for explaining cross-linguistic phonetic and morphosyntactic variation. This is because we often see variation in the use of a form as it undergoes grammaticalization. The second concept, prefabs (or prefabricated sequences), refers to conventionalized sequences that are semantically predictable. These may be short phrases or expressions that are not necessarily used a lot (e.g., ‘beyond repair’ and ‘need help’ [Bybee, 2006]), yet native speakers immediately know and recognize these as the way to express a certain idea. Both of these concepts together are employed by usage-based theorists to provide further support for the claim that language experience serves as the foundation for the cognitive representation and organization of linguistic knowledge.

From a usage-based perspective, then, adult second language learners are continually confronted with linguistic forms and constructions in the second language that exhibit frequency effects and are constantly affected in some way by use. One can imagine the many challenges such a system may present to the adult second language learner. Some of these challenges and their
implications for second language learning, discussed by Bybee (2008), are summarized in Table 5.5.

Bybee (2008) also addresses the role of the first language in second language learning from a usage-based perspective. Essentially, first language constructions form the foundation of second language constructions. Such a system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>Repetition of forms guarantees more exposure to them. This is particularly helpful for high frequency irregular forms, but not low frequency irregular forms, which are likely to be regularized by learners. Repetition also yields chunking, which is unfavorable if incorrect forms are strengthened in learners’ cognitive representations (similar to fossilization).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous constructions</td>
<td>To the extent that second language learners have knowledge of the communicative intent of autonomous constructions, these high frequency items can facilitate communication at earlier stages of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction</td>
<td>Difficulties in comprehension and production of spoken language may stem in part from effects of reduction. Learners with less experience in the second language may find highly frequent, reduced constructions not only difficult to parse for comprehension, but also difficult to produce if the resulting sequences are phonotactically infrequent or illicit in their respective first languages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 5.5 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of patterns</td>
<td>Knowledge of patterns in the second language can facilitate the learning and production of new, but related, forms. That said, learners must be exposed to a variety of items exhibiting a given pattern to be able to apply it productively or innovatively in future second language use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biased input</td>
<td>Like native speakers, learners can benefit from the “biased” input to which they are exposed. For paradigm-based learning, high frequency forms can serve as a reference point for low frequency forms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

may facilitate second language learning when constructions in the second language mirror those in the first language (e.g., Spanish es, third-person singular present form of the verb ‘to be’ is similar to English ‘is’, which is the third-person singular present form of the same verb). Alternatively, learning may be hindered to the extent that similar constructions across languages differ in detail. That is, even though a construction may be similar in two languages, detailed differences may hinder learning (e.g., the ‘to be’ verb is expressed with two verbs in Spanish, ser and estar, and only one in English, ‘to be’).

The application of usage-based models to second language acquisition research is becoming an increasingly popular endeavor. Here we provide a brief review of two recent studies that have examined second language development from a usage-based perspective. The first, conducted by Eskildsen (2009), examined development in the use of the English modal ‘can’ by one adult classroom learner over time. The learner under study, Carlos, was a native speaker of Mexican Spanish. The data submitted to analysis originated from transcriptions of 120 hours of classroom-based audio recordings gathered over a four-year period.2 Eskildsen’s analysis revealed Carlos’ use of can appeared to develop initially from the following four recurring patterns: I can V(erb), Can you V, Can I V, and You can V. His analysis also revealed that the emergence of these particular patterns was linked to the communicative needs
of the learning context. For example, several instances of the expression *I can write* were found at different points, but each occurrence was connected to moments when Carlos volunteered to write on the board. Furthermore, not all patterns were productive (i.e., demonstrated high type frequency) at all points in time examined. Eskildsen views this finding as support for the non-linear nature of second language development. Findings from his 2012 examination of the development of negation construction in second language English (by Carlos and one other first language speaker of Mexican Spanish) offer additional support for this conclusion and also for an experience-based explanation of second language grammar development.

Blom, Paradis, and Sorenson Duncan’s (2012) study of English third-person singular –s development by second language learners provides additional support for a usage-based approach to second language learning. Their longitudinal study examined spontaneous data elicited during free-play sessions conducted with child learners from different first language backgrounds (Cantonese, Mandarin, Romanian, and Spanish). Support for usage-based learning was demonstrated by greater accuracy of third-person singular –s marking on verbs that exhibited higher input frequencies. Similar to findings for native English-speaking children, these child second language learners also demonstrated a tendency to drop /iz/ more often than other allomorphs of –s. This finding is explained by the lower type frequency of this particular suffix, making it unlikely to become a productive pattern. Blom and colleagues also found that children with a higher productive lexicon or a higher receptive lexicon demonstrated greater rates of accuracy for third-person singular –s. Additionally, their study revealed first language effects: those children whose first languages contained rich inflection (i.e., Romanian, Spanish) outperformed children belonging to those whose first languages did not. This finding provides support for the assertion that, where applicable, first language constructions serve as the basis for second language constructions.

**Research Methods and Usage-Based Models**

The methods of data collection and analysis generally employed in usage-based second language acquisition research reflect the centrality of language experience in second language learning. First, the majority of studies conducted thus far are longitudinal in nature. Longitudinal research is essential not only for examining language experience in detail, but also for examining previous uses of constructions and their potential impact on subsequent uses. A second feature of usage-based methods that is indicative of the importance of considering language experience is the collection of large samples of data from individual learners. With large datasets, researchers can gain a better understanding of learners’ experience with the second language (at the point(s) in
time that development is under analysis). Use of large datasets, in turn, allows researchers to pinpoint instances of use and connect them to earlier and later uses of a given construction under study. This has further made it possible for researchers to identify patterns at earlier stages that become productive and facilitate learning in later stages (cf. Eskildsen, 2009). As such, the methods of data elicitation employed in this approach provide specific tools for the analysis of changing patterns of association over time.

One final aspect of usage-based methodology that is essential for research adopting this approach concerns the methods employed to measure frequency. In fact, measuring frequency is not as straightforward as it may seem and several issues must be considered. For example, a researcher must decide whether to measure the frequency of a word (e.g., ‘go’) or to look at collocations containing the same word (e.g., ‘I go’ vs. ‘I’ll go’ vs. ‘I go to’). This choice will, in turn, reflect something about how the researcher views the relationship between those elements and frequency—that is, whether individual elements are frequent on their own (e.g., ‘go’) or frequent in the function of the context in which they are embedded (e.g., ‘I’ll go’ is likely more frequent than ‘I go’). A second issue to consider is the comparison group for this measure. For example, is the measure of frequency one that describes a word or collocation within a corpus relative to other elements in that same corpus or is the comparison to be made across different corpora? If the comparison is to be made across corpora, what is the criterion for selection of this comparison group? The researcher could, for example, compare examples across modes of production, dialect regions, task types, and so on. What is more, a comparison across several of these differences will make inferences about the relationship between any one of them and frequency difficult. In many cases, the answers to these questions will largely depend on the linguistic structure(s) under study as well as the availability of relevant resources. Nevertheless, given that frequency is a central concept in this approach, how it is measured and interpreted requires careful thought and empirical practice, both of which will ultimately come to bear on the findings reported in each research study.

**Systems-Based Theories**

The final group of approaches covered in Chapter Five is known collectively as systems-based theories or approaches to second language learning. The two examples we will highlight are Complexity Theory and Dynamic Systems Theory. To be sure, these theories are distinct and are associated with the work conducted by distinct research groups. Nevertheless, they are grouped here because of several fundamental assumptions that they do share. We begin with a discussion of what these theories have in common and then we will provide an overview of each approach individually, so that their unique characteristics are also apparent.
The class of theories or approaches that are systems-based view knowledge as a complex system that develops over time (de Bot, 2008, p. 167). Before we expand on what this means for cognition, language, and language learning, it is important to understand what is meant by a complex system. First, a system is understood simply as a naturally occurring group of interacting elements or agents (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). For example, the molecules of an atom or a gaggle of geese would fit this definition. In science, the interaction of these elements or agents is believed to give rise to problems of organized complexity. This interaction is complex in that we cannot restrict each variable playing a role in any given system, and furthermore some (or all) of those variables may behave in ways we cannot control. At the same time, these elements or agents naturally function as an integrated whole, from which complex order emerges. A systems approach, therefore, attempts to understand the relationships among the various parts that function together as an integrated whole (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p. 50).

Researchers advocating for a systems approach to language learning view this process of emergent, complex order as a naturally occurring phenomenon applicable not only to language but also to the human mind. In other words, these approaches, like many others reviewed in the present chapter as well as in Chapter Four, do not view linguistic knowledge as a specific type of knowledge that requires separate mechanisms in order to operate. Instead, linguistic knowledge, and language learning as well, share the general cognitive mechanisms used for other functions. There are several characteristics of complex systems that are helpful to understand prior to a discussion of language acquisition under these models (see Beckner et al. [2009] and Larsen-Freeman [2011] for additional details about each). First, complex systems consist of multiple, interacting agents. Returning to our earlier examples, these agents might be an individual atom or a goose, for that matter. Second, complex systems are open and can receive energy from outside the system. In other words, they are continually influenced by the activities taking place around them, rather than existing in isolation. This continual influence, or input of energy from the outside, accounts for the dynamic and adaptive nature of the system. In other words, energy from outside the system is “fed” into the system. This input, in turn, affects the interaction among the parts; consequently, we see a change in the system to adapt to these new conditions. What emerges is an ever-increasingly complex system that accounts for each external force over time. What is clear is that this approach does not view a language system (or any other) as static. Additionally, these systems are believed to be self-organizing, meaning that they are able to spontaneously create complex order without external help. In other words, no additional mechanism is needed to organize the information held within the system. Finally, the changes in the system are nonlinear. This means that we do not expect to see each modification in exact proportion to the external effect that drives it.
The characteristics of complex systems that we have described point to an important observation shared by researchers who advocate for a systems-based approach to language and language learning; no single variable can account for the patterns (frequently nonlinear) observed in language or language learning. Instead, it is the interaction of several variables at several different levels that explain the organization of the complex system or the manner in which it changes over time (de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007). Additionally, this interaction of variables at different levels is understood as an integrated whole, and not the sum of its individual parts (cf. Finch, 2004). Thus, the patterns observed in language are believed to emerge as stabilities in a complex system, or simply put, a natural by-product of human interaction and communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Language learning is believed to occur via repeated exposure to these patterns, a viewpoint that is shared by usage-based theorists.

**Dynamic Systems Theory**

Taking the shared assumptions about the nature of complex systems as our starting point, we begin with the first example of such an approach. One source of difference across complex systems approaches is the aspect of the system on which each theory focuses. For example, the **Dynamic Systems Theory** has its origins in mathematics and emphasizes the examination of behavior and change in systems over time. An important aspect of this theory is the notion of nested systems. This concept captures the idea that every system is, in fact, part of another system (de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007, p. 8). The implication of this idea is that it is not feasible to trace the **exact** development of such a system over time, precisely because each variable of each system (which is constantly influencing and being influenced by other, interconnected systems) is constantly changing and is in continual interaction with other dynamic variables. This does not mean, however, that the system is necessarily “chaotic” in the sense that every element in the system is constantly in flux. In contrast, dynamic systems may stabilize over time, or settle into what are called **attractor states**. Another important consideration for dynamic systems is the initial state. The initial conditions of dynamic systems are considerably less stable. Therefore, small changes or “disturbances” in the system can greatly influence the trajectory of their development. This notion is commonly referred to as the **butterfly effect**, in light of the fact that a small difference in the initial state of a system can have larger consequences later on (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). The idea that small changes have a great impact in initial stages of development not only highlights the importance of initial conditions in dynamic systems, but rather it also reinforces the idea of an interrelated, interconnected whole. Dynamic Systems Theory has been connected to the issue of language learning in particular, viewing the learner as a subsystem within a larger, nested social system.
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In this view, language development requires constant input of energy and resources, which can be internal (e.g., capability for learning, motivation, etc.) or external (e.g., physical environment, materials in the physical environment) in nature. Given the constant input of energy in an interconnected whole, language development is necessarily nonlinear and inherently variable. What is more, the developing system is influenced by a host of factors, not simply those internal to the linguistic system.

Complexity Theory

A second complex systems approach is Complexity Theory, which also places emphasis on change over time, but as it relates to better understanding the relationship between the parts that make up the whole (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Because the parts of a complex system are constantly changing, the system as a whole is continually changing as well. Nevertheless, this change over time is not so great that the system completely loses its identity. The emergence of stabilities in the system at different periods allows the system as a whole to maintain its identity, regardless of the fact that it is constantly evolving. The most relevant example here is language, which is viewed as continually perceptually changing, while at the same time staying sufficiently stable to be identified as itself (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p. 51).

In her seminal article, Diane Larsen-Freeman (1997) argues that this systems-based approach is especially relevant for second language learning. Specifically, she detailed the parallels between complex systems and second language acquisition, showing how a Dynamic Systems/Complexity Theory perspective could address some of the recurring questions in the field of second language acquisition. Among these parallels she includes dynamicity, complexity, and nonlinearity. Like dynamic, complex systems, the acquisition of a second language can be characterized as dynamic because second language grammars are also continually developing. Likewise, second language systems are complex (i.e., not explainable by a single or few causative factors or variables) and they are nonlinear (i.e., mastery of second language linguistic items and concepts is not step by step). She notes that the precise mechanisms of second language acquisition remain unclear in many models, approaches, and theories of second language acquisition. Additionally, they fail to account for the complexity of second language output that is observed in second language research. As an alternative, Larsen-Freeman (1997) offers a Dynamic Systems Theory/Complexity Theory approach to second language acquisition because of its potential for the examination of development in complex systems over time, and also for the conceptualization of the adaptation and variability evident in such systems.

Since Larsen-Freeman’s initial proposal, the application of systems-based theories has received growing attention and the theory has been further
developed to account for second language learning. Two empirical studies that provide strong models for framing second language research within this perspective are Larsen-Freeman (2006) and Verspoor, Lowie, and van Dijk (2008). The study conducted by Larsen-Freeman employs a dynamical description methodology (defined in the next section of this chapter) to examine the interlanguage patterns of five Chinese-speaking learners of English. She provides specific examples to support her observation of recurring patterns of second language use and the nonlinearity of second language development. Verspoor, Lowie, and van Dijk’s (2008) study similarly examines variability in the second language performance of one Dutch-speaking learner of English. Using quantitative measures of complexity and lexical creativity of eighteen academic compositions collected over three years, the researchers were able to demonstrate the extent of variability encountered. Additionally, they were able to describe how the relative importance of variables associated with that variability may change over time. In both cases, the authors demonstrated how a Dynamic Systems approach accounted for issues that were not previously encompassed in earlier work.

Research Methods and Systems-Based Theories

Like the usage-based approaches described earlier, the second language data that researchers seek to describe may be elicited in a variety of ways, and does not tend to differ from other approaches to second language acquisition. What does differ, however, are the approaches to modeling and/or describing the patterns in those data. Citing van Gelder and Port (1995), Larsen-Freeman (2011) identifies three methodological approaches to the study of complex, dynamic systems. These include quantitative modeling, qualitative modeling, and dynamical description. Quantitative modeling, as the name suggests, involves numbers and uses mathematics to study complex systems. This approach is not the most feasible for the study of human systems, which consist of variables that cannot necessarily be expressed numerically. Qualitative modeling instead may provide a more suitable alternative to the study of human complex systems, as computers can be used to simulate these systems and run multiple iterations. Nevertheless, these are ways of modeling dynamic systems in the real world and, thus, they represent an approximation rather than a precise account of real world data. The third method, dynamical description, provides a means of conceptualizing certain aspects or processes of dynamic systems in the real world. Using the tools provided by ethnography (e.g., observation and detailed description), insight into the dynamic, interconnected nature of a particular language learning context can be achieved. For example, a detailed, longitudinal description of the classroom-learning context allows us to understand the dynamic and interconnected nature of
the parts of this particular system. Consequently, this method can lead to a better understanding of the current state or future potential of a system. It cannot, however, account for an end state or for an absolute account of a given system.

**SUMMARY**

The goal of this chapter has been to provide an overview of some of the most well-known, and also most recent, cognitive approaches to the study of language. While these theories prioritize the role of cognition in language and language learning, the manner in which cognition is viewed can differ greatly. A summary of the approaches covered in this chapter is provided in Table 5.6 below. Similar to the summary table in Chapter Four, for each approach we define language learning, identify cognitive aspects addressed, and indicate whether research on sociolinguistic competence exists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model/theory/approach</th>
<th>Second language learning</th>
<th>“Cognitive” aspects considered</th>
<th>Sociolinguistic competence examined?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimality Theory</td>
<td>Change ranking of constraints to best match constraint ranking of second language</td>
<td>Components of mental grammars, including GEN, EVAL, CON, and the mental lexicon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectionism</td>
<td>Adjustment of connection weights between units in a distributed, neural network (already finely tuned for the first language); process-oriented</td>
<td>Patterns of connectivity between units in a neural network; associative learning mechanisms</td>
<td>No relevant research to date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Continued)*
A central contribution of the approaches reviewed in this chapter is the place they give to cognition in researching language and language learning. Unlike many of the approaches covered in the previous chapter, this focus on cognition allows researchers of these theories to examine linguistic aspects of language and its acquisition. For example, Optimality Theory is able to account for the role of linguistic universals (the same constraints in every language), cross-linguistic differences (different rankings of constraints), and the ease of acquisition (a simple constraint demotion process). In contrast, Connectionism and usage-based approaches model linguistic knowledge as associations between form and meaning. Though quite different, each incorporates acquisition and storage of linguistic knowledge in their account. One advantage of these later, emergentist approaches is that they also account for changes in native and nonnative grammars that result from additional experiences. In other words, the dynamic view of the linguistic system provides a clearly articulated avenue for the inclusion of social factors in the linguistic model. Consequently, we see several options for modeling sociolinguistic competence, the myriad factors involved in language variation, and, most especially, the manner in which this competence develops over time.

Among the approaches covered in the last two chapters, there is, in general, less research available in the field of second language acquisition conducted.
under these frameworks. Thus, while we can see the promise in each, only Optimality Theory and Connectionism have witnessed at least a decade of research on second language use within that model. The other models presented in the present chapter, however, do a much better job of modeling language as a socially situated phenomenon. Fortunately, the newer, usage-based and complex systems approaches are currently the object of much discussion and debate (cf. colloquia and plenaries given in 2013 and 2014 at important second language research conferences such as American Association of Applied Linguistics, Second Language Research Forum, etc.) and we anticipate tremendous growth in these areas in the next decade. As we turn our attention to variationist models in the following chapter, we will be reminded that it is likely that these fields are not only compatible but will be an area for extensive cross-disciplinary investigation in the future.

READING BEYOND THE TEXT


COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION

A. Comprehension
1. What are the four basic mechanisms that operate in Optimality Theory?
2. What constraints are included in Lombardi (2003)? How do constraint rankings need to be ordered to result in production of /θ/ as [s]? As [t]?
3. What does Connectionism attempt to demonstrate? What processes are included?
4. What are distributed representations and neural networks?
5. What does MacWhinney’s Unified (Competition) Model posit? What role do cues play within that model?
6. What do Sokolik and Smith (1992) conclude?
7. What do Ellis and Schmidt (1997) conclude about the role of rules in second language learning?
8. What is the focus of usage-based models? What mechanisms are included in such models?
9. What is the difference between token frequency and type frequency? What three effects are associated with token frequency?
10. What is grammaticalization?
11. According to Blom, Paradis, and Sorenson Duncan (2012), why do learners drop /ɪz/ more often than other allomorphs of –s?
12. In systems-based theories, what are five features of a complex system?
13. How do quantitative and qualitative modeling differ?

B. Application

1. What are some difficulties associated with Optimality Theory, Connectionism, usage-based models, and systems-based theories? What strengths do they offer? Which do you find the most compelling? Why? Can you offer evidence from your own language learning?
2. Two learners of English, Nikolai and Hiro, pronounce the word thin very differently. Nikolai produces [t]in, while Hiro’s pronunciation is [s]in. How would Lombardi (2003) use Optimality Theory to explain these differences?
3. In English, that-deletion is a common process, such that the phrase ‘I think that we should go’ is often produced as ‘I think we should go’. On the other hand, ‘I hypothesize that we should go’ is less likely to be produced as ‘I hypothesize we should go’. How would researchers within the usage-based model account for this difference?
4. In answering one of the application questions in the previous chapter, you transcribed part of one of your favorite movie scenes. Imagine that when you were writing the transcription, you accidentally wrote the word ‘goal’ instead of ‘objective’, even though these words sound nothing alike. How would Bybee and other researchers in usage-based models explain this?
5. Systems-based theorists hold that language learners have a grammar that is systematic but also ever-changing. Think of non-target-like examples of language that you have used in a second language. What word or structure did you produce? What word or structure would a
native speaker be more likely to use in that context? How did your use demonstrate that you had some rule in place? Since language learning is dynamic, there is a good chance that now you no longer would use that word or structure in the same context. What are some other examples of changes that you have noticed in your second language?

NOTES

1. Variable constraint ranking is characteristic of stochastic accounts of Optimality Theory (cf. Boersma & Hayes, 2001), as well as the Maximum Entropy Model (cf. Goldwater & Johnson, 2003; Hayes & Wilson, 2008). The reader is directed to these works for further reading.

2. All transcriptions belong to the Multimedia Adult Learner English Corpus (MALEC), a large-scale corpus compiled and maintained by The National Labsite for Adult ESOL.

3. There are ten authors on this article: Clay Becker, Richard Blythe, Joan Bybee, Morten H. Christiansen, William Croft, Nick C. Ellis, John Holland, Jinyun Ke, Diane Larsen-Freeman, and Tom Schoenemann.
Variationist Approaches to the Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Competence

We will see that unlike the previous two chapters, which reviewed several different approaches all labeled under the same, larger umbrella term (social or cognitive approaches), the present chapter focuses on one particular approach: the Variationist Approach. Variationist approaches are compatible with several of the theories advanced in Chapters Four and Five. For example, variationist theory affords a role for social factors, either those describing the individual (e.g., age or level of education) or the setting in which the individual uses language (e.g., abroad vs. at home). In addition, because it models the patterns in language itself, rather than finding its roots in a particular conceptualization of how the mind works, this approach is compatible with several of the emergentist theories described in Chapter Five. Thus, this final chapter on approaches to second language variation, in our view, represents a viable bridge between the range of theories outlined in the two preceding chapters and, consequently, will receive greater attention throughout the remainder of this volume.

The Variationist Approach to the study of language has its origins in the broader field of sociolinguistics. To be clear, there are many approaches to the study of language variation and change that tend to fall under the umbrella term “sociolinguistics” (Preston, 2004). Examples include quantitative or variationist sociolinguistics, ethnography of speaking, interactionist conversation analysis, social psychology of language, and sociology of language, to name but a few. Nevertheless, as the chapter’s title suggests, we will limit our discussion to variationist or quantitative sociolinguistic approaches to the study of second language variation. Traditionally, this approach sought to identify the internal (i.e., linguistic) and external (i.e., social) factors influencing variability in language.1

Unlike the early foundational chapters on language variation (Chapters Two and Three), the present chapter addresses the specific models followed by variationist-oriented second language researchers, with a focus on probabilistic
models of language variation (e.g., Preston, 2000, 2004). After introducing these models, we discuss the tools for collecting and analyzing data and the factors most commonly examined in this area of research. Once these preliminaries are established, we provide an overview of how models of second language variation were initially conceptualized and gradually modified over time. We conclude with a critical analysis of variationist approaches and their compatibility with other models that attempt to account for second language variation.

**PROBABILISTIC MODELS OF VARIATION**

Probabilistic models of variation have their origins in the subfield of sociolinguistics known as variationist or quantitative sociolinguistics. This subfield was developed to examine the internal and external factors influencing the use of two or more forms conveying the same meaning in discourse. The way in which variationist sociolinguists go about examining these factors gives the subfield its name—researchers provide a quantitative model of the linguistic variation under study. Nevertheless, this model does not simply provide a count of how often one variant is used in comparison with others. Instead, it aims to uncover the nature of the distribution of use of each variant, using quantitative terms to identify the factors that influence the distribution of a particular linguistic form in variation with other “equal” variants. In other words, these models assess the frequency of use of a form and the linguistic and social constraints on that use.

But how are these quantitative models probabilistic rather than merely descriptive? The wealth of previous research employing variationist approaches to language variation has provided overwhelming support for the assertion that selection among multiple forms can be predicted through a careful examination of the interplay of internal and external factors influencing that selection. That is, language users tend to select for use (arguably consciously and/or unconsciously) one of two or more forms when certain other factors, related to the linguistic or social context of the utterance, are present. Thus, a pattern is established for selection of a given form. This pattern serves as the basis for future form selection, a process that will be influenced by the same interplay of internal and external factors. This manner of characterizing or modeling language variation is probabilistic in that it attempts to uncover the circumstances under which (i.e., which factors are present) a user is likely to select a particular form. Thus, the study of patterns of use under this framework describes a dataset and also serves to predict future patterns of use of the same forms under the same conditions.

To illustrate these ideas, let’s take the case of final stop deletion in English, a variable linguistic phenomenon that has been examined for a variety of English language dialects (e.g., Guy [1980, 1991a, 1991b] for standard
American English in Philadelphia and New York City; Labov, Cohen, Robbins, & Lewis [1968] for African American English in New York City; Santa Ana [1992] for Chicano English in Los Angeles; etc.). Variable deletion of /t/ and /d/ in word final position (e.g., ‘mist’, ‘missed’) across dialects is influenced by several internal or linguistic factors, including the type of segment following it (greater deletion when a consonant follows), the type of segment preceding it (greater deletion when a segment with similar features precedes), and the grammatical status of –t or –d (greater deletion in monomorphemic words like ‘mist’). Research on this topic shows that deletion of –t and –d in pre-consonantal position does not occur 100% of the time. Similarly, a 100% or categorical deletion rate will not be observed for all regular past tense (–ed) verbs. Rather, these factors conspire to lead to a greater likelihood of –t/d deletion when they are present. This allows researchers to examine a context for the presence or absence of each relevant factor and know the probability of occurrence of a given form. Variationist sociolinguists have developed tools to talk about this likelihood of occurrence in a quantitatively sophisticated manner, and this is the topic to which we now turn.

TOOLS OF ELICITATION AND ANALYSIS

As was noted in Chapter Two, sociolinguists have developed special tools for analysis of linguistic data and also specific methods for eliciting such data from speakers of a given community. We review these briefly with a focus on how this can be used in the context of second language learners. Beginning with the first variationist sociolinguistic studies conducted by William Labov (e.g., 1963, 1966, 1972a), a broad range of elicitation methods have been developed and continue to be used to capture distinct facets of linguistic variation. One of the most popular elicitation methods is the interview, conducted one on one with the researcher or in a group setting. Interviews are popular because they provide the opportunity for elicitation of a particularly large number of tokens, especially for analyses of variation in the sound system. Additionally, the interview is believed to create an opportunity for spontaneous, vernacular (informal) speech. In fact, the sociolinguistic interview is a specific type of interview developed to further maximize the degree to which the interaction elicits unmonitored production. The sociolinguistic interview arose from the need to capture different levels of use of a linguistic form, ideally from the most casual (e.g., spontaneous conversation during interview) to the most careful (e.g., reading a word list of minimal pairs) production of the variable under study. However, Labov (1972b) noted that even in the most casual setting, there is still a tendency to employ careful speech due to the presence of the researcher, a phenomenon he termed the Observer’s Paradox (see Chapter Two). In an
effort to minimize this effect, the sociolinguistic interview, unlike other types of interviews, includes topics of conversation that are likely to be emotionally charged, personal, and important enough to the speaker that the focus is on the content expressed rather than the manner of expression. For example, speakers might be asked to relate a time during which they felt they came close to death or to recount childhood memories or stories. The hope is that a speaker will “get lost” in the content of the conversation and focus to a lesser degree on the presence of the interviewer. In the context of second language learners, this same style of interview has been employed, often with a shift in the topics believed to elicit the most involved speech. Thus, for study abroad learners, such narratives might involve moments of frustration in the host country. Despite this difference, the intention remains the same for second language interviewees: to elicit informal, unmonitored language production.

In addition to developing particular interview questions geared toward minimizing the impact of the researcher, Labov (1972b) also addressed this phenomenon in his famous department store study examining the production of post-vocalic /r/ among store employees holding distinct positions (e.g., stock boy, sales associate) and of distinct racial background (e.g., African American, Caucasian) (see Chapter Two for details). To briefly review, Labov’s research team approached store employees to make a store-related inquiry that elicited the phrase ‘fourth floor’. The researchers also elicited a repetition of the phrase so that a careful production could be observed. After departing from the informant, the researcher recorded impressionistically how the /r/ was produced in each word of the phrase. Thus, in addition to the sociolinguistic interview, the “quick survey” represents another method of data elicitation that has been used in sociolinguistic studies. This sort of elicitation task may be slightly more difficult to employ with second language learners, but the idea behind it has been applied effectively to this context. One such example is found in Schmidt (2014), who sought to examine the degree to which second language learners of Spanish demonstrated voicing assimilation between word final /s/ and the following consonant. The elicitation task used by Schmidt required participants to state the number of items various individuals were bringing to a party. A series of pictures with a person (name indicated below the image) was shown with a sketch of a specific number of items. When there were two of a given item, the phrase elicited was something along the lines of Ernesto vende dos vestidos ‘Ernest sells two dresses’. In some items the object name began with a voiced consonant and in others it did not. Thus, speakers produced the target contexts but the focus of their message was content-based. Clearly this is not the same as an impersonal encounter in a department store, but the short utterance produced with a focus on meaning, rather than on form, is incorporated into research on second languages as well.
A final method employed in second language research on variation is the written contextualized task. This task is an important complement to the sociolinguistic interview because it allows the researcher to examine the process of form selection by many speakers in identical contexts. Using this elicitation method, a researcher can select a particular subset of relevant linguistic variables to manipulate, while holding the others constant. If we return to the earlier example of –t/d deletion, we might opt to manipulate the grammatical category of each token as well as the preceding segment while holding the following segment constant. Thus, an instrument of this type ensures that every participant is exposed to every context of interest. Additionally, for morphosyntactic variables, where constructs such as the referent of a direct object, the time frame of an event, or other sentence or discourse-level characteristics are important, the researcher is able to ensure that all participants are viewing the situation in the same way. This avoids the difficulty of needing to interpret speaker intentions properly in order to classify the linguistic context. In the case of second language learners, where formal accuracy is not yet achieved, this can be especially challenging (see Chapter Seven and Woolsey, 2008). Although the response format on a written contextualized task can vary, it is not always limited to production of a response to a given context. Instead, oftentimes, these measures elicit a preference from the speaker, thereby allowing speakers to indicate contexts in which more than one option is possible. In other words, the way in which speakers respond may tell the researcher something about their awareness of linguistic variation as well, depending on the goals of the project itself and the way in which the response format is crafted. We will see several examples of this type of task employed in the research reviewed in the next two chapters.2

From methods of data elicitation we now shift our attention to how the data elicited through these methods is modeled quantitatively. The most well-known and commonly used method of quantitative analysis is multivariate regression analysis. Recall that variationist sociolinguists employ a probabilistic model of variation where the likelihood that a form occurs or is selected for use by a speaker can be predicted by analyzing the relationship between the frequency of occurrence of linguistic forms and the interplay of internal and external factors influencing those rates of use. This model can be constructed through a regression analysis, which is a statistical “... technique that allows you to look at a number of explanatory variables and decide which ones have independent power to explain what's going on with the variable you have measured” (Larson-Hall, 2010, p. 176). Here the variable measured refers to the dependent variable—that is, the variable linguistic phenomenon under study (e.g., deletion of word final –t/d). The explanatory variables, on the other hand, are the independent linguistic and social factors believed to be related to use of a given form. In the case of –t/d deletion, these might include the preceding and following segments as well as social variables, such as gender or level of education.
In most cases, variationist sociolinguists have approached the study of variable linguistic phenomena in a binary manner (e.g., word final –t/d is retained or deleted in elicited data). This means that the dependent variable has two categories. In other words, variation is often viewed as the linguistic and socially indexed alternation between two forms (either of equal meaning or fulfilling the same function). Thus, this limitation of the dependent variable to two categories may be related to the nature of the statistical models most frequently employed to model this variation (i.e., the binary logistic regression\(^3\)), rather than an examination of the dataset to determine the range of forms used to fulfill a given function. Nevertheless, we will see later in this chapter, as well as in Chapter Seven, that other statistical options exist that allow for multi-category dependent variables and these have already been applied to second language variation research.

Researchers have used regression analyses in two ways: (1) to determine the extent to which the explanatory variables examined can account for the variance observed in the response variable (or dependent variable), or (2) to establish a predictive model that best accounts for observed variance (Larson-Hall, 2010, pp. 204–205). In either case, a regression analysis uses a plotted set of observations to draw a line demonstrating the relationship among explanatory variables. Figure 6.1 presents a simplified version of these observations in which they are plotted based on two explanatory variables (one on the x-axis and the other on the y-axis). We can see a trend line drawn through the scatterplot where its slope indicates that, in general, the higher the number on the x-axis, the higher the number on the corresponding y-axis. Of course there are exceptions to this tendency, and those tend to be the observations or dots falling farther away from the trend line. This line is established by a mathematical

![FIGURE 6.1 Sample scatterplot with linear trend line](image-url)
formula \( y = \alpha + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \ldots + \text{error} \), where \( \alpha \) is the intercept and \( \beta \) is the slope), which is used for both of the two purposes of regression analyses described above.

The most commonly used statistical software tool by variationist sociolinguists is Goldvarb X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte, & Smith, 2012). This tool has also allowed researchers to conduct multivariate analyses using the same conceptual framework of regression analysis. Instead of explaining variance, however, the quantitative output represents assignment of probability weights to factors (or explanatory variables) entered into the statistical analysis. **Factor weights** indicate how influential each independent variable included in the analysis is in the variation observed for one level or category of the dependent variable (called the **application value**) of the (generally) binary dependent variable. A factor weight above 0.50 indicates that the respective category of the variable favors selection of the application value, while a factor weight below 0.50 indicates that the respective category of the variable does not favor selection of the application value. To provide a concrete example, let’s explore the results reported in Howard, Lemée, and Regan’s (2006) study on Irish learners’ variable \(/l/-deletion in French, which are repeated in Table 6.1.

In order to make sense of the information provided in Table 6.1, we must first understand the application value. In Howard, Lemée, and Regan’s (2006) study of \(/l/-deletion in French by Irish learners, the dependent variable has two categories (i.e., is binary). That is, either learners retained or deleted \(/l/ in production. The researchers chose the deletion of \(/l/ as the application value. Thus, their quantitative results are to be interpreted in relation to \(/l/-deletion (rather than retention). In other words, each independent variable is examined for its influence on \(/l/-deletion and for the categories within each independent variable that favor or disfavor this phenomenon. As we move through the third column of the table from top to bottom, we have bolded those factor weights greater than 0.50 to help the reader to identify, at a glance, which categories of the independent variables entered into the statistical analysis favor \(/l/-deletion, or the application value. Their analysis examines the effects of five independent variables, and the findings of this analysis are summarized in Table 6.2, which identifies the degree and direction of the effects for the categories of each of the independent variables on \(/l/-deletion.

Howard and his colleagues (2006) also reported values for input and log likelihood. **Log likelihood** values are used to determine how well the analysis conducted and resulting model offered by Goldvarb fit the data (the closer to 0 the better). These values are used when comparing models obtained from multiple analyses of the same dataset in order to select the most appropriate one. **Input** refers to how likely it is that the application value occurs. In Howard, Lemée, and Regan’s dataset, therefore, \(/l/-deletion occurs about 26.4% of the time.

As was mentioned earlier, probabilistic models of linguistic variation are generally modeled in the way that is illustrated with the example from Regan,
### TABLE 6.1
Goldvarb results for /l/-deletion in Howard, Lemée, & Regan (2006, adapted from Table 2, p. 14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups and factors</th>
<th>Percent deleted tokens</th>
<th>Factor weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pronoun</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>il</em> impersonal</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>il</em> personal</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ils/elles</em></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>elle</em></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Following phonological segment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowel</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consonant</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preceding phonological segment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowel</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consonant</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pause</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0.521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Following grammatical category</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input = 0.264</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood = -984.607</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 6.2
Summary of findings from Howard, Lemée, & Regan (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Effects found</th>
<th>Factor weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td><em>il</em> impersonal</td>
<td><em>il</em> impersonal and <em>ils/elles</em> favor /l/-deletion</td>
<td>0.632 and 0.520, respectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>il</em> personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>ils/elles</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>elle</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
Howard, and Lemée (2009). That is, in nearly all cases researchers have adjusted the dependent or response variable such that it is expressed in binary terms. Returning to the example of /l/-deletion, this means that data are analyzed for presence or absence of deletion, but no degrees of deletion are reported. In some cases, this is not merely an artifact of the statistical test employed but also of the manner in which it is most appropriate to view a given phenomenon. In others, however, we know that additional categories would be useful. For example, a study of syllable final /s/ in Spanish would do well to account for [s] production relative to both aspiration [h] and complete elision [Ø]. An account of presence or absence of [s] alone would miss important details. In cases where the envelope of variation includes more than two variants, this poses a challenge to models of analysis like the one presented previously and has led to at least two different solutions. The first, and most commonly applied, approach has been to group the individual categories of the dependent variable to accommodate statistical analysis. In the case of /l/-retention, for example, the [s] would be compared to all other variants. Nevertheless, this type of methodological accommodation, while telling us something about the factors that lead to retention of the /s/, may fail to capture the manner in which those same factors favor or disfavor one reduced form or another (e.g., [h] as compared to [Ø]).

Given the importance of statistical modeling for variationist approaches to linguistic variation, it has been essential to identify ways in which models can account for additional categories (or levels) of the dependent variable. This

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Effects found</th>
<th>Factor weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Following phonological segment</td>
<td>Vowel</td>
<td>/l/-deletion is favored when followed by a consonant</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceding phonological segment</td>
<td>Vowel</td>
<td>/l/-deletion is favored when preceded by a vowel or pause</td>
<td>0.524 and 0.521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following grammatical category</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>/l/-deletion is favored when the grammatical category of the following word is a pronoun or other</td>
<td>0.639 and 0.513, respectively</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
area of research is somewhat new, but we cover two examples of how recent research on second language variation has met this challenge to statistical modeling. Perhaps the simplest solution is to employ a regression analysis in a different statistical package that allows for additional categories in the dependent variable. In the case of subject expression, for example, Linford and Geeslin (2013) sought to extend the envelope of variation beyond the comparison between overt and null pronominal subject forms to also include full lexical noun phrases. In their study, based on a written contextualized task, all items included subjects that had been mentioned previously in the discourse and, thus, should have been good contexts for pronominal forms only. Nevertheless, they included three response options (null subject pronoun, overt subject pronoun, and full lexical noun phrase) and found that all three forms were selected regularly by both native and nonnative speakers. Consequently, it was imperative that they employ a statistical test that could adequately model this variation: the relative influence of each independent linguistic and social variable on all three subject forms. To do so, Linford and Geeslin employed multinomial regression analyses that enabled them to examine the patterns of selection for each of the three response options relative to the other two. This same method has been employed in an investigation of future time reference by Gudmestad and Geeslin (2013). In the case of that study, the researchers sought to compare the relative effects of several linguistic and social variables on the selection of three forms, all of which can be used in contexts of future time reference in Spanish (the simple present, the morphological future, and the periphrastic future). Because the multinomial regression uses similar means to model variation as the binary logistic regression, researchers who are accustomed to working with the latter are likely to be able to extend their knowledge to this type of test without tremendous difficulty.

In contrast with the two studies cited above, which employ a different type of regression analysis to model the variation found in their respective datasets, there is one example of research to date that employs a different type of modeling and likely requires a greater degree of statistical knowledge. Nevertheless, for the problem examined, the complexity of the analytical methods is justified by the demands of the phenomenon under investigation. Gudmestad, House, and Geeslin (2013) employed a Bayesian multinomial probit model to examine all forms of Spanish third-person subject expression used by native and highly advanced nonnative language users. The unique advantage of this quantitative model is the ability to examine a non-binary variable. Additionally, the selection among two, three, four, or more variants or levels of a dependent variable is understood as “preference” for a non-baseline variant over the baseline variant. For example, in Gudmestad, House, and Geeslin’s study, the four levels of the dependent variable, third-person subject expression included null subjects, overt personal pronouns, lexical noun
phrases, and other pronouns (i.e., demonstrative, indefinite, and interrogative pronouns). Because each of these was attested in their interview data, it was important to include them all in the analysis. In their model, the “null subjects” variant was selected as the baseline; thus, their findings for personal pronouns, lexical noun phrases, and other pronouns were expressed with regard to preference for these variants over null subjects or vice versa. Another advantage of this model is the ability to account for dependent observations in the dataset. This is an important advantage over regression models, such as those conducted in Goldvarb, because of the assumption of independence of observations. This is even the case for improved versions of Goldvarb, such as random forests (Breiman [2001], as cited by Gudmestad, House, & Geeslin, 2013). To be sure, there are alternatives to this approach, such as models conducted in Rbrul, which can account for dependent observations in the dataset, but these models handle only binary dependent variables (cf. Johnson, 2009). Thus, Gudmestad, House, and Geeslin identified a manner in which the relationship between a multi-category dependent variable and several independent variables could be examined in order to provide new information about native and nonnative patterns of use of third-person subject forms. Despite the heavy technical requirements of this type of analysis, it is likely that future research will continue to foster collaborations between statisticians and linguists because of the added detail this sort of analysis provides.

Before we conclude this section, it is worth addressing the issue of dependent or independent observations in greater depth. Many of the statistical tests regularly employed by linguists, such as chi-square tests or binary regression analyses, assume that there is an independence of observations. Nevertheless, this is rarely the case (Labov’s department store study might be an exception). This is because nearly every analysis of variation includes multiple tokens produced by a single individual. Thus, the tokens produced by that individual cannot be seen as independent from one another. In other words, the most frequently employed practices in linguistics would be frowned upon by those in the field of statistics. While it is important to state that we do not seek to discredit research that employs the current, central mode of analysis, we would like to note that there are recent efforts to overcome this statistical challenge. For example, in her work on requests and complaints in second language Spanish, Kuriscak (2006) employed a multi-level regression model that allowed her to include her participant variables (those that would be true for multiple tokens) in one level of the model and her linguistic variables (those that were true for individual tokens) in a separate level. The resulting statistical analysis was one in which the effect of each of these independent variables could be understood, while at the same time the study maintained the assumption of independence of observations. In more recent
research, linguists have begun to employ a Generalized Estimating Equation test (Hanley, Negassa, & Forrester, 2003; Hardin & Hilbe, 2003). This model accounts for the fact that each individual may also contribute to the variation observed in the dataset. In other words, it does not assume that each token is independent from all others. This method has been used to examine subject expression (Geeslin, Linford, Fafulas, Long, & Díaz-Campos, 2013) as well as the contrast between the present progressive and the simple present (Fafulas, 2012), both for second language learners of Spanish and their native speaker comparison groups. Although analyses of this sort remain somewhat limited, it is likely that we will see a shift toward these more sophisticated statistical models.

**PREDICTIVE FACTORS**

We have discussed the manner in which the effects of independent variables on a given sociolinguistic variant are modeled statistically. Nevertheless, these factors themselves deserve greater consideration. Although a variationist probabilistic model should include several independent variables related to the linguistic context, and these factors are specific to the phenomenon under investigation, there are other factors that have been widely used across studies and may serve to guide second language researchers. These factors generally fall into one of the following three categories: those related to the speaker, those related to the interlocutor, and those related to the speech context. **Factors related to the speaker** have been investigated to the greatest extent and in a variety of ways depending on the speech communities under study. These factors include age, gender, ethnicity, social class, occupation, education, and country of origin, among others (see Chapter Three). We will see that these factors have also been applied to the second language context in a variety of ways. For example, Adamson and Regan (1991) found that the variation between \(-in\) and \(-ing\) among learners of English from Vietnam and Cambodia was influenced by gender; male speakers used the reduced variant with greater frequency than females and, perhaps more interestingly, with greater frequency than their male native speaker counterparts (see also Pica, Holliday, Lewis, Berducci, & Newman, 1991). Nevertheless, the impact of these factors has not generally been as significant as that of the linguistic independent variables (Preston, 2000). This may be related to the fact that learners tend to focus more on local factors, beginning with the word level and then extending to the sentence and eventually to discourse, as a result of basic processing limitations in the second language, but it may also be a reflection of the average participant population in these studies. As we will see in the upcoming chapters, a great deal of research on this topic focuses on college-educated second language learners, and, thus, the diversity of characteristics such as social class
can often be limited in a given participant group (e.g., Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2010; Regan, Howard, & Lemée, 2009).

Factors related to the interlocutor and factors related to the speech context have also received attention in the variationist sociolinguistic literature. For example, Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) examined how one speaker’s speech style (defined as audience accommodation, cf. Bell, 1984; Giles & Powesland, 1975) shifted depending on who she was talking to and what she was talking about with her interlocutor(s). Characteristics of the interlocutor examined by Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) included ethnicity, gender, and relation to the participant (i.e., whether family, friend, or stranger). With regard to topic, the researchers observed differences in the use of zero copula (e.g., ‘they stupid’) and invariant be (e.g., ‘She be happy’) when talking about political topics (lesser use of these features) versus when discussing others’ personal relationships (greater use of these features). Another study examining factors related to the speech context was conducted by Medina-Rivera (1999) on the realization of the Spanish tap /ɾ/ and trill /r/ in word final position by native residents of Caguas, Puerto Rico. Medina-Rivera reported a tendency for use of nonstandard variants in the group conversation settings as compared to an oral presentation. He also observed an effect for discourse type, where nonstandard variants were favored in dialogues and narratives. The application of these factors to the second language setting has generally been subsumed under the umbrella term “task-based variation”. However, some of the effects found are closely related to the characteristics of the interlocutor. For example, the ethnicity of the interviewer (Beebe & Zuengler, 1983) and the degree of cultural empathy shown by the interviewer (Berkowitz, 1989) both correspond to variation in use. Likewise, there is a sub-field of research that has explored how the characteristics of the elicitation tasks themselves are related to variable language production or form selection. For example, Medina-Rivera (2004) extended his research on type and topic of discourse to second learners of Spanish, analyzing interview data from four near-native speakers. His analysis of the copula contrast, the preterit/imperfect contrast, and mood choice showed that in conversations where the topic was family or religion, as well as for narrative and argumentative discourses, accuracy across structures fell. Although Medina-Rivera’s previous research on native speakers had shown that narratives are associated with nonstandard forms whereas argumentation produces the opposite effect (Medina-Rivera, 1999), Medina-Rivera hypothesized that the pressures that make native speakers produce more standard language may impact nonnative speakers differently. The differences found in learner language across tasks have then been explained as a result of differing types of discourse (Cadierno, 2000), differing topics of speech (García-Amaya, 2008, 2012; Liskin-Gasparro, 2000; Medina-Rivera, 2004;
Selinker & Douglas, 1985) or the degree to which discourse is controlled or planned ahead of time (e.g., Ellis, 1999; Ellis & Yuan, 2004). Thus, although most second language studies generally begin with “task” as the primary independent variable, the explanations for the differences found across tasks are often couched in terms of the characteristics of the setting or the interlocutor. These extralinguistic predictive factors examined in variationist research are summarized in Table 6.3.

As we explore research on second language variation, the factors related to the speaker, the interlocutor, and the speech context are likely to be relevant even if their application to the second language context requires modifications in order to be situationally appropriate. Furthermore, these factors are likely best examined using the modeling techniques described earlier in this chapter, rather than in isolation. One final connection the reader might note is that researchers who examine this interaction among native speakers often do so through investigations of style-shifting or stylistic variation (e.g., Bell, 1984; Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991; Tarone, 1978, 1979). What is more, this research may be couched in theories such as Accommodation Theory (see Chapter Four), even though the analysis seeks to analyze variation in the manner described in the present chapter. Thus, we continue to find an important overlap among approaches and also a reminder that the goals and methods of analysis of one approach are often well aligned with those of another.

### TABLE 6.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related to the speaker</th>
<th>Related to the interlocutor</th>
<th>Related to the speech context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Discourse type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to interlocutor</td>
<td>Relationship to speaker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., family, friend, stranger, etc.)</td>
<td>(e.g., family, friend, stranger, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MODELS OF SECOND LANGUAGE VARIATION

Now that we have explored the methods of data elicitation and techniques for modeling linguistic variation developed in variationist sociolinguistics, we turn our attention to the manner in which second language variation has been conceptualized. Models of second language variation generally reflect the influence of two approaches in variationist sociolinguistics. The first is the early Labovian paradigm and the second is the dynamic paradigm (Preston, 1996). From the early Labovian paradigm emerged an approach called the continuous competence model (or the Chameleon Model) (Tarone, 1982, 1988, 1989), which examined the linguistic forms produced by learners in relation to the concept of stylistic variation. Like native speakers, learners' speech was believed to vary as a function of attention. As learners' attention to speech increased, so too did the production of more "prestigious" or more target-like forms. In contrast, as attention to speech decreased, so too did the rates of production of "prestigious" or target-like linguistic forms. This is consistent with early work by Labov (1972b) (see Chapter Two). What emerged then from early second language variation research under this approach were studies that examined variation across elicitation tasks. For example, Dickerson and Dickerson (1977) found systematic differences in the production of English (r) and (z) by Japanese speakers in data elicited through free speech, dialogue reading, and word list reading. Similar effects have since been found for numerous variants, among speakers from many language backgrounds (Adamson & Kovac, 1981; Adamson & Regan, 1991; Bayley & Preston, 1996; Beebe, 1980; Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2008a; Salaberry & López-Ortega, 1998; Weinberger, 1987; Zampini, 1994).

While the influence of style-based variation on first and second language speech remains of interest, we have already seen that the differences across tasks are no longer viewed as a function of differing attention paid to form. This change reflects developments in sociolinguistic theory, such as the recognition that a host of situational factors come to bear on the language we produce (e.g., Bell, 1984). In the second language context, as with the first language context, these factors include those mentioned above, related to the characteristics of the speaker, the interlocutor, and the topic and type of discourse produced. However, unlike the first language context, where research focuses on variable forms (perhaps with differing degrees of associated prestige), in the second language context, some research also focuses on nonnative errors and the degree to which they increase in frequency from one task to another. This has led to an additional stream of research examining the type of linguistic context produced across tasks. For example, Tarone and Parrish (1988) conducted a reanalysis of data collected from 20 learners of English, 10 of whom had Arabic as a first language and 10 of whom had Japanese as
a first language. They identified differences in the types of noun phrases that were elicited through different tasks and the degree to which this was related to variation in accuracy across tasks. Originally, Tarone (1985) found differences in the accuracy with which learners used noun phrases on a grammaticality judgment task, an oral interview, and an oral narration task. By categorizing the noun phrases into four different types, Tarone and Parrish showed that learners produced different quantities of each of the four types on the two oral tasks, even though some types of noun phrases were consistently more frequent than others regardless of the task. In addition, the accuracy rates for each type of noun phrase were different within a single task, and, in some cases, these rates also varied across all three tasks. This early study showed that one key difference between more and less guided tasks was the actual language produced, and a failure to assess these differences prior to assessing overall accuracy changes across tasks ignored a key source of variation. These findings were later applied to variable structures in research by Geeslin (2006) and Geeslin and Gudmestad (2008a), who demonstrated that variable structure use also varies by the type of task. The study by Geeslin and Gudmestad (2008a), in particular, not only demonstrated that task impacts variable use of the copulas ser and estar and the subjunctive or indicative mood in native and second language Spanish, but also that the linguistic factors conditioning use of these variable structures differed by task type. In sum, we note that the importance of task-based variation has not diminished, but there are two primary changes in the way this variation is presently conceptualized. First, just as sociolinguists no longer claim that style-shifting is a simple function of varying degrees of attention to speech, second language researchers who encounter task-based differences have looked beyond attention to explore other characteristics of the task that together might explain the differences found. The second difference, given the findings of Tarone and Parrish (1988), Geeslin (2006), and Geeslin and Gudmestad (2008a), is that task-based differences are no longer believed to be limited to changes in the frequency of use of a given form. Instead, we see evidence that under different conditions, the frequency and/or constraints on use may differ for the same learner. What has not changed, however, is the interest in task-based variation and the importance of employing multiple elicitation tasks in second language research (see also Chapter Seven).

The second theoretical approach that has influenced second language variation research is Wave Theory. In this theory, variation is seen as a linguistic innovation initiated within a particular group of speakers that then spreads outward to other groups of speakers over time. The spread from one group to another typically occurs along some aspect of the social dimension (e.g., age or gender), although it may also occur as a result of geographic proximity. Applying the basic mechanisms of Wave Theory to second language variation,
researchers like Gatbonton (1978) and Huebner (1983) have modeled variation in learner interlanguage as the increase or spread of target-like use of linguistic forms over time. Gatbonton’s (1978) study examined the use of three phonological variables—/ð/, /θ/, and /h/—in the speech of 27 male French Canadians’ use of English to propose a model of how second language learners came to gradually replace incorrect variants of these variables with correct ones. She showed that learners’ use of the variants largely supported the implicational model of gradual diffusion proposed. For example, use of nonnative variants of /ð/ decreased first in the “heaviest” phonetic environment (i.e., after a vowel) and lastly in the “lightest” phonetic environment (i.e., after a voiceless stop). Similarly, Huebner’s (1983) longitudinal study on the acquisition of English is(a) (e.g., But Sunday, Saturday and Sunday, isa stop ‘But as for Sunday, Saturday and Sunday, stop working’, p. 71) by an adult Hmong-Lao bilingual learner revealed how use of this morphosyntactic variable became increasingly target-like, and also how it spread to other functions observed in the target language over time (e.g., from a topic-comment marker, as observed in the previous example, to a copula, as in Pao Xiong isa fifteen dollars, p. 116).

In these earlier studies, the mechanisms of language change (conceptualized as waves through various socially defined groups) were adapted to the second language context. What was not imported, however, was the social dimension of the wave model. Thus, we can see that more recent research, such as Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009), which explores the role of learner gender on linguistic variation, could make use of this sort of modeling, while at the same time representing an important advance over these studies by also accounting for the social nature of linguistic variation.

Thus far, we have presented two approaches to the study of second language variation influenced by variationist sociolinguistics and models of language variation and change. In the first, researchers conceptualized second language variation as the alternation between use of target-like and non-target-like forms shifting along a continuum of formality. Researchers using this first approach pinpoint the external or extralinguistic factors influencing use of target-like and non-target-like forms (e.g., task type), as well as the relative degree of influence of those factors. In the second, researchers examine how learners’ use of target-like variants spread from one (linguistic) context of use to another, as well as how learners’ functional use of linguistic forms increased over time. Both models represent important early attempts to address linguistic variation in the second language context. Nevertheless, these approaches do not address the psycholinguistic underpinnings of variability in second language speech. That is, they do not account for the choice of one variant over another and do not explain the influence of internal and external factors on this choice.

Dennis Preston’s psycholinguistic model of interlanguage variation (2000; see also Preston, 1996, 2002) addresses the psycholinguistic nature of linguistic
variation. In this model, variation in second language is conceptualized in probabilistic terms. Recall that a probabilistic model of variation attempts to uncover the circumstances under which a language user is likely to select a particular form. This same idea is reflected in Preston's model, where the “circumstances” include those linguistic and social factors (chosen by the researcher) that are believed to condition variation in selection among variants of a particular linguistic structure. In addition, the linguistic and social factors under examination often do not carry the same degree of influence on a learner's selection of a particular variant of a linguistic structure. Thus, use of a particular variant is “unfairly” biased by these influences, and Preston describes this to be like flipping a weighted coin:

Imagine that, for a two-way variable, one is equipped with a coin which is flipped before the product appears. . . . When flipped, it is as likely to turn up heads as tails. . . . unfair coins can be (and have been) made. If I add weight to the tails side of a coin and flip it, it is more likely to come up heads; the more weight I add, the greater the probability it will come up heads. (Preston, 1996, p. 33–34, 37)

We can see from Preston's description that the choice of one form over another is likened to tossing a weighted coin. In this analogy, the likelihood or probability that the coin will land on one side versus another depends on how “weighted” each side is. In other words, the likelihood of selecting one form over another depends on the extent to which internal or external factors exert influence on selection of a particular variant. This coin-tossing metaphor model of selection has been applied with success to second language variation. We will also see that it accounts for the findings of several empirical studies on variation in second languages and is compatible with the concepts advanced in several of the sociolinguistic models reviewed in Chapters Four and Five.

Expanding on the coin-tossing metaphor, Preston's (1996) model includes three levels. Each level refers to a type of factor believed to influence the selection of a particular linguistic variant in a probabilistic manner. These factors include social factors (Level I), linguistic factors (Level II), and time (Level III). In what follows, we provide a brief overview of these levels, each exemplified by an empirical study that explores those factors.

**Level I Factors**

Level I factors include those related to the influence of social or, more generally, external factors on variation. The range of social or external factors previously examined is expansive, including characteristics of the learner (e.g., Beebe, 1981; Beebe & Zuengler, 1983; Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005;
Mougeon, Nadasdi, & Rehner, 2010; Pica, Holliday, Lewis, Berducci, & Newman, 1991), characteristics of the speech context (e.g., Selinker & Douglas, 1985), and context of learning (e.g., Rehner, Mougeon, & Nadasdi, 2003; also see Chapter Eight, this volume), to name but a few. Thus, Level I studies are those that focus on the influence of these external factors on the use or selection of a given sociolinguistic variable.

A good example of a Level I study is the work by Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid (2005), who investigated the relationship between learners' ethnic group affiliation and ratings of pronunciation accuracy. Accurate pronunciation was operationalized as “nativelike, nonaccented second language speech or second language speech that contains no first language influences” (p. 489). Their study was conducted in two parts. In the first (based on an earlier study conducted by Gatbonton, 1975), they examined how pronunciation of English by Francophone learners was perceived by their peers in terms of degree of affiliation to the Francophone ethnic group. Twenty-four learners of English listened to and rated native French speakers reading the same passage in English and French. The learners were further subdivided into three groups of eight learners, each based on self-rated measures of ethnic group affiliation: nationalistic listeners, non-nationalistic listeners, and liberal listeners. Although the researchers found no effect for learners' self-rated ethnic group affiliation on their ratings of their peers' speech, they did find that the less accented the speech produced in the second language of their peers, the more learners rated them as “pro-Anglophone.”

In the second part of their study, the researchers sought to determine the extent to which the patterns in the first study held for learners belonging to a different ethnic group. Thus, they investigated perceptions of accented and non-accented second language speech by Chinese learners of English. The participants of their study were 84 native speakers of Mandarin attending one of two universities in Montreal. From these learners, 30 were recorded reading the same passage in English and Chinese. Six of these recordings were chosen to be rated for ethnic affiliation by 84 learners. In this portion of the study, Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid (2005) found that when Chinese learners heard the speakers in English only, they rated the more heavily accented stimuli as “pro-Chinese.” On the other hand, when they listened to the same speakers in Chinese, they rated the moderately accented stimuli as less “pro-Chinese.” This latter finding went against the expectations of the researchers based on the first set of findings, although they discovered that the moderately accented speaker spoke a nonstandard variety of Chinese. Nevertheless, Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid's study as a whole uncovered a relationship between ethnic group affiliation and second language accent. Ethnic group affiliation is one of many Level I factors that
has been examined in second language variation (see summary Table 6.6 for other Level I factors).

Level II Factors

Level II factors include those internal or linguistic factors that influence variation in second languages. Like studies examining Level I factors, research on Level II factors investigates the influence of a wide range of factors on the use or selection of the variants of a given sociolinguistic variable. However, it is not possible to list all of the factors that have been examined in Level II studies precisely because these factors are dependent on the particular linguistic structure under study. Returning to the study described earlier in the present chapter by Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009), the inclusion of the preceding and following segments in the analysis is logical only in relation to the phenomenon of /l/-deletion. Thus, we provide an example of a study of this type, although the factors themselves will not necessarily be generalizable to other studies.

Bayley’s (1996) study on phonological variation observed in the speech of Chinese learners of English incorporates both Level I and Level II factors. Bayley’s goal was to uncover patterns of variable deletion of word final –t/d in the speech of Chinese learners of English. The data were comprised of over 3,000 word final consonant clusters (e.g., –lk and –rk, in words such as ‘walk’ and ‘bark’, respectively) extracted from hour-long sociolinguistic interviews. Each token was coded for several linguistic factors related to the morphosyntactic and phonetic features of the context. These factors are summarized in Table 6.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic factor</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical category of the verb</td>
<td>monomorpheme, semiweak verb, regular participle, or regular preterit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceding segment</td>
<td>liquid, obstruent, or nasal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following segment</td>
<td>vowel, pause, glide, obstruent, or liquid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voicing (C_##)</td>
<td>heterovoicing, homovoicing; with preceding segment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllable stress</td>
<td>stressed, unstressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster length</td>
<td>CC##, CCC##</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to illustrate how each token was coded for these independent linguistic variables, we take the example ‘barked’, produced as [bɑɹkt] in the hypothetical utterance ‘the dog barked all night’. First, one codes for the dependent variable, which is word final –t/d deletion. In this hypothetical production, /t/ is retained, so we will code “0” to indicate “not deleted”. Next, we code for each of the independent linguistic factors. This coding scheme is summarized in Table 6.5.

Bayley’s (1996) analysis was conducted using Varbrul 2 (a regression analysis that supplies factor weights). The analysis showed that of the six linguistic factors considered, four significantly predicted –t/d deletion. Specifically, final –t/d deletion occurred significantly more with regular preterit, a preceding obstruent or nasal, a following liquid or obstruent and glide, and when voicing was the same as the preceding segment. We will see in Chapter Seven that there are multiple examples of this type of study, demonstrating similar effects for morphosyntactic phenomena as well.

**Level III Factors**

The third level, or factor type, described by Preston (1996) is time. Studies that incorporate time in their models of analysis examine how the influence of social and linguistic factors characterizing learner interlanguage variation changes over time. In the first language context, one of the principal goals of sociolinguistic research has been to characterize language change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Summary of coding for ‘barked’ in ‘the dog barked all night’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic factors</th>
<th>Category (Coding)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical category of the verb</td>
<td>regular preterit (–ed ending on regular verb ‘to bark’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceding segment</td>
<td>obstruent ([k])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following segment</td>
<td>vowel (/a/ from ‘all’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voicing (C_##)</td>
<td>homovoicing (goes from voiceless /k/ to voiceless /t/)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllable stress</td>
<td>stressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster length</td>
<td>CCC## (three consonants in the cluster, [a], [k], and [t])</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nevertheless, there are fewer examples of second language studies that include time in the analysis conducted. One exception is that conducted by Tarone and Liu (1995), which examined the use of interrogative structures and other linguistic characteristics (e.g., complexity) of one learner’s utterances over a 26-month period. The learner under study, Bob, was a five-year-old Chinese boy living in Australia during the period of the study. The utterances analyzed in Tarone and Liu’s study came from videotaped interactions of Bob speaking English in the following four contexts: with preschool peers and staff, with his primary school teachers, with primary school peers, and with the researcher (Liu, 1991). Tarone and Liu’s analysis revealed differences in Bob’s utterances by interactional context. For example, Bob produced more complex utterances when speaking with the researcher than when speaking with peers. The researchers also found that Bob initiated more conversations with peers and the researcher, while at the same time responding less to their initiations. Tarone and Liu further related the situationally based variation observed to his interlanguage development of interrogative structures and the rate of that development. The researchers demonstrated that new structures appeared first in interactional contexts where the researcher was involved, followed by contexts involving his peers, and lastly in contexts involving his teacher. These findings led the researchers to suggest that rates of development may be slower in contexts facilitating less interaction—in this case, those interactional contexts involving Bob’s teacher. Not only is this study a good example of an analysis that includes time as a factor, but it has also led to discussion about whether the path of acquisition of certain grammatical structures depends on the speech context.

**Summary of Preston’s (1996) Model**

It will be recalled that Preston (1996) conceptualizes variation in second languages like the toss of a weighted coin. The weight of the coin reflects the influence of several types of factors, each of which conspires to determine the probability that a particular variant will be selected in a particular moment. To review, the Level I factors deal with the social influences on language variation, the Level II factors are related to the linguistic constraints, and, finally, the Level III factors are related to change over time. As stated earlier in the review of Bayley’s (1996) study of –t/d deletion in second language English, the linguistic factors (Level II) are directly related to the structure under examination. In contrast, the Level I and Level III factors are more likely to generalize across learners and learning contexts. To complement the specific examples already provided here, we summarize a broader range of these two types of factors in Table 6.6.
In the current chapter we have reviewed the tools for conducting variationist research and for modeling linguistic variation (both descriptive and predictive) for first and second language users. There are, however, a few additional issues that must be understood prior to continuing our review of research on the second language acquisition of variation in subsequent chapters. These issues involve the nature of variation in second languages and some important distinctions between types of variation. We noted in Chapter One that as early as Corder (1967) researchers working on second languages noticed that language use was systematic. In other words, second languages are rule-governed and independent of the first and the second language grammars, reflecting typological patterns, learning strategies, and the like. Our review of approaches to language variation in the preceding two chapters indicates that “rules” may be conceptualized in a variety of ways, but the basic assumption that second languages develop as a function of a range of influencing factors is compatible with a variety of approaches. In these early studies on second language variation, the variation under consideration was nearly exclusively between a target-like form and a non-target-like form. Ellis (1999) hypothesized that for a short period of time these two forms might even be in free variation, or

| TABLE 6.6 |
| Summary of three levels of Preston’s (1996) model |
| **Level I (social factors)** | **Level II (linguistic factors)** | **Level III (time)** |
| Characteristics of learner (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) | Specific to the linguistic variable under study | Change over time |
| Characteristics of interlocutor (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) | | Relative time of acquisition |
| Context of learning | | Change from above |
| Context of interaction | | Change from below |
| Task | | |
| Topic | | |
variation that is not constrained by social or linguistic factors. This free variation was said to serve the purpose of allowing the learner to introduce new, target-like forms into the grammar and to test hypotheses about the appropriate contexts of use of those forms. As the learner progressed, this free variation gives way to constrained variation, such as that influenced by task, and eventually to use of only the target form.

In addition to free variation, there are two other types of variation that have been examined in the second language context, and this additional distinction is especially important for the remaining chapters. The first type of variation has been referred to as developmental variation (e.g., Adamson & Regan, 1991) or as Type I variation (e.g., Rehner, 2002), and refers to variation between a native-like form and one or more nonnative forms. This type of variation is seen as learners go through the developmental process but disappears once a structure is acquired. A classic example of this type of variation is that between the forms ‘goed’ and ‘went’ in both child and second language English. In the case of all successful learners, the form ‘goed’ disappears over time and the variation dissipates. The second type of variation is known as horizontal (e.g., Adamson & Regan, 1991) or Type II (e.g., Rehner, 2002) variation, and this refers to variation between two or more target-like forms of the type found among adult native speakers of a language. To be sure, this does not mean that both forms share equal prestige or acceptability in formal contexts, but rather it means that both forms exist in variation among native speakers of the language. It is the case that social factors might be relevant to both types of variation, such that gender may play a role in the manner in which a form is acquired, but it is only Type II variation that is relevant for the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. This is because the ability to vary one’s speech in native-like ways refers only to the acquisition of patterns of use that adult native speakers use to reflect individual and situational factors. Thus, while it is certainly the case that the Variationist Approach has been applied to the analysis of developmental (Type I) variation, as we transition to the critical review of empirical studies of the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence, we will necessarily focus on Type II variation.

**EVALUATION OF VARIATIONIST APPROACHES**

The Variationist Approach to language variation allows for an examination of linguistic and social influences on the forms produced or selected for both native and second language users. The wealth of research conducted under this framework has led to highly sophisticated methods of analysis as well as innovation and creativity in the manner in which less monitored, more casual speech has been elicited. Additionally, several variants have been studied so extensively that the Level II factors have been corroborated and operationalized
in increasingly effective ways, such that studies can now begin to assess the degree to which findings are generalizable across speech communities, discourse contexts, and, in some cases, even across languages (Torres-Cacoullos & Travis, in press). One considerable advantage to this approach is the degree to which both linguistic and social factors figure prominently in the analysis. This stands in stark contrast with approaches that focus nearly exclusively on one or the other. A second advantage to this approach is the sophistication with which it describes variable forms in terms of the frequency and manner in which they are used. The accuracy with which actual datasets can be described has led to the ability to develop predictive models to explain patterns of use more globally.

One potential disadvantage to variationist approaches is the sometimes weak connection between models of linguistic data and the conceptualization of how language is acquired, stored, and used from a psycholinguistic or cognitive perspective. In response to this criticism, Preston has developed the coin-tossing metaphor to illustrate precisely how variation might operate from a psycholinguistic perspective. To be sure, there is much to be learned about how the mind operates, but it is inaccurate to say that variationist research has not sought to address this point. What is more, it has been noted by several prominent researchers (Bayley & Preston, 2008; Preston, 1993, 1996, 2000; Tarone, 2005, 2007) that several of the models reviewed in Chapter Five are, in fact, compatible with models of linguistic variation. For example, Connectionism or other usage-based models can easily incorporate “experience” in such a way that social information is connected (cognitively) to linguistic information and stored so that this social information can later come to bear on language use. In sum, it is accurate that there is limited research that models cognitive processes as they relate to linguistic variation, but, despite this, it is not the case that variationist approaches are incompatible with psycholinguistic ones.

Another challenge that variationist researchers working on the second language context, in particular, have faced is maintaining the ability to address long-standing issues such as language transfer or linguistic universals while adapting a new (i.e., the variationist) approach to second languages. One would hesitate to adopt an approach, for example, that did not allow us to examine the influence of the first language on the developing second language grammar, or one that could no longer show stages of acquisition. In response to such challenges, there is now research to demonstrate exactly how these issues can be conceptualized while at the same time recognizing linguistic variation. For example, Preston (1993) demonstrates how a variationist analysis can help us to glean new insights into language transfer and linguistic universals using these tools. One classic example of new insights to existing data sets can be
seen in Berdan's (1996) analysis of the data elicited from Alberto (Schumann, 1978b), an adult learner of English who had been identified as having reached a state of “fossilization” in which he was not able to acquire certain formal properties of the grammar. Berdan’s reanalysis of these data showed that when time (Level III) was integrated into the analysis, there was clear evidence of both variability and development over time. Likewise, Geeslin (2011b) argues that even with a shift from an error analysis to a probabilistic model of variable forms, we can still show stages of acquisition and address issues such as native and near-native differences. We will explore this research in greater depth in the subsequent chapter, and we will see that there are now myriad examples of research demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach for addressing long-standing concerns in the field of second language acquisition.

READING BEYOND THE TEXT


COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION

A. Comprehension

1. Within what larger field did variationist approaches originate?
2. What does it mean to say that variationist sociolinguistics employs probabilistic models of variation?
3. What sort of speech is desired in a sociolinguistic interview?
4. What is the Observer’s Paradox?
5. What does a factor weight above 0.50 indicate? Below 0.50?
6. What are five factors related to the speaker?
7. What predictions does the Chameleon Model make?
8. What does wave theory posit?
10. What factor do Level III studies incorporate?

B. Application

1. According to researchers working on variable /t/ and /d/-deletion (e.g., Guy, 1980), how is it explained that ‘mist’ would be more likely to feature deletion than ‘missed’? Why would ‘I missed John’ suffer more deletion than ‘I missed it’? Why is there more deletion for ‘She shredded it’ than ‘She played it’?

2. What potential biases do you see in studies such as Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid (2005), in which speakers rate other speakers? If you had to rate the speech of someone else, can you think of some factors that might intervene or cause you to rate one speaker more highly than another?

3. In this chapter, studies which integrate the role of change in learner language over time were considered. Locate a paper or homework assignment from a second-language course that you took (or are currently taking). Identify evidence in your writing (or speaking, if you have a recording) that your second language production has changed over time. What has changed?

4. Table 6.1 reports findings on /l/-deletion from Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009). Interpret the factor weights in the table. What do these values mean in terms of deletion? What does the input value mean?

5. Imagine that you have to give a speech tomorrow. What factors would influence the language that you use in your speech? Think about factors related to you (i.e., the speaker), the interlocutor, and the speech context, in addition to other factors that might be relevant.

NOTES

1. This approach to variation is also known at the “first wave” of variationist research and is contrasted with second and third waves that demonstrate increasing focus on the social factors and the social meaning of variation (Eckert, 2012).

2. Although we also explored elicitation methods such as matched guise tests in Chapter Two, these are not described in the present chapter because they are not commonly applied to second language learners (see Ringer-Hilfinger, 2012 for exception).

3. Regression analyses carry a number of assumptions that, once violated, weaken the robustness of statistical findings. For further discussion, refer to Chapter 7 of Larson-Hall’s (2010) A Guide to Doing Statistics in Second Language Research Using SPSS.

4. A second approach also emerged based on Krashen’s (1977) Monitor Model. Like the Chameleon Model, the Monitor Model characterized variation in learner
speech as the production of target-like or non-target-like forms. However, unlike the Chameleon Model, the Monitor Model originates variation in learner speech from learners' access to one of two systems of linguistic knowledge, one explicit or metalinguistic (i.e., learned) and the other implicit (i.e., acquired).

5. We refer the reader to the original article for a more detailed description of speakers and listeners.

6. Preston (1996) has argued that free variation is simply variation for which the proper constraints have not been identified. Nevertheless, this does not constitute a serious conflict because Ellis (1999) is careful to note that this period of free variation is short-lived and characteristic of a particular stage of development.

7. A good example of this is that the large corpus of research on subject forms in Spanish has led to recent research on the influence of the same linguistic constraints on subject expression in English (e.g., Torres-Cacoullos & Travis, in press).
Empirical Research on the Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Competence

In Chapter Six we explored the application of variationist theory to second language acquisition, noting that this empirical approach to the study and analysis of patterns of language use is likely compatible with several of the social and cognitive models reviewed in Chapters Four and Five. In the present chapter we turn our attention to empirical investigations of the development of sociolinguistic competence in second languages conducted under the Variationist framework. This field is still relatively young, but research on this topic has witnessed exciting growth in recent decades, and even in the past few years. We begin our discussion with an overview of important developments in inquiry into second language variation and continue with examples of recent studies of the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. Because sociolinguistic competence often entails the use of linguistic structures that are in variation, rather than absolute categorical grammatical rules, the Variationist Approach provides a mechanism for addressing long-standing issues in the field of second language acquisition without recurrence to an error analysis. In other words, this body of empirical research allows us to continue our discussion of issues like the influence of the first language on the acquisition of the second, the interfaces between different areas of the grammar, and the degree to which native-like patterns of language use can be achieved by very advanced second language users through an assessment of the frequency of use and constraints on the use of a given form, rather than an evaluation of accuracy. Thus, the purpose of the present chapter is to demonstrate how the Variationist Approach has been used to address important concerns in the field of second language acquisition, rather than to provide a complete review of all existing work in this field (for comprehensive reviews, see Bayley & Tarone, 2013; Geeslin, 2011a, 2011b; and Gudmestad, 2013b).
EARLY DEVELOPMENTS IN SECOND LANGUAGE VARIATION

In Chapter Six we explored the manner in which early work investigating variability in learner language was heavily influenced by theory and also by research carried out at the same time within two broader paradigms: the early Labovian paradigm and the dynamic paradigm. The question we did not address was why these particular approaches were influential in the study of second language variation, and perhaps more importantly, why research on second language variation surfaced in the first place. Thus, we begin our account of developments in this sub-field of second language acquisition research by addressing the latter question first. That is, what motivated the emergence of research on variation in second languages? In Corder's revolutionary work (1967; see Chapter One for details), he noted that interlanguages were systematic and that errors were clues to the rule-based system underlying second language use. From this insight, several researchers moved the field forward by demonstrating that interlanguages behave like all natural languages. This meant, for example, that interlanguages are also inherently variable (cf. Dickerson, 1974; Huebner, 1979). These two ideas together, that interlanguage is both systematic and variable, led second language researchers to seek ways in which to describe and explain this variability. Because a central goal of sociolinguistics is to demonstrate how variation in the use of linguistic forms is systematic, the field of sociolinguistics provides models that can be adopted in the second language context. These models of variation appealed to researchers aiming to uncover the systematic nature of second language variation. Thus, second language researchers subsequently adopted and adapted principles, practices, and tools of these models to examine and explain variability in interlanguage. It is within this context that research examining second language variation first emerged and laid the foundation for investigation that continues to the present day.

We will also recall that in Chapter Six we addressed an important distinction between variation that was related to language acquisition (Type I) and variation that involved two or more native-like forms (Type II). This second type of variation, also found in the speech of native speakers of a language, is related to sociolinguistic competence. The earliest studies examining Type II variation focused nearly exclusively on second language learners of French or English. One of the best known studies, which has served as a model for subsequent research, is the work conducted by Adamson and Regan (1991), who investigated the acquisition of variable –ing (e.g., ‘eating’, ‘walking’) by Vietnamese and Cambodian immigrants living in Philadelphia and Washington, DC. The variation between forms of [–ing], realized as either [iŋ] or [ɪŋ] in a variety of linguistic contexts, including gerunds of progressive tenses (e.g., ‘I am eating’, ‘she was eating’, etc.) and noun phrases (e.g., ‘I like swimming’), is
a well-studied sociolinguistic phenomenon. This variable structure has been examined in both American English (e.g., Fischer, 1958; Labov, 1966) and British English dialects (e.g., Houston, 1986; Trudgill, 1974), and shown to be influenced by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors, such as the phonological environment in which it occurs, as well as a speaker’s gender and social class. Adamson and Regan studied how Vietnamese and Cambodian speakers (10 Vietnamese and four Cambodian) varied their use of the two –ing variants. Specifically, they sought to identify the factors that conditioned the use of the variant [ɪn] and to understand how patterns of variation were similar to or different from a native speaker comparison group of 31 Philadelphia residents. Thus, they first showed how the native speakers in their comparison group varied in their production of –ing as [ɪn], noting that their use of the reduced variant was conditioned by grammatical category of the word, the following phonological environment, the speaker’s sex, and speaking style. Their Varbrul 2 analysis (see Chapter Six for overview) showed that [ɪn] was favored in verbs marked for progressive aspect and when the following segment was apical or labial. Regarding the extralinguistic factors, [ɪn] was favored by male speakers and in unmonitored speech styles. In comparison, the Vietnamese and Cambodian speaking learners showed that use of [ɪn] was also favored by a following labial or apical segment. However, unlike the native speaker group, the nonnatives demonstrated a greater likelihood of [ɪn] when the following segment was a velar or palatal segment or a vowel. The results for grammatical category were mediated by proficiency, such that lower level speakers did not produce any tokens of [ɪn], while more proficient speakers produced several instances of [ɪn] across the different grammatical categories encountered in the dataset (e.g., noun, gerund, adjective, future, etc.). Lastly, regarding speaker sex and speech style, the researchers found that males produced more [ɪn] variants than females, showing that the nonnatives appeared to be conforming to native norms for social conditioning of variation. However, while both male and female native speakers use more [ɪn] in unmonitored speech, only the females of the nonnative group used more [ɪn] in unmonitored speech. In contrast, the males demonstrated a greater frequency of [ɪn] use in the monitored style than the unmonitored style. The results of this analysis of sociolinguistic variation in native and learner speech in Philadelphia are summarized in Table 7.1.

There are several reasons that the study by Adamson and Regan (1991) has served as a model for research on second language variation. First, their use of a native speaker comparison group in the same geographic region provides a concrete and appropriate basis for assessing the degree to which their learner group has acquired the sociolinguistic norms of that community. Likewise, their use of variationist methods of analysis allows them to provide a detailed account of the linguistic and social influences on the patterns of use for each
participant group. Finally, their account shows that not only do social factors, such as gender, play a role in the production of second language speech, but also that learners are sensitive to the patterns of variation inherent in native speech and, over time, may acquire the ability to vary their speech in native-like ways.

Since the time of Adamson and Regan’s (1991) study, there has been steady expansion to additional grammatical structures in English as well as other second languages. For example, we saw in Chapter Six that Bayley (1996) analyzed Chinese-speaking learners of English and their acquisition of the variable use of $-t/d$ deletion. Likewise, Adamson, Fonseca-Greber, Kataoka, Scardino, and Takano (1996) extended this approach to the variable use of tense-marking in the narratives of Spanish-speaking learners of English. A characteristic of tense-marking in English narratives is that in foreground clauses (i.e., those that advance the action of the narrative), verbs may be inflected for either the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Native speakers: Factors that favor [ɪn]</th>
<th>Second language speakers: Factors that favor [ɪn]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part of speech</td>
<td>Progressive aspect (0.63)</td>
<td>Lower proficiency learners do not produce this variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Higher proficiency shows production across grammatical categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonetic environment</td>
<td>Following segment is apical (0.61) or labial (0.56)</td>
<td>Following segment is apical (0.52) or labial (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Following segment is velar or palatal segment (0.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Following segment is a vowel (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Males (0.77)</td>
<td>Males produce more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech style</td>
<td>Unmonitored (0.72)</td>
<td>Only females show higher rates in unmonitored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Males show higher rates in monitored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
past tense or the present tense (Kumpf, 1984). This use of the present tense in foreground clauses of narratives is known as the historical present. Based on the findings of previous studies on Vietnamese speakers of English (e.g., Wolfram, 1985; Wolfram, Christian, & Hatfield, 1986), Adamson and his colleagues wanted to know which phonological, lexical, and discourse-level constraints influenced past-tense marking by their Spanish-speaking participants, as well as the impact of length of residence on the patterns of past-tense marking observed. The participants of their study were seven middle school students that had been living in the US for 2 to 14 years (only 2 were US-born). The data for their study were elicited using a sociolinguistic interview, where verbs referring to past events in narratives were extracted and coded for the following factors: verbs and verb classes (e.g., ‘be’, ‘go’, –t/d, preceding segment, following segment, etc.) and clause type (background or foreground). The researchers also coded for gender and proficiency of the speaker, which was defined as a direct function of length of residence (e.g., less than four years = “low proficiency”). The results show higher rates of past-tense marking among the high proficiency group. The analysis of constraints on use revealed that the learners demonstrated more variable marking between present tense and past tense for verbs in foreground clauses, similar to the native-like patterns. The researchers also reported greater rates of –t/d deletion in verbs marked for past tense before a consonant or pause, a finding that had been reported in some varieties of American English but not others. Thus, the research conducted by Adamson and his colleagues added to the growing evidence that second language speakers can acquire sociolinguistic norms of use.

The research on sociolinguistic competence in second language English demonstrates a trajectory of expansion from phonological variable structures to those at the level of discourse. As stated previously, there has also been expansion from second language English to other second languages. For example, there is extensive research on the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation by learners of French in the study abroad setting (e.g., Regan, 1995, 1996), and this work will be reviewed in detail in Chapter Eight, which focuses on the role of study abroad in the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. Likewise, there is a growing body of research on second language Spanish (for a review, see Gudmestad, 2013b) and Chinese (e.g., Li, 2010), and examples of this research will be reviewed below. In the field today we see contemporary examples of the issues explored in these early studies, such as Hansen Edwards’ (2011) study on –t/d deletion by Chinese learners of English, as well as a push to address new developments and long-standing issues in the field of second language acquisition in general, within the Variationist Approach. The remainder of the present chapter is devoted to exploring how some of these issues have been connected to the goal of describing and understanding the second language acquisition of sociolinguistic competence.
Just as the interest in systematic variation in interlanguage drove second language researchers to adopt principles of sociolinguistics in order to account for the constraints on the variability inherent in both first and second languages, there has been a long-standing push to understand not simply the product of second language acquisition, but also the process. In keeping with this effort, early studies of the orders of acquisition of multiple morphemes (e.g., Krashen, Dulay, & Burt, 1982) gave way to accounts of the stages of acquisition of single grammatical structures (e.g., Wode’s 1977 study on negation in English or Van-Patten’s 1987 study of the copula contrast in Spanish). It was argued that the nature of learning a second language is best understood by tracing development over time and through an understanding of how patterns of use come to evolve from one moment to another. In order to do this, researchers must focus on how a structure is used or a function is accomplished, rather than simply whether a learner is using a structure correctly. The degree to which these stages of acquisition appeared to hold across different groups of learners, even those with differing experiences (e.g., naturalistic vs. classroom) and different characteristics (e.g., different first languages) led to some debate about whether these stages of acquisition were, indeed, universal. While some argued that it was only the rate that differed from one group to another, others claimed that the route of acquisition also differed (see discussion in Gass, Behney, & Plonsky, 2013). In fact, we saw in Chapter Six that Tarone and Liu (1995) have argued that the route of acquisition may be dependent on the context such that these routes may differ from one environment to another, even for the same learner. What is apparent is that there is a great deal more to be learned about the nature of second language acquisition and the questions raised may only be answered if we are able to examine how interlanguages change over time. Thus, it has been important for researchers working within the Variationist framework to incorporate new methods of analysis while at the same time maintaining the ability to study acquisition as a process. In this section we review a handful of examples of variationist research that has employed a cross-sectional design and a variationist analysis to chart the path of acquisition. In sum, these studies examine the process of acquiring sociolinguistic competence in a second language.

One of the most comprehensive examples of research on the development of sociolinguistic competence is Sax’s (2003) investigation of American English-speaking learners of French as a second language. She examined the development of stylistic variation through an analysis of how learners at three proficiency levels used three variable structures in role-plays simulating a formal and an informal speech context. The first of the three variable structures was **ne deletion**, or the deletion of the preverbal particle *ne* as shown in Example 7.1.
Rates of deletion of *ne* range from 40% in the formal speech of Parisian speakers to 61% in informal speech (Ashby, 1976). *Ne* deletion in Quebec and Ontario is nearly categorical, occurring 98% of the time in an analysis of Montreal French (Sankoff & Vincent, 1977) and 99% of the time in Poplack's (1989) analysis of speakers from Ottawa. Sociolinguists have shown that *ne* deletion correlates with verb type, clause type, presence or absence of another clitic pronoun (e.g., Armstrong, 2002; Coveney, 1996, 1998; Sandy, 1997; Tennant, 1995), and occurrence in lexicalized phrases (Ashby, 1976, 1981). Additionally, *ne* deletion patterns occur according to age (greater deletion by younger speakers), gender (greater deletion by women), social class, and style (greater deletion occurring in informal speech) (Ashby, 1981). Previous research conducted by Dewaele and Regan (2002) on 27 Dutch learners of French demonstrated that second language learners showed native-like sensitivity to style in their deletion of *ne* in oral interviews, particularly at more advanced levels of proficiency. A noteworthy aspect of Dewaele and Regan's findings for Sax (2003), therefore, is the finding that native-like or Type II variation with *ne* deletion is more likely to be observed among advanced learners.

The second variable structure examined by Sax (2003) is the **alternation between **nous** and **on** in second language French, illustrated in Example 7.2. *Nous* corresponds to 'we' in English, and *on* roughly corresponds to 'one', but it may be used in place of *nous* (as well as other subject pronouns like *tu* 'you').

**EXAMPLE 7.1. Ne deletion**

a. *Je ne mange pas de fruits de mer.* 'I don’t eat seafood’

b. *Je Ø mange pas de fruits de mer.* 'I don’t eat seafood’

**EXAMPLE 7.2. On and nous alternation**

a. *Nous allons à la piscine.* ‘We go to the pool’

b. *On va à la piscine.* ‘One/we/you go to the pool’

Across varieties of French, *nous* is less frequent than *on* (cf. Laberge [1977] for Montreal French; Boutet [1986] and Coveney [2000] for metropolitan French). Previous research investigating the alternation of *nous* and *on* has shown that *nous* is more likely to be used when the referent is specific and restrictive (Boutet, 1986), and it is more frequent among older speakers, women, and the middle class (Laberge, 1977). This sociolinguistic variable is particularly sensitive to speech style such that *nous* is also more frequent in formal speech (e.g., Coveney [2000] for metropolitan French; Deshaies [1986]
for Canadian French). With regard to the linguistic behavior previously demonstrated by second language learners, Dewaele (2002) reported that in oral and written productions elicited from 32 Dutch-speaking learners of French, use of *on* was influenced by more linguistic or internal variables such as morpholexical accuracy rates, presence of *ne* deletion, and use of colloquial lexical items. Nevertheless, interaction in the second language also played a role in the native-like use of *on*.

The third and final variable structure examined in Sax (2003) is /l/-deletion, illustrated in Example 7.3.

### Example 7.3. /l/-deletion in French

| a.  | *il* va         | ‘he goes’       | [il.va] → [i.va] |
| b.  | *il y a*        | ‘there is/are’  | [i.li.ia] → [ija] or [ja] |

Sociolinguistic research has shown that rates of deletion for *il* are very high: 88% in Ashby (1984) and 94% in Laks (1980). Linguistic factors influencing /l/-deletion in French include occurrence in an impersonal phrase (e.g., *il faut* ‘one needs’) or with certain lexical items (e.g., more deletion in masculine personal pronouns *il* and *ils* than feminine *elle* and *elles*). Armstrong (1996) has also reported that rates of deletion are higher for females than for males, making this a good variable structure to examine for effects of style.

The participants in Sax (2003) were 30 female learners of French enrolled in second year, fourth year, or graduate level French courses at a large, Midwestern university. Sax also included four native French-speaking graduate teaching assistants in the department where the learners were enrolled in classes, as well as one postdoctoral fellow from outside of the department but researching at the same institution in order to have a native baseline for comparison. All participants completed two guided role-plays: one in which the participants were interviewed for a job and another in which they meet their new French roommate for the first time. The job interview role-play was designed to simulate a formal speech setting while the roommate meeting scenario was designed to simulate an informal speech situation. Following sociolinguistic research, Sax coded for a range of linguistic and extralinguistic factors, which are exemplified in Table 7.2, and analyzed her data using Varbrul.

Sax (2003) found that the learners used the same range of variants as the native speakers for each of the variables studied, but their distribution of use differed. Variable *ne* deletion demonstrated the greatest range of stylistic variation, followed by /l/-deletion and then the *nous/on* alternation. Sax also found that experience abroad and high proficiency were good predictors of variation for these learners. Sax observed that use of informal variants increased as previous
experience abroad increased. Second, Sax found that the range of stylistic variation increased as previous experience abroad increased, with the exception of use of on. Lastly, the patterns of use of these variants moved toward the native norm, with the exception of on for the intermediate level group. Based on these patterns, Sax proposed that on was the first stylistic marker to emerge, followed by /l/-deletion then ne deletion. Most importantly, she showed that learners can indeed acquire sociolinguistic aspects of second language use, and that the developmental trajectory for sociolinguistic variants is gradual.

The work by Sax (2003) is not the only example of developmental research on sociolinguistic competence in French, but because the other studies largely

---

**TABLE 7.2**

Summary of coding scheme for Sax (2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Factors examined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ne deletion</td>
<td>Following phonological segment (vowel, consonant, yod)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syntactic structure of the verb (e.g., main, auxiliary, copula, modal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lexicalization (i.e., whether or not it occurred in a formula such as je sais pas ‘I don’t know’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-verbal negator (pas or another, such as rien ‘nothing’ or plus ‘more’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject type (pronoun, full noun phrase)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presence of object pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous/on alternation</td>
<td>Specificity and restrictedness (i.e., all members of group are nameable by speaker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/l/-deletion</td>
<td>Following phonological segment (vowel, consonant, yod)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clitic type (personal, impersonal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clitic number (singular, plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject type (personal, impersonal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Il y a ‘there is/are’ versus other expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All tokens</td>
<td>Extralinguistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current class level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time abroad in a French-speaking country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of years of pre-university French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of years of college French and college French courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact with French outside of the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French speaking outside of the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formality of context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
take place in the study abroad context, we will discuss them in greater depth in Chapter Eight. Thus, we now turn to the development of sociolinguistic competence in second language Spanish. The earliest example of this type of research on Spanish is Geeslin (2000), who investigated the development of Spanish copula use in attributive contexts (i.e., with adjectives) by English-speaking learners at four different levels of proficiency in Spanish. In Spanish, many adjectives allow either ser or estar in attributive contexts. This contrast is illustrated in Example 7.4.

**EXAMPLE 7.4.** Copula contrast in Spanish  

a. *Ella es bonita.* ‘She is (ser) pretty’  
   *Ella está bonita.* ‘She looks (estar) pretty’  

b. *El perro es sucio.* ‘The dog is (ser) dirty’  
   *El perro está sucio.* ‘The dog is (estar) dirty’

Unlike the research reviewed in French thus far, the use of this structure is constrained by syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic factors. In order to investigate how the use of the copula contrast developed over time, Geeslin (2000) elicited data from 77 high school learners of Spanish enrolled in four different levels of instruction. Each participant completed a semi-structured interview, a picture description task, and a contextualized grammaticality judgment questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 15 contextualized utterances for which learners were prompted to select the version they preferred from three options: an utterance with ser, one with estar, or a preference for both. Each token was coded for the semantic and pragmatic features listed in Table 7.3.

Geeslin (2000) found the rates of use of estar increased from one level to the next. This finding was especially important because it was consistent with the research on this structure conducted using an error analysis and, thus, demonstrated that the Variationist Approach to data analysis did not lose the important insights of earlier work. In addition, it was shown that some predictors changed from one level to the next, such that the predictive models were qualitatively different for each level. This afforded a mechanism through which development could be characterized. Specifically, the constraint susceptibility to change was significant at the lowest level, and the importance of this constraint weakened over time. In contrast, the frame of reference constraint was not included in the predictive models at lower levels but became a significant predictor of estar use for the higher two levels of proficiency. Taking these findings together, development of the copula contrast in Spanish
was characterized as a decreasing sensitivity to the feature Susceptibility to Change and increasing sensitivity to pragmatic features such as Frame of Reference. More recent work on this topic has benefited from advances in the operationalization of the linguistic constraints included in the analysis, as well as the inclusion of more advanced learners and native speaker participants (see Geeslin [2005] for a critical discussion). Additionally, controlled elicitation instruments, such as the written judgment questionnaire, have evolved to better control the relevant linguistic factors (e.g., Geeslin, 2003) and to refine our conceptualization of particular linguistic constraints (e.g., Woolsey, 2008). Likewise, research has been extended to learners with Portuguese (e.g., Geeslin & Guijarro-Fuentes, 2006) and Chinese (e.g., Cheng, Lu, & Giannakouros, 2008) as a first language.

Research by Gudmestad (2006, 2012) extended variationist research in second language Spanish to the alternation between the subjunctive and the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contextual feature</th>
<th>Distinction denoted by each classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective class</td>
<td>What is the lexical class of the adjective (e.g., physical state)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Does copula choice change adjective meaning completely, slightly, or not at all?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animacy</td>
<td>Is the referent an animate being?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susceptibility to Change</td>
<td>Is the adjective susceptible to change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on Experience</td>
<td>Does the description depend on prior experience with the reference?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directionality</td>
<td>Is the adjective unidirectional (e.g., age), bidirectional (e.g., emotional state), or non-directional (e.g., race)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamicity</td>
<td>Does the underlying verb phrase denote a constant input of energy (e.g., worried)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectivity</td>
<td>Is it the viewpoint of the speaker that the event described is complete or ongoing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame of Reference</td>
<td>Is the referent compared to a class of items or to itself at another point in time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telicity</td>
<td>Does the underlying verb phrase have a natural endpoint?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
indicative. Hers is the first large-scale, cross-sectional analysis of the acquisition of variable mood use in Spanish. Subjunctive mood is marked grammatically primarily in dependent clauses, as exemplified in Example 7.5.

**EXAMPLE 7.5.** Mood contrast in Spanish

a. *Dudo que venga* Marcos a clase hoy. ‘I doubt Marcos is coming to class today’

b. *Espero que nieve* este diciembre. ‘I hope it snows this December’

The use of the subjunctive verb form (e.g., *venga* in 7.5a and *nieve* in 7.5b) is triggered by semantic features of the independent clause (cf. Butt & Benjamin, 2004) to mark meanings such as volition (e.g., *querer que* ‘to want to’) and uncertainty (e.g., *dudar que* ‘to doubt that’). The indicative, on the other hand, is used to mark assertions (e.g., *creer que* ‘to believe that’) and habitual or definite actions.

Use of the subjunctive is nearly categorical in some contexts (e.g., volition) and variable in others (e.g., in expressions of emotion) (Silva-Corvalán, 1994).

The participants of Gudmestad’s (2012) study were 130 English-speaking learners of Spanish enrolled in five levels of instructional levels and a native speaker baseline group in the same university community. All participants completed three tasks. The first task, a monologic role play, presented six scenarios and instructed participants to respond orally to the questions provided to an imaginary listener. The second task, a contextualized clause elicitation task, instructed participants to read aloud a set of interrelated passages and at different moments throughout the narrative to complete a sentence with a phrase of their choosing that fit the context of the story. The third task, a contextualized verb elicitation task, was similar in format to the second task but requested that participants produce a verb that fit the context of the story. Samples of these last two tasks are provided in Examples 7.6 and 7.7. From these three tasks, each context for verbal mood choice was analyzed as a single token. The dependent variable for the analysis was (non)use of a subjunctive form. Each token was also coded for four linguistic variables and two extralinguistic variables, each of which is summarized in Table 7.4.

**EXAMPLE 7.6.** Item from task two (Gudmestad, 2012)

Clara tends to have a hard time picking just one dish off of a menu. She asks Pedro for a recommendation since he eats at the restaurant often. He says:

“Te sugiero que _____________________________”

“I suggest that _____________________________”
EXAMPLE 7.7. Item from task three (Gudmestad, 2012)

Ana knows Barcelona has a lot of tourist attractions and wonders if three days will really be enough for them to visit all of the sites on their list. She adds:

“Dudo que ______________ (hacer) todas las cosas en la lista.”
“I doubt that ______________ (to do) all the things on the list.”

Table 7.4

Summary of coding scheme for Gudmestad (2012, pp. 379–381)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Levels and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form regularity</td>
<td>Regular (e.g., bailar ‘to dance’, bailo ‘I speak’, bailas ‘you speak’, baila ‘he/she speaks’, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irregular (e.g., servir ‘to serve’, sirvo ‘I serve’, sirvió ‘he/she served’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form-specific irregular (e.g., venir ‘to come’, vengo ‘I come’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic category</td>
<td>Volition (i.e., desire, hope; e.g., querer que ‘to want to’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comment (i.e., emotion, evaluation; e.g., gustar que ‘to like that’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uncertainty (i.e., doubt; e.g., dudar que ‘to doubt that’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temporality (i.e., with adverbial conjunctions; e.g., cuando ‘when’, tan pronto como ‘as soon as’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assertion (i.e., certainty; e.g., saber que ‘to know that’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time reference</td>
<td>Past-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Future-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypotheticality</td>
<td>Non-hypothetical (e.g., Los estudiantes asisten a clase ‘The students attend class’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-past hypothetical (Si los estudiantes asisten a clase, sacan buenas notas ‘If students attend class they get good grades’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Past hypothetical (Si los estudiantes asistieran a clase sacaran buenas notas ‘If the students had attended class they would have gotten good grades’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extralinguistic variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant group</td>
<td>Learner group (Level 1–Level 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Monologic role-play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contextualized clause elicitation task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contextualized verb elicitation task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In her analysis of the frequency of use of subjunctive forms, Gudmestad (2012) found a nonlinear increase in the use of subjunctive forms as learners’ proficiency in Spanish increased (from 4.1% at Level 1 to 53.8% at Level 5, with a lower frequency of use at Level 4 than Level 3). The analysis of the constraints on use for each level showed development across proficiency levels. At Level 1, none of the linguistic factors were statistically significant predictors of use. At Level 2, semantic category was the only significant predictor of use, and this variable remained significant through Level 5. At Level 3, learners have added Time Reference and Hypotheticality, so that by Level 4 and 5 all of the factors examined in the statistical model are identified as constraints on the use of subjunctive forms. This finding mirrors the general patterns of use for native speakers. There were, however, subtle differences between the upper level learners and the native speakers. For instance, the variable Time Reference was a significant predictor of mood use for Levels 3 through 5, but only the Level 5 learners demonstrated native-like patterns of use across all three categories of this variable. These findings serve to demonstrate that frequency and constraints on use provide information about second language development. What is more, by examining the categories of each independent variable we further see that the patterns of distribution across the categories of that variable provide additional detail about the path of development. Gudmestad’s work provides additional evidence that second language learners can come to vary their speech in native-like ways; at the same time, it contributes the first large-scale, cross-sectional study of the subjunctive in second language Spanish. Although the subjunctive has been studied extensively (see Collentine [2013] for review), Gudmestad’s (2012) study was the first to approach this structure using a variationist analysis. Since this large-scale study, research on variable mood use has expanded to include an analysis of the second language development of tense-aspect distinctions within the subjunctive mood (Gudmestad, 2013a) and an exploration of how second language mood use relates to issues of vocabulary and frequency (Gudmestad, in press). The Variationist Approach has also been adopted to address interpretation of subjunctive forms (Kanwit & Geeslin, 2014).

Killam’s (2011) examination of differential object marking in Spanish by English-speaking learners represents another important extension of this body of research. Differential object marking, another variable linguistic phenomenon in Spanish, refers to the variable marking of direct objects with the accusative marker *a*. This is illustrated in Example 7.8, where 7.8c and 7.8d represent variable contexts for *a*.

The examples in 7.8 show that some direct objects are marked with the accusative *a* (e.g., *los niños*), some are not (e.g., *los edificios*), and others are variably marked (e.g., *Buenos Aires*). Direct object marking has been shown to be influenced by an array of linguistic factors, such as definiteness, animacy,
EXAMPLE 7.8. Object marking in Spanish

a. *No veo a los niños.* ‘I don’t see the children’

b. *No veo los edificios.* ‘I don’t see the buildings’

c. *Visité Buenos Aires el verano pasado.* ‘I visited Buenos Aires last summer’

d. *Visité a Buenos Aires el verano pasado.* ‘I visited Buenos Aires last summer’

and topicality (cf. Balasch, 2011), and it also demonstrates variation by dialectal region (cf. Schwenter, 2006; Tippets & Schwenter, 2007).

Killam’s (2011) participants were 102 English-speaking learners of Spanish and 22 native speakers of Spanish who resided in the same community as the learners. The learners were further divided into four groups based on the instructional level in which they were enrolled: Level 1 (N = 28), Level 2 (N = 28), Level 3 (N = 22), and Level 4 (N = 24). In addition to a background questionnaire and proficiency test, all participants completed three tasks. The first, an oral picture description task, presented participants with a series of images depicting an event on a computer screen and asked them to describe what had happened using a guided prompt. The response prompt was structured in such a way as to elicit an utterance ending in an animate direct object, as demonstrated in Example 7.9.

The second task, a written contextualized task, presented participants with items contextualized in a story. Each item provided a pair of sentences and, upon arriving at each sentence pair, participants were instructed to rate their preference for one sentence over the other (or indicate equal preference), as demonstrated in Example 7.10.

The final task, a word order perception task, instructed participants to choose the picture (among four picture options) that matched the sentence they heard. The target sentences were manipulated to topicalize the direct object—that is, place it in sentence initial position, as demonstrated in Example 7.11. Killam (2011) used this task to determine whether perceived word order played a role in the acquisition of direct object marking.

EXAMPLE 7.9. Oral picture description task (Killam, 2011)

*Guillermo besó __________.* ‘Guillermo kissed __________.’
Killam coded data elicited from the first two tasks for three linguistic variables. The data elicited from the third task were coded for two different independent linguistic factors. These coding schemes are detailed in Table 7.5.

Killam’s (2011) analysis showed that on both the oral picture description task and the written contextualized task, overt object marking increased as learner level increased. In fact, on the written task Level 1 learners were as likely to prefer non-marking to marking of human direct objects with a. With regard to the linguistic factors constraining direct object marking, definiteness was a significant factor for each learner level with slight differences by task. For the oral task, Killam found that learners were more likely to mark objects that were “more definite” on the definiteness continuum (e.g., pronouns and proper names), and this likelihood increased as learner level increased. He encountered the same tendency on the written contextualized task, with the exception that the Level 2 model included number as a significant factor and the Level 4 model included kinesis as a significant factor. It was only on the

---

**EXAMPLE 7.10.** Written contextualized task item (Killam, 2011)

*Juan se quedaba inmóvil, acostado en la cama, mirando una mosca que bailaba entre las aspas del ventilador.* ‘Juan remained motionless, lying on the bed, watching a fly that danced between the blades of the fan’

A. *Su esposa y él esperaban una llamada de la policía.*
   ‘His wife and he waited a call from the police’

B. *Su esposa y él esperaban por una llamada de la policía.*
   ‘His wife and he waited for a call from the police’

---

**EXAMPLE 7.11.** Object topicalization in Spanish

*Juan vio a la mujer.* ‘Juan saw the woman’ (typical subject-verb-direct object)

*A la mujer la vio Juan.* ‘The woman: Juan saw her’ (topicalized direct object)
Table 7.5
Summary of coding scheme in Killam (2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Categories and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral picture description task and written contextualized task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definiteness</td>
<td>Pronoun (e.g., él, ella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proper name (e.g., Silvia, Raquel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definite common noun (e.g., has already been mentioned in discourse; preceded by definite article as in <em>el libro</em> ‘the book’, possessive adjective as in <em>mi libro</em> ‘my book’, or demonstrative adjective as in <em>este libro</em> ‘this book’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific indefinite common noun (i.e., indicative verb in subordinate adjectival class; e.g., <em>Juan vio</em> (a) <em>un hombre que llevaba una chaqueta negra</em> ‘Juan saw a man that wore a black jacket’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonspecific indefinite common noun (e.g., common noun not modified in any way, or preceded by indefinite article, as in <em>un libro</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinesis</td>
<td>High (i.e., direct object physically affected by sentential subject; e.g., <em>matar</em> ‘to kill’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low (i.e., direct object not physically affected by sentential subject; e.g., <em>encontrar</em> ‘to meet’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Singular direct object (e.g., <em>Veo al niño</em> ‘I see the boy’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural direct object (e.g., <em>Veo a los niños</em> ‘I see the children’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word order perception task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of <em>a</em> on Oral Picture Description Task</td>
<td><em>a</em> is used at least once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>a</em> is not used at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity</td>
<td>Number of subject and object is same (e.g., <em>Veo al niño</em>, both are singular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of subject and object is different (e.g., <em>Veo a los niños</em>, subject is singular and object is plural)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

written task that the Level 4 learners most closely approximated the performance observed with native speakers, not only in the inclusion of kinesis as a significant predictive factor, but also in distinguishing object marking by nonspecific indefinite nouns and all other levels of the definiteness variable with the exception of specific indefinites. Although Killam did not find a notable relationship between direct object marking and word order (as measured...
by the word order perception task), his study does show that development of
variable object marking does approximate native-like norms. Further, acquisi-
tion of this variable morphosyntactic structure can be best characterized by
increasing the frequency of overtly marked direct objects, and then adjusting
the linguistic constraints on use to include kinesis and distinguishing among
the levels of definiteness in such a way that pronouns, proper names, and defi-
nite common nouns are marked significantly more than specific indefinites,
which are in turn marked significantly more than nonspecific indefinites.

In Chapter Six we mentioned Gudmestad and Geeslin (2013) as an example
of research that employs a multinomial logistic regression in order to account
for a three-category dependent variable, but this study also shows develop-
ment across levels of proficiency and, thus, is relevant to the present discussion.
The focus of that study was the variable use of three forms used to indicate
future events: the periphrastic future, the morphological future, and the pres-
ent indicative (see Chapter Three for Wagner and Sankoff’s [2011] work on
the same phenomenon in native French). In Spanish, variation among these
forms has been linked to the distance of the event in the future, the presence of
a lexical temporal indicator, the certainty of the event, the type of clause, and
also the person and number of the verb (Blas Arroyo, 2008; Gutiérrez, 1995;
Orozco, 2005, 2007; Sedano, 1994). Gudmestad and Geeslin designed a written
contextualized task to manipulate the first three of these linguistic constraints
while holding the others constant across items. Their participants were 151
English-speaking learners of Spanish enrolled in five levels of instruction, as
well as 22 native speakers of Spanish from a variety of countries of origin, all
residing in the same US community. Results showed that learners gradually
increased their use of the periphrastic future while decreasing the use of the
other two forms, although not in a purely linear fashion. The highest level
group was seen to overshoot the native speaker norms for use of the morpho-
logical future, using this at much lower rates. The multinomial logistic regres-
sion, which compares each category of the dependent variable against the
others, showed that certainty appears to constrain the selection of future time
forms prior to the other two variables and that the presence of a lexical tem-
poral indicator is the last to demonstrate influence on form selection. Another
interesting finding was that development is also seen as the adjustment of the
rates of selection across each of the categories of the temporal distance vari-
able such that even when this constraint becomes a significant predictor of
form selection, the distribution takes several more years to acquire. Thus, the
work by Gudmestad and Geeslin illustrates innovations in the methods of
analysis while at the same time contributing to our general knowledge of the
acquisition of second language sociolinguistic competence.

The final and most recent study on the acquisition of variable structures in
second language Spanish we review in this section is Fafulas (2013). Fafulas
examined development of variation between the simple present and the present progressive by English-speaking learners of Spanish, as shown in Example 7.12. The example shows that in Spanish two verb forms, the simple present and present progressive, can both encode the meaning “action in progress”, while in English only the be + V-ing form is acceptable in expressing ongoing action simultaneous with speech time.

Fafulas noted that this variable structure is particularly understudied, not only in second language acquisition research, but also in first language or native speaker variation research. We do know, however, that the estar + V–ndo form is favored with temporal adverbs indicating immediacy (ahora ‘now’); in dynamic predicates, especially with activity verbs (comer ‘to eat’); in describing background information; with animate subjects; and with full, post-posed direct objects (Cortés-Torres, 2005; Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012; Klein, 1980; Mayberry, 2011; Torres-Cacoullos, 2000). In addition to variation between the present and the estar + V–ndo present progressive forms, there is also variation in the base used to form the progressive, and this is illustrated in Example 7.13.

The estar + gerund form is the most frequent and therefore the most studied, and little is known about the patterns of use of other auxiliary verbs such as seguir ‘to continue, to follow’ and venir ‘to come’.

Fafulas’ (2013) participants included English-speaking learners of Spanish (N = 75), native speakers of Spanish from Mexico and Spain (N = 20), and native speakers of English from the US with less than one semester of experience with the Spanish language (N = 20). The inclusion of a native English-speaking baseline group, and two distinct dialect target groups, represents a unique methodological contribution in that Fafulas was able to characterize how patterns of use reflect first language influence across the process of development, while also considering the variability of the input based on geographic

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**EXAMPLE 7.12. Present progressive in Spanish**

a. Ahora mismo, el perro corre por el parque. ‘Right now, the dog runs through the park’

b. Ahora mismo, el perro está corriendo por el parque. ‘Right now, the dog is running through the park’

---

**EXAMPLE 7.13. Variation in progressive auxiliaries**

El perro está/sigue/viene corriendo por el parque. ‘The dog is/continues/comes running through the park’
origin of the native Spanish speakers. All participants completed a background questionnaire, a proficiency test, and three additional tasks. The first was a simultaneous film narration in which participants were instructed to narrate orally a silent film as it was playing on a computer in front of them. The second elicitation task, a written contextualized questionnaire, required participants to select the phrase among contrasting pairs. These sentence pairs were contextualized in an interconnected story; a sample item is shown in Example 7.14.

The third and final elicitation task was a judgment task in which participants were instructed to select among variants of the present progressive to indicate all those that they would use in the provided context. Although there are others, Fafulas included the five auxiliaries that are reported most frequently in the literature. A sample, which shows each of the five auxiliaries in context, is provided in Example 7.15.

The data elicited through the oral narrative task were coded for the form produced (the present indicative, estar + gerund, venir + gerund, andar + gerund, ir + gerund, seguir + gerund, other + gerund [e.g., pasar + gerund ‘to pass by doing something’], and nonnative auxiliary + gerund [e.g., *es comiendo ‘is eating’]) and a series of independent linguistic and extralinguistic variables, which are summarized in Table 7.6. On the other two elicitation tasks, which are more highly controlled, these factors were either manipulated or held constant, according to the goals of each task.

**EXAMPLE 7.14.** Sample item from written contextualized task (Fafulas, 2013)

*Lees un periódico mientras esperas. Algunos minutos después, entra a la sala de espera un hombre vestido como médico. El hombre saluda a la secretaria y a la enfermera y desaparece detrás de una puerta. La secretaria mira a la enfermera y le dice:*

A. “El doctor Ramírez está llegando tarde a la oficina todos los días.”
B. “El doctor Ramírez llega tarde a la oficina todos los días.”

___ Prefiero A. ___ Prefiero B. ___ Ambos.

You read a magazine while you wait. A few minutes later, a gentleman dressed as a doctor enters the waiting room. He says hello to the nurse and secretary and disappears behind an office door. The secretary looks at the nurse and says:

A. “Every day Doctor Ramírez is arriving late to the office.”
B. “Every day Doctor Ramirez arrives late to the office.”

___ I prefer A. ___ I prefer B. ___ Both.
The results of the analysis of the oral narration task showed that, overall, the native English-speaking group displayed a higher rate of progressive use than the native Spanish group, with the learner group falling somewhere in between. Learners did not demonstrate the use of progressives with auxiliaries other than estar until the fourth year, but their use increased steadily after that level. Fafulas (2013) also found that lexical aspect was a significant factor for all groups.
### TABLE 7.6

Summary of coding scheme for Fafulas (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Representative example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs/verbal modifiers</td>
<td>Locative (e.g., <em>aquí</em> ‘here’)</td>
<td><em>El hombre está ahí recolectando peras</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temporal (e.g., <em>ahora</em> ‘now’)</td>
<td>‘The man is there gathering pears’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other (e.g., <em>después</em> ‘then’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None (no adverb in context)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clause type</td>
<td>Subordinate (Dependent clause)</td>
<td><em>Yo creo que él los conoce</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple (Main clause; includes coordinated clauses)</td>
<td>‘I believe that he knows them’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>State (<em>querer</em> ‘to want’)</td>
<td><em>Él recolecta las peras</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity (<em>correr</em> ‘to run’)</td>
<td>‘He gathers the pears’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accomplishment (<em>correr 1 km</em> ‘run one km’)</td>
<td>(Activity predicate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achievement (<em>caer</em> ‘to fall’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animacy of subject</td>
<td>Animate (e.g., person)</td>
<td><em>El hombre está corriendo</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inanimate (e.g., machine, car)</td>
<td>‘The man is running’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Animate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object type</td>
<td>Direct (e.g., object of transitive construction)</td>
<td><em>Veo al hombre</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect (e.g., recipient of ditransitive construction)</td>
<td>‘I see the man’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other (e.g., reflexives)</td>
<td>(Direct object)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None (e.g., intransitive verbs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object form</td>
<td>Full noun phrase (e.g., <em>las peras</em> ‘the pears’)</td>
<td><em>Veo a las peras ahí</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronoun (e.g., <em>lo</em> ‘it’)</td>
<td>‘I see the pears there’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other (e.g., <em>se</em>, reflexive particle)</td>
<td>(Full noun phrase)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None (no object)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object position</td>
<td>Pre-posed (before verb)</td>
<td><em>Lo llama con un silbido</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-posed (after verb)</td>
<td>‘He/She calls him with a whistle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other (e.g., part of reflexive construction)</td>
<td>(Pre-posed object)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None (no object)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object number</td>
<td>Singular (<em>la pera</em> ‘the pear’)</td>
<td><em>Tomo café todos los días</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural (<em>las peras</em> ‘the pears’)</td>
<td>‘I drink coffee every day’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other (non-count)</td>
<td>(Non-count)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None (no object)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
examined, but it was not until the fourth year that learners began to approximate patterns of native use, with object type, object form, and object position strongly predicting the form produced. At the graduate level, despite overall similarities with the native Spanish-speaking groups, polarity is a significant factor even though it is not for either of the native Spanish speaker groups. Likewise, experience abroad was significant for the graduate student learners.

Turning to findings for the written contextualized questionnaire, Fafulas (2013) first found that the simple present was preferred by all participants on this particular task. Lexical aspect was the most significant factor predicting selection of the present progressive form by all participants. Among the learner groups, examination of selection of a progressive form revealed a U-shaped pattern of development, where lower level learners demonstrated target-like rates of selection, selection rates decline away from native-like norms among the middle proficiency learners, but at later stages of acquisition the selection rates increase and approximate native-like rates once again. Lastly the analysis of the judgment task data showed that the canonical estar + gerund form was the most accepted by all participant groups. Selection of additional auxiliaries was found to be influenced by lexical aspect and adverb among the more proficient learners, with adverb serving as the stronger predictor between these two factors for the native English speaker group. In summary, Fafulas’ (2013) results indicate that both recognition and use of other Auxiliary + V–ndo progressive constructions is an acquisitional challenge for second language learners of Spanish, given that these forms are restricted to specific aspectual/temporal contexts in native-speaker Spanish and vary by dialect.

In the past few years, excellent variationist research has also emerged for learners of Chinese as a second language. One such example, Li (2010), examines the acquisition of variable use of the particle de, which is used in native speech as a genitive marker, attributive marker, or a nominalization marker. These functions are illustrated in Example 7.16. This particle is used variably and is sensitive to style such that its use is less frequent in informal speech.
The participants of Li’s (2010) study were 12 native speakers of Chinese (half the participants were female) and 20 learners of Chinese from four different first language backgrounds and at different levels of proficiency in Chinese. All participants completed a background questionnaire and a sociolinguistic interview (twice for the learners). Li also collected audiotaped recordings of four instructors of the learners while they were teaching and analyzed the learners’ textbooks in order to examine the nature of the input the learners received. For the sociolinguistic interviews, all environments where de occurred, could possibly occur, and where it is not prescriptively allowed were identified and first coded for presence of de (the dependent variable), and then for several independent variables. These include the function of de, speaker gender, formality (native speakers only), and first language (learners only). Results showed that the native speakers always used de in conditional clauses but never in lexicalized expressions. Native speakers variably omitted de in contexts of modified relative clauses, as well as in fast and informal speech. A Varbrul analysis revealed that females used de significantly more than males in the genitive and demonstrative/number + classifier contexts, and de was encountered significantly more in formal contexts. Overall, the learners used de more than the native speakers, especially in certain contexts. Like the native speakers, learners always used de in conditional clauses and almost never in lexicalized expressions. Finally, they used de nearly obligatorily in contexts of relative clause modifiers. This higher frequency of use of de is consistent with the higher rates of use reported in pedagogical materials. A Varbrul analysis with the learner data revealed that females also use de more than males and de-omission is favored by learners who have stayed in China for longer periods of time and have higher proficiency in Chinese. Li reported some interaction between variables, but the learners’ first language was not selected as a significant predictor of de-omission.
Thus, like the other studies reviewed thus far, learners’ use of variable forms in the second language is highly complex but systematic, and it is sensitive to the sociolinguistic variables demonstrated to play a role in native variation. Although this study did not include cross-sectional data, the effects for proficiency do indeed further our understanding of the development of sociolinguistic competence.

Using a similar design, Li (2014) employed a variationist analysis to study variable subject pronoun expression, which has been researched extensively for second language Spanish but has not received the same attention in Chinese as a second language. In Chinese, pronominal subjects can be expressed with an overt pronominal form or may be null (i.e., unexpressed), as demonstrated in Example 7.17.

**EXAMPLE 7.17.** Null and overt subjects in Chinese (Li, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null subjects</th>
<th>Overt subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tā méi xué guò hán yǔ</td>
<td>Ø yǐ diăn yē bù huí shuō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He not learn EXP Chinese,</td>
<td>Ø a:little also not can speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘He has never learned Chinese and he can’t speak it at all’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Li’s (2014) participants were 23 high-intermediate and advanced learners studying in China. Each participant completed a conversation-style interview and an elicited narrative task. These tasks were completed twice at a ten-week interval. Li’s analysis was based on 13,345 tokens and the overall subject expression rate was 59.4%. The factors found to have the greatest influence on subject expression were the person and number of the verb and switch reference. Significant effects were also found for sentence type, native language, length of residence in China, gender, discourse context, proficiency level, and specificity. These results are largely consistent with the findings reported in Li, Chen, and Chen (2012) for native speakers in the same region. Of interest to second language researchers are the findings that first language contributed to rates of subject expression, such that native speakers of English and Russian used overt forms at higher rates than speakers of Korean and Japanese. Likewise, longer stays in China (over two years) and higher proficiency favored null forms. Finally, females favored overt forms more than males, and overt forms were favored more in conversations than in narratives. These last two findings show that learners were sensitive to social and stylistic variation and were able to demonstrate this in their second language use.

The research studies included in the present section demonstrate, collectively, that the adoption of a variationist approach does not pose a threat to the view of second language acquisition as a process, rather than a product. In fact, these
studies show that development in the area of sociolinguistic competence can be understood through changes in the frequency of use of a given form, changes in the linguistic and extralinguistic factors that constrain that use, and, more subtly, changes in the distribution of the rates of use across the categories of those constraining variables. Additionally, the research reviewed here demonstrates how the application of sociolinguistic methods of analysis to cross-sectional second language research designs has fostered exciting new research on a range of structures and second languages. The level of detail with which these studies were presented further allows future researchers to employ these techniques to new areas of study. Nevertheless, there are a host of other issues that are addressed through variationist research. The remainder of the present chapter is devoted to providing a sampling of studies within the Variationist framework that address issues common to the field of second language acquisition.

RESEARCH ON PHONOLOGICAL VARIATION

In contrast with research in the field of sociolinguistics as a whole, recent research on Type II phonological variation in second languages is rare. There are, however, some examples of research from which to build. As mentioned previously, Sax (2003) examined /l/-deletion (see also work by Regan, Howard, & Lemée [2009] in Chapter Eight). Another phenomenon investigated in second language French is schwa deletion (e.g., *demain ‘tomorrow’* [d.mɛ̃]), which is a well-attested sociolinguistic variable in European French that has been shown to be influenced by speaker age and style (e.g., Hansen, 2000), as well as linguistic factors such as the surrounding phonetic context in which variable deletion occurs (Uritescu, Mougeon, & Handouleh, 2002). Uritescu, Mougeon, Rehner, and Nadasdi (2004) examined the French immersion context of Ontario. The data for their analysis came from semi-directed interviews with 41 high school students participating in a French immersion program. They found that with regard to overall frequency of occurrence, the French immersion students did not delete the schwa nearly as frequently as the native speaker comparison group (21% for the learners and 68% for the native speakers). Regarding the linguistic factors constraining schwa deletion for the learners and the native speakers, several similarities were found. For example, both learners and native speakers favored schwa deletion word medially after one consonant (e.g., *maint(e)nant ‘now’) and after more than one consonant (e.g., *exact(e)ment ‘exactly’), as well as in monosyllabic words followed by a non-schwa vowel or pause (e.g., *j(e) sais pas ‘I don’t know’). However, some differences were observed with regard to the linguistic factors. For example, certain high frequency lexical items exhibited schwa deletion in the native speaker group, but not the learner group. With regard to the extralinguistic factors constraining schwa deletion, Uritescu and colleagues found a favoring
effect for gender (females favor deletion), exposure to French media (those who reported “occasional” use), and previous length of stay with a Franco-
phone family (at least one week or longer). These findings were different from those observed for the native speaker comparison group, where only the informal speech style (defined as informal topics) favored schwa deletion.

Schmidt (2011) conducted a large-scale study on the perception of /s/-
aspiration in Spanish by English-speaking learners enrolled in various levels of university language and content classes. Like schwa deletion in French, /s/-
aspiration in Spanish is a well-attested sociolinguistic variable notable across several dialects of the Spanish-speaking world, particularly in coastal varieties (cf. Hualde, 2005; Lipski, 1994). This phonological process (also called debuccalization) is one that changes [s] to [h] most often in syllable-final position before a consonant (e.g., basta ‘(that's) enough’ [bah.ta]) or in phrase final position (e.g., dos ‘two’ [doh]). Several studies cross-dialectally have provided support for differences in /s/-aspiration by gender, social class, and age (cf. Lipski [2011] and Samper Padilla [2011] for an overview). With the exception of Gee-
slin and Gudmestad (2011a), research has not examined learners’ acquisition of /s/-aspiration production. However, the study by Schmidt (2011) examined development of perception of this process (i.e., association of the [h] variant with Spanish /s/), especially given it is one that learners do not tend to be aware of without some exposure to an /s/-aspirating variety of Spanish. The partici-
pants of her study were 215 university-level English learners of Spanish. All par-
ticipants completed an identification task in which they had to identify nonce or invented words containing syllable final variants of /s/ word medially (e.g., baspe [bah.pe]). The options provided to them for identifying the entire word included /s/, /f/, /l/, /r/, /n/, and a /V/ (no coda). Taking the example of baspe, they would hear [bah.pe] and then be directed to click whether they heard baspe, bafpe, balpe, barpe, banpe, or bape. In this way, Schmidt could determine how learners were categorizing [h] phonemically, and how that categorization changed with increasing experience with and exposure to Spanish as a second language. Schmidt found that learners indeed developed in their perceptual acquisition of /s/-aspiration with increasing exposure to the second language. It was not until the intermediate level that learners first began categorizing [h] as /s/, and by the advanced level more than half of the learners were demonstrating patterns of perception that mirrored those of native speakers of Spanish from /s/-aspirating varieties (e.g., Argentina). Schmidt also linked patterns of identi-
fication performance demonstrated on the task to dialect exposure and location of study abroad experience. Specifically, those learners who had been exposed previously to /s/-aspirating varieties or studied abroad in an /s/-aspirating region identified [h] as /s/ more than learners who had not had such experience with the second language. As with morphosyntactic variation, it appears thus far that learners can also acquire sociolinguistic variables that are phonological in
nature. More research is needed in this area, not only with other segmental and suprasegmental features of second language speech, but also with those that may carry more or less prominence in social stigma among learners and the native speakers or advanced users from which they are receiving input.

THE NATURE OF NEAR-NATIVE COMPETENCE

Across approaches to second language acquisition, one persistent question is whether second language learners can come to use that language in native-like ways. For some, this entails access to innate grammatical knowledge; for others, this has to do with the degree to which the existing first language knowledge influences the second language system. Regardless of the approach, this question is important because it helps us to understand the nature of second language acquisition in general (cf. Gass, Behney, & Plonsky [2013] for review). Given the importance of this question, it is essential to address this same issue for variable structures in order to assess the degree to which learners can acquire native-like sociolinguistic competence. Many of the studies reviewed above included a very advanced participant group as part of the cross-sectional design. Thus, we have already seen examples of how learners differ from native speakers on the use of structures like mood contrast, the present progressive, future-time marking, and object marking in Spanish; the use of on, ne deletion, and /l/-deletion in French; and the use of the variable de and subject expression in Chinese. In addition to the studies reviewed earlier in the present chapter, there are several that have focused exclusively on the comparison of highly advanced learners to their native-speaking counterparts. A fairly large body of work examining these differences has been conducted with English-speaking learners of Spanish and has covered a variety of variable morphosyntactic structures, such as the copula contrast (e.g., Geeslin, 2003), mood use (Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2008a), subject expression (e.g., Abreu, 2012; Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2008b, 2011b; Gudmestad & Geeslin, 2010; Gudmestad, House, & Geeslin, 2013), present-time expression (e.g., Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012), and future-time expression (Gudmestad & Geeslin, 2011). One of the most widely studied structures in research on native and near-native differences is subject expression. Geeslin and Gudmestad (2008b), an early example of this type of research, analyzed sociolinguistic interviews conducted with 16 advanced nonnative learners of Spanish and 16 native speakers from a variety of dialectal regions, all residing in the same community. As with Chinese (see Example 7.17), subject forms in Spanish may be null or overt. Overt forms may include pronouns of several types (e.g., personal pronouns, interrogative pronouns) or full lexical noun phrases. Geeslin and Gudmestad found that near-native and native speakers employed null subjects most often, followed by lexical noun phrases and then by overt subject pronouns. Nevertheless, the
rates of use were, in fact, statistically different for both groups, and the examination of the independent linguistic factors provided details of these differences. Specifically, the near-native learners tended to use more null subjects in all contexts except first-person singular and third-person plural, two contexts where native speakers used more null subjects. Additionally, in nonspecific contexts (i.e., those where the referent could not be named) native speakers used more subject pronouns than the near-native speakers, constituting another subtle difference between the two groups studied. Accounts of these subtle differences between native and highly advanced learners of a second language develop our understanding of the abilities that sociolinguistic competence entails, as well as the degree to which nonnative speakers are able to achieve this goal.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Second language acquisition researchers have also witnessed growing interest in the role of the individual in the process of language learning. We have already mentioned that the universality of the stages of acquisition has been questioned in recent work (e.g., Tarone & Liu, 1995) and there is mounting evidence that language learning is influenced by a host of individual factors, ranging from personality to inherent capacities such as working memory (cf. Miyake & Friedman, 1998; Robinson, 2003). Unlike the many instances where sociolinguistic research is not only compatible but provides the model for second language analysis, this may be a case where second language variation research must break with that tradition. This is because it has been demonstrated, and argued quite effectively, that looking at results in aggregate is appropriate because individuals display the patterns of the group (Guy, 1980). In fact, this same point has been demonstrated for second language learners (Bayley & Langman, 2004) but recent research has called this into question. Geeslin and Gudmestad (2012) found that in a study of use of future time forms, learners differed in both frequency of form selection and the effect of certain constraints on that selection. Additionally, speakers often differed on one measure but not on the other, indicating even greater degrees of variability. Likewise, Geeslin, Linford, Fafulas, Long, and Díaz-Campos (2013) found individual variability in their study of sentence-level constraints on subject expression. In contrast to the work by Geeslin and Gudmestad, however, they found that the degree to which individuals differed from the group norms decreased as proficiency increased. The authors suggest that this may have to do with the sociolinguistic status of the variable structure (i.e., stable variation vs. change in progress and/or degree of prestige of a given variant) in conjunction with the individual differences in the group. Clearly, this work is in its infancy but represents an exciting new method for examining individual differences in the second language context. What is more, the use of insights from sociolinguistics may provide new variables related to sociolinguistic status, which serve to move these fields forward.
MULTILINGUAL TARGETS

For several decades now, there has been a tension between our understanding of what it means to be a native speaker of a language and the reality of the second language acquisition context. For example, when we think of what it means to be a native speaker, this idea may include monolingual, highly educated adults, even though much of the world's population uses several languages in the course of a single day to fulfill a variety of functions. Thus, researchers like Vivian Cook (1992) have argued that the target for second language learners ought to be multi-competence, on the grounds that knowing two languages is not identical to being a monolingual in each of those languages. This argumentation has evolved and has come to be known as the “bilingual turn” in second language acquisition; its proponents advocate for the inclusion of bilinguals as appropriate comparison groups, and for a more thoughtful evaluation of the speakers to whom learners are compared (Ortega, 2011, 2013). In other words, researchers must ask the question: is this a reasonable target for my learner group? Variationist approaches, because of the incorporation of social factors, individual factors, and geographic factors, all of which are linked to differences in patterns of language use, are well poised to lead in moving second language acquisition research toward an acceptance of bilingualism as a norm (and a goal) for language learners. To this end, we see that many of the studies reviewed in the present chapter provide models for this movement. For example, Sax (2003) included native speakers who were also instructors in the language program she investigated, and the native speaker comparison groups for Killam (2011), Gudmestad (2012) and Geeslin (2003) were all bilinguals residing in the area of research (rather than in a distant home country). Fafulas (2013) provided yet another approach to this issue by including monolingual native speakers of Spanish from Mexico and from Spain as well as monolingual native speakers of English. In this way, he was able to assess the degree to which his learners showed similar tendencies to each of these groups without arbitrarily designating speakers of a single variety of Spanish as the target for his learners. Each of these studies demonstrates the importance of the bilingual turn in second language acquisition research.

INCORPORATING NEW THEORETICAL INSIGHTS:
LEXICAL EFFECTS AND FREQUENCY

In Chapters Four and Five we provided an overview of several different approaches to modeling linguistic knowledge and language development. In some sense these models represent a differing focus between social factors on the one hand and cognition on the other. Nevertheless, they were each included in the present volume because they account for the social influence on language in some way. Thus, in order for the Variationist Approach to effectively respond
to increasing interest in the role of social factors in language acquisition, it must be able to incorporate insights from many of these approaches and also to adapt when new findings are made available. To this end, we see that the statistical modeling employed in variationist research is, in fact, quite capable of incorporating influences of newfound social constructs as well as linguistic ones. What is more, the statistical relationship identified between these factors can be modeled in a variety of ways, including in several of the theories advanced in Chapter Five. To illustrate this, we take two examples, one from second language research and the other from usage-based approaches. In second language acquisition research, there has been growing interest in the role of vocabulary and lexical acquisition in the process of second language learning as a whole (for a review, see Castañeda-Jiménez & Jarvis, 2013). For example, research has shown that vocabulary size is related to several other properties of second language use. Likewise, it has been suggested that second language acquisition is intricately tied to learning the properties of individual lexical items. In other words, rather than viewing second language learning as developing the ability to plug lexical items into an acquired structure, we benefit from also knowing how the properties of those lexical items come to be acquired. This can be illustrated with the research on the copula contrast in Spanish, which has previously viewed adjectives as a unified group and focused on the properties of the two copular verbs, *ser* and *estar* (both mean ‘to be’). However, recent variationist work has explored the degree to which an adjective allows variation in relationship to patterns of use, showing that one key difference between native and near-native language use rests in the fact that the natives allow variation with a larger range of adjectives than the nonnatives (Geeslin, 2013). In other words, the learners appear to allow variation and to respond to the same linguistic constraints, but they do so in a more restricted range of lexical contexts. This example serves to show how new insights from second language acquisition research can be integrated into variationist analysis, leading to improved knowledge in both areas.

A second example of this type comes from the growing interest in usage-based approaches to language use and language learning (e.g., Bybee, 2002). Recent research in the field of sociolinguistics has shown that lexical frequency mediates the effects of several linguistic constraints on subject expression in Spanish (Erker & Guy, 2012). At the same time, there are interesting discussions about how frequency is best measured (e.g., within corpus vs. within speaker vs. outside measure) and also whether frequency is best viewed as one of many explanatory factors or as the single principle guiding language acquisition and use. In order to participate in these discussions, we see that the Variationist Approach must provide the necessary tools to address these issues. In fact, it does so quite effectively, and this type of research is presently underway (e.g., Linford, Long, Solon, Whatley, & Geeslin, 2014). For example, one might measure frequency in several different ways and compare statistical models to determine which explains the greatest portion
of the variation. What is more, one might simply come to add a measure of lexical frequency into the statistical analysis along with other linguistic and extralinguistic constraints, lending greater predictive and explanatory power to existing models. The important insight is that as the field develops and new factors are examined, the Variationist Approach is able to incorporate these insights and participate in cross-disciplinary dialogue.

CONCLUSION

In the present chapter we have shown that the Variationist Approach to second language acquisition, which was born out of the need to explain the systematic variability inherent in interlanguages, has grown to provide empirical accounts of second language development for a variety of second languages and grammatical structures. This approach uses changes in frequency of use and constraints on use to identify the path of development and to better understand how sociolinguistic competence is acquired. This is accomplished through the adoption of recent insights in sociolinguistic research, as well as innovation in elicitation tasks and statistical modeling. It offers a means for assessing the degree to which second language learners can acquire native-like patterns of use and the manner in which individual differences influence second language acquisition. Likewise, it addresses key concerns in recent second language acquisition work, such as the identification of the appropriate target for comparison and the role of vocabulary building in language learning, as well as new developments in linguistic theory, such as the examination of the role of lexical frequency in language acquisition and use. Moreover, this approach is compatible with the push to incorporate social factors into our account of language learning and also with several of the cognitive models advanced to accomplish this goal. In this sense, we see that the Variationist Approach is not only compatible with current theories of second language acquisition, but it is also responsive to the primary concerns of second language acquisition researchers. Despite this promise, however, there is a great deal of territory left to explore. For example, researchers will do well to delve into the differences across learning contexts and learners, as well as how this is mediated by differences across grammatical structures and the linguistic factors that constrain their use.

READING BEYOND THE TEXT


**COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION**

A. Comprehension

1. What motivated the emergence of research on variation in second languages?
2. Why were sociolinguistic approaches to the study of second language variation particularly influential?
3. What is Type I (or vertical) variation? What is Type II (or horizontal) variation? What does Type II variation tell us about sociolinguistic competence?
4. In Adamson and Regan (1991), what was the relationship between proficiency and production of [ɪn]? What role did speaker gender play?
5. In her study of *ne* deletion, *nous/on* alternation, and */l/-deletion, what did Sax (2003) find with respect to the variants used by learners and native speakers of French and their frequencies of use? What order did Sax propose for the emergence of these stylistic markers?
6. What evidence of linguistic predictors changing according to learner proficiency can be found in Geeslin’s (2000) study of the Spanish copula *ser* and *estar*?
7. What other structures have been studied in variationist work on Spanish and Chinese? What do these studies have in common? How do they differ?
8. Give an example of research on Type II variation in the second language sound system and describe that study.
9. What is near-native competence? What evidence exists for the potential for second language learners to achieve near-native sociolinguistic competence?
10. Why is it important to consider the comparison group in variationist research? How might that group differ from one study to another?
B. Application

1. The current chapter has presented the results of empirical research on near-native attainment. Given your own language learning, are there particular structures or aspects of your L2 that you have found to be particularly challenging? Are there linguistic contexts in which you are uncertain of which form to use over another or how to produce that form? Reflect on how you might be able to gain input to overcome these details.

2. Now, turn your attention to the language learning of someone other than yourself. Think of someone you know or a famous person who is a nonnative speaker of a language. What particular structures or aspects of their L2 seem to be particularly challenging? Are there linguistic contexts in which this is especially apparent?

3. In this chapter, you have read about horizontal (i.e., native-like) and vertical (i.e., developmental) variation. Think of a structure in English (or another language) for which you demonstrate horizontal variation. What variants exist? In which context(s) do you produce one variant? In which context(s) do you produce the other(s)?

4. Think of an original example of a structure in English (or another L2) for which learners might demonstrate vertical variation. What variants exist? In which context(s) might the learner produce one variant? In which context(s) might he or she produce the other(s)?

5. Imagine that two learners, Mary and Karen, have encountered the following sentence in Spanish: El muchacho está muy alto ahora (‘The boy is very tall now’). Mary explains that the verb estar is used because “someone is saying that the boy is tall and that’s something that can change, so you use estar”. Karen explains that estar is used because “someone is saying that the boy is tall and we can compare the boy to how he used to be, so you use estar”. Both of these responses indicate predictors of estar use. Using your knowledge of Geeslin (2000), which of these learners has more advanced development of the copula contrast? Why?

NOTE

1. Linguistic constraints on –t/d deletion have been found to differ between varieties of English. For example, a following pause has been shown to favor deletion in New York City while it has been shown to disfavor deletion in Philadelphia (cf. Guy, 1980).
The Role of Study Abroad on the Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Competence

Linguists and nonlinguists alike often believe that a second language learner must spend time in a setting that provides intense exposure to the second language in real contexts of use in order to acquire communicative competence. For this reason, the study abroad setting has received considerable attention. Use of the term, however, spans a variety of related, yet often distinct, language learning settings. Table 8.1 illustrates the many types of learning contexts that can be subsumed under the umbrella term of “study abroad”. None of the definitions in Table 8.1 should be taken as absolute; rather, they are examples of the degree to which “study abroad” experiences can differ. In Table 8.1 we see the importance of understanding the characteristics of the study abroad experience. Failure to do so is likely to lead to conflicting research results. We further note that the terms “study abroad” or “year abroad” tend to be meaningful terms for Americans and Europeans, while elsewhere in the world these experiences may be called “exchanges” (e.g., Korean students studying in Australia; for discussion, see introduction of Freed, 1995). In this chapter we adopt the term “study abroad”, and we will use it to refer to all experiences in which students travel to another country for the purpose of studying language and/or content in a classroom setting. To be clear, this is not the only type of experience that constitutes study abroad, but we find that this type of experience has been researched most widely in relation to the acquisition of communicative competence.

RESEARCHING THE EFFECTS OF STUDY ABROAD: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Research on the effects of study abroad has a long history, dating back to Carroll (1967) and generally focused on more global abilities, such as measures of proficiency and fluency. For example, several studies using the ACTFL Oral
### Table 8.1
Examples of study abroad contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freed (1995)</td>
<td>The traditional stay abroad: learners leave the home country and live in a country where the second language is spoken as a majority language; length of stay ranges from as little as three weeks to several academic semesters or academic school years; participants are typically classroom learners and constitute a fairly homogenous social group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segalowitz &amp; Freed (2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lafford &amp; Collentine (2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Studies Summer Programs*</td>
<td>Intensive language schools: held outside of the learners’ home country, typically in a country where the second language is spoken as a majority language; length of language training ranges from as little as two weeks to several months; participants are classroom learners and vary in terms of group homogeneity/heterogeneity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guntermann (1995)</td>
<td>Work and/or service-based stay abroad (e.g., Peace Corps): learners receive language training specific to the region to which they have been assigned; length of stay ranges from one to two years; participants are not typically classroom learners and vary greatly in terms of individual and social characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hansen (2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mougeon, Nadasdi, &amp; Rehner (2010)</td>
<td>Intensive immersion schools: held inside the learners home country; medium of instruction is the second language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Several institutions in the Republic of Korea have these programs. Web links to two examples are provided here: http://home.sogang.ac.kr/sites/esummer/Pages/default.aspx (Sogang University); http://summer.hufs.ac.kr (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)
Proficiency Interview have investigated the development of oral proficiency by learners traveling abroad (e.g., Foltz, 1991; Magnan, 1986; Milleret, 1991; O’Connor, 1988; Veguez, 1984). It is not surprising that study abroad continues to be a popular topic of research, yielding numerous articles, doctoral dissertations, and edited volumes (e.g., Collentine, 2009; Lafford & Uscinski, 2013). Over time the focus has shifted from proficiency to specific linguistic abilities (e.g., phonology, morphosyntax, pragmatics). For instance, while Segalowitz and Freed (2004) showed that second language learners abroad made greater gains in fluency than their at-home counterparts, Díaz-Campos (2004) found that at-home learners and study abroad learners made equal gains in pronunciation, and Collentine (2004) showed that the at-home group in his study appeared to make greater gains on grammatical performance than the study abroad group. The overarching question across such studies has often been whether study abroad is categorically beneficial for language learning, and, to this day, this question remains open for debate and additional research. Nevertheless, it does appear that there are certain, specific benefits when performance by learners who study abroad is compared to that of learners who remain in the at-home setting.

Although less numerous, we also find good research on variable structures in second languages that can serve as a strong point of departure for future work (e.g., Regan, Howard, & Lemée, 2009). The focus of the current chapter is to review this growing body of research on the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence in the study abroad context. Our discussion is organized by the grammatical characteristic studied, although these research studies could just as easily be grouped according to the types of study abroad experiences available to the participants in each study. In many cases we will see that the researcher’s focus is on the documentation of developing sociolinguistic competence, rather than comparing a group abroad to an at-home counterpart. In this sense, our overarching research question has changed from whether or not study abroad is superior to at-home learning toward an interest in whether learners can acquire sociolinguistic competence and, if so, how learner grammars develop over time to reach this state.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IN THE STUDY ABROAD SETTING

Research on the development of sociolinguistic competence in the study abroad context has focused heavily on morphosyntax and nearly exclusively on learners of French and Spanish, usually with English as a first language. Despite that limitation, in the review that follows we will see that a wide range of variable structures has been examined. In general, this research supports the assertion that learners move toward native-like norms of use and also that there is a good deal of individual variation, even in the same learning context. Our review is
organized by areas of the grammar; for each structure, we provide a brief summary of how the variable structure operates in the language of native speakers prior to exploring the research on its acquisition by second language learners. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of some of the additional factors that have been shown to influence this development in the study abroad context.

**Morphosyntax**

The first variable structure to receive serious attention in the study abroad literature was *ne* deletion in French (see Chapter Seven for additional details). Vera Regan (1995, 1996, 2004) examined whether a year abroad in France would have an impact on frequency of occurrence and patterns of use in the speech of second language learners. She followed seven English speakers from Ireland studying French in their home institution and abroad over three years. Regan's findings are based on quantitative analyses of sociolinguistic interviews conducted with each learner at three different time points: before departing for the yearlong study in France (Time 1), immediately after their return (Time 2), and one year after their return (Time 3). From Time 1 to Time 2, Regan (1996) found that learners demonstrated striking change in rates of *ne* deletion, as they were not likely to delete at Time 1 (0.27) but much more likely to do so at Time 2 (0.72). Regan also found that learners, like the native speakers described in Ashby (1981), deleted *ne* more in casual speech than in formal speech at Time 1 and Time 2. Interestingly, Regan found that *ne* deletion in casual speech did not differ much from Time 1 to Time 2 in terms of likelihood of deletion (0.61 at Time 1 and 0.59 at Time 2), whereas in formal speech the likelihood of deletion increased notably (0.37 at Time 1 and 0.44 at Time 2). This led Regan to suggest that learners were indeed acquiring the stylistic differences associated with *ne* deletion, but they were also overextending *ne* deletion into contexts where it would not necessarily occur in native speech (formal or monitored speech). Regan also found that, like native speakers, learners delete *ne* more in main clauses, in lexicalized phrases, and when an object clitic pronoun is present. For the latter two variables, the strength of their influence on *ne* deletion increased after the yearlong stay abroad (i.e., the probability weights increased from Time 1 to Time 2). Finally, Regan found that learners had maintained approximately the same rate of *ne* deletion at Time 3 (one year after their return) as that found at Time 2 (immediately after their return). Collectively, Regan's work lends support to the idea that the study abroad setting is particularly influential in the acquisition and continued use of known sociolinguistic phenomena in advanced, nonnative speech. This claim gains even greater ground if we compare the use of this variable structure by learners in the at-home classroom or immersion context (e.g., Dewaele, 1992, 2004; Dewaele & Regan, 2002; Rehner & Mougeon, 1999; Thomas, 2004), who, in general, delete *ne* much less than native speakers of French.
The alternation between *nous* and *on* (also described in detail in Chapter Seven) has also received attention in the study abroad literature (Dewaele, 2002; Lemée, 2003; Regan, Howard, & Lemée, 2009; Sax, 2003). This body of research generally examines study abroad as an extralinguistic variable, rather than comparing learners before and after study abroad. The studies conducted by Dewaele (2002) and Sax (2003) reported that learners who had either previous experience studying abroad or extensive exposure via interaction with native speakers of French favored *on* in oral production. Dewaele’s (2002) study also examined this alternation in written productions of advanced level Dutch-speaking learners, revealing nearly equal frequency of *on* use as that observed in the learners’ oral productions (see also Chapter Seven). Sax’s (2003) study reported evidence of increasing native-like stylistic variation among learners as they progressed in instructional level. In related work, Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009) report that after a year abroad, their 20 Irish learners patterned similarly to native speakers. Specifically, male learners favored use of *on* while females favored *nous*, *on* use was favored by middle-class learners, and *on* was used much more in informal speech. Their research also showed that knowledge of Irish strongly favored the selection of *on* (0.989), whereas knowledge of German as a third language strongly disfavored *on* use (0.204). From a larger corpus of 48 Irish-speaking learners, length of previous stays abroad correlated positively with increasing use of *on* (Lemée, 2003). With regard to the linguistic variables studied, specificity and restriction appeared to play a role in constraining learner alternation, with *on* favored by nonspecific and nonrestrictive referents (0.964) and highly disfavored by specific and restrictive referents (0.076). Thus, adding this to the research described on *ne* deletion, we see that, for Irish learners of French, the study abroad setting has been shown to facilitate the development of each of these two sociolinguistic variables.

Another variable structure examined by Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009) is future time expression. **Future time expression** in French manifests itself as seen in Example 8.1, via use of the simple present (8.1a), the morphological or inflected future (8.1b), or the periphrastic future (8.1c).

---

**EXAMPLE 8.1.** Future time expression in French

a. *Demain on nage à la piscine.*
   ‘Tomorrow we’re swimming (lit. we swim) at the pool’

b. *Demain on nagera à la piscine.*
   ‘Tomorrow we will swim at the pool’

c. *Demain on va nager à la piscine.*
   ‘Tomorrow we are going to swim at the pool’
Variation in the expression of future time has been documented across varieties of French. The periphrastic future form is more frequent than the morphological future in Canadian French (Blondeau, 2006; Poplack & Turpin, 1999), whereas the rates of use in spoken Metropolitan French do not indicate that one variant is preferred over the other, even though it has been suggested that the morphological form is preferred in written French (Wales, 2002). Several factors have been shown to play a role in the expression of future time reference. Poplack and Turpin's (1999) Ottawa-Hull data and Blondeau's (2006) speakers from Montreal both showed that younger speakers demonstrated a lower rate of use of the morphological future, leading researchers to suggest that use of the morphological future is on the decline. Poplack and Turpin (1999) also observed that use of the simple present to express future time occurred with temporal adverbials (e.g., tomorrow, next year, etc.). In addition, Blondeau (2006) reported greater use of the morphological future in negative polarity utterances.

Lemée (2002, 2003) examined the acquisition of variable expression of future time reference by Irish learners of French who had spent a year abroad in France. In interview data, these learners demonstrated sensitivity to several constraints, with greater use of the morphological future associated with formal style, nonspecific adverbials, and negative polarity. In the case of temporal distance (i.e., how far the event is in the future), the simple present was preferred in distal events, whereas the periphrastic form was preferred for both proximal and indeterminate events.

Looking at English-speaking learners of Spanish, Kanwit and Solon (2013) compared the impact of two different study abroad contexts on the acquisition of variable future-time expression. Their learners were high school students participating in a seven-week immersion program in Valencia, Spain or Mérida, Mexico, each of whom completed a written contextualized questionnaire designed to manipulate temporal distance, presence of a temporal adverbial (e.g., mañana ‘tomorrow’, el año que viene ‘next year’), and clause type (i.e., whether the verbal predicate occurs in the main or subordinate clause). Because of the additional goal of comparing differences across study abroad sites, Kanwit and Solon also collected data from native speakers in each of the two regions using the same elicitation instrument (see Example 8.2 for a sample item in which the temporal distance is within a week, there is a temporal adverbial present, and the verbal predicate occurs in the main clause).

Kanwit and Solon (2013) found that after seven weeks, learners demonstrated selection rates comparable to those of the respective native speaker group for the region in which they were studying: like native speakers from Valencia, learners who had studied in Valencia demonstrated greater rates of selection of the morphological future than learners who had studied in
Mérida. The learners also showed movement toward native-like constraints on future form selection. Mérida native speakers’ future form selection was constrained only by clause type; the Mérida learners showed increased sensitivity to local norms in that, at Time 1, both presence of a temporal adverbial and clause type were significant predictors (with clause type, the direction of influence was reversed from the native speaker patterns). By Time 2, the learners dropped clause type and adverbial from the predictive model. The Valencia learner group’s model selected the same predictors (i.e., temporal distance and clause type) as the Valencia native speakers. By Time 2, they increased their factors’ weights toward the native targets.

In a related study, Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler, Henriksen, and Killam (2012) investigated the acquisition of the variable use of forms of past perfective time in Spanish by English-speaking learners. In Spanish, a completed action can be expressed with either the preterit or present perfect verb forms, as illustrated in Example 8.3.

In Peninsular varieties of Spanish, the present perfect has been described as moving into contexts normally reserved for the simple past, such as in hodiernal or today contexts (Burgo, 2012; Howe, 2006, 2013; Howe & Schwenter, 2003; Kempas, 2006; Schwenter, 1994a, 1994b; Serrano, 1994). To explore the acquisition of this geographic variation, Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler, Henriksen, and Killam (2012) studied 33 high school learners of Spanish

**EXAMPLE 8.2.** Sample item from Kanwit & Solon (2013, p. 210)

_Example 8.2. Sample item from Kanwit & Solon (2013, p. 210)_

_Tu amigo Marcos te ve en el supermercado. Está haciendo preparativos para tener un evento en su casa. Él te dice:_

‘Your friend Marcos sees you at the supermarket. He is making preparations for an event he is having at his house. He says to you:’

_a. Voy a dar una fiesta mañana. ‘I am going to throw a party tomorrow’_

_b. Daré una fiesta mañana. ‘I will throw a party tomorrow’_

_c. Doy una fiesta mañana. ‘I throw a party tomorrow’_

**EXAMPLE 8.3.** Preterit and present perfect forms in Spanish

_a. bailé ‘(I) danced’ preterit_

_b. he bailado ‘(I) have danced’ present perfect_
participating in an intensive, seven-week study abroad program. The learners lived with host families, attended classes on Spanish language and culture, and followed a Spanish-language-only code, which mandated the use of Spanish at all times. As in Kanwit and Solon (2013), the researchers recruited 24 native speakers to provide regionally appropriate comparison data. The data were elicited using a written contextualized task in which the linguistic factors known to constrain use of variable past time expression in Peninsular varieties of Spanish were manipulated. These factors included time of the event (an hour ago, today, one week ago, and a year or more ago), telicity (i.e., whether or not the predicate had a specific endpoint), anteriority (i.e., whether or not the predicate had “explicit consequences” for the present), and the presence or absence of background information in the linguistic context. The task was administered three times to the learners and once to the native speaker comparison group.

Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler, Henriksen, and Killam (2012) found that both the native and the learner participant groups selected the preterit more than the present perfect. In addition, the learners’ selection rates of the present perfect were higher than those reported for the native speaker group, regardless of time. This surprising finding meant that even though the variety with which learners had contact is associated with relatively higher rates of use of the present perfect, development for this learner group was seen in a decrease in rates of selection of the present perfect over time. The researchers also analyzed the constraints on use over the course of the stay abroad. One important change was the way in which the time of event constrained form selection; not only did the time of event become a significant predictor of selection, the greatest rates of selection of the present perfect came to occur in events that took place that day or one hour ago. The findings of the analysis on linguistic constraints across the three test times are summarized in Table 8.2.

In line with inquiry into the impact of the study abroad site on acquisition, Kanwit, Fafulas, and Geeslin (2011) explored the variable use of the Spanish present perfect as well as the copula contrast and the present progressive. In Chapter Seven we saw research conducted on second language learners of Spanish outside the study abroad context that focused on the variable use of the copula contrast (e.g., Geeslin, 2000, 2003) and the alternation between the simple present and the *estar + V–ndo* present progressive (e.g., Fafulas, 2010, 2013; Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012). With the existing research on these three variable structures in the at-home context in mind, Kanwit, Fafulas, and Geeslin (2011) sought to assess whether the learners participating in a relatively short stay abroad were also able to move toward native-like patterns of use, and whether this path of development differed according to the variety of Spanish to which learners were exposed. As with Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler, Henriksen, and Killam (2012), the 46 learners of Kanwit, Fafulas, and Geeslin (2011) were English-speaking high school learners of Spanish participating
in a seven-week intensive study abroad program, either in Valencia, Spain, or San Luis de Potosí, Mexico. They also included a native speaker baseline group from each region for the sake of comparison. Using a written contextualized questionnaire, administered at the beginning (Time 1) and end (Time 2) of the seven-week period, the researchers found differing results for each variable structure. The analysis of the rates of selection of the preterit and present perfect forms revealed that the learners in Mexico moved away from native speaker norms (exhibiting higher rates of selection of the present perfect at Time 2 than at Time 1, both of which were higher than the native speakers’ norms), while learners in Spain moved toward native speaker norms by selecting the present perfect more at Time 2 (arriving at a rate similar to that of the native speakers). However, in terms of predictors of use, both learner groups moved toward the target language community norms. For example, selection of the present perfect in “today” contexts, which is heavily favored by native speakers in Spain but not by native speakers in Mexico, exhibited a reduction in importance for the learners in Mexico, but an increase in importance for the learners in Spain. The second analysis, focused on the copula contrast, showed that both groups moved away from their respective native speaker target groups in terms of frequency of use. In addition, the factors predicting selection of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Native speakers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atelic predicates</td>
<td>Time of action (one hour ago and today)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional years of previous language study</td>
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<tr>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Native speakers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atelic predicates</td>
<td>Time of action (one hour ago and today)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background information absent</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional years of previous language study</td>
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<td>Improvement on level test</td>
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<tr>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Native speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional years of previous language study</td>
<td>Time of action (one hour ago and today)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement on level test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher final scores on level test</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous experience abroad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time of action (those taking place on the same day)</td>
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estar for each native speaker group (they were the same for both regions) were largely in place for each learner group at Time 1. Lastly, regarding variable use of the simple present and the present progressive, Kanwit, Fafulas, and Geeslin found that learners in Mexico shifted away from the target norm in terms of frequency of use and learners in Spain did not demonstrate much change, maintaining rates of use above the respective native speaker norm. The predictors of selection for both learner groups demonstrated similar patterns, and each was distinct from their regional native speaker norm. Specifically, learners at each study abroad site selected the present progressive more with states and did not prefer the present progressive with frequentative adverbs (e.g., cada día ‘everyday’), unlike the patterns attested by the native speakers. This study demonstrates that not all variable structures are acquired at equal rates. Nevertheless, we also see that the move toward native-like use by learners is possible and varies according to the region in which the learners’ experience abroad occurs.

One last variable structure in the area of morphosyntax that has received attention in the research on the acquisition of Spanish in a study abroad context is the sociolinguistic phenomenon known as leísmo. Leísmo refers to the use of the indirect object pronoun le instead of lo or la to mark a direct object. In English, no such distinction between direct and indirect objects is marked, and all three of these forms could be translated as ‘it’, ‘him’, or ‘her’, depending on the referent. The variable use of these forms in Spanish is illustrated in Example 8.4. To be clear, regions where the use of object pronoun forms is variable do not all vary in the same way. For example, laísmo is the phenomenon through which gender is marked on indirect objects (i.e., the use of la instead of le for animate, feminine indirect objects). Leísmo has been attested in several varieties of central Spain and its use is conditioned by linguistic factors, such as the gender and number of the direct object, as well as extralinguistic factors such as social class (Klein-Andreu, 2000).

Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler, Henriksen, and Killam (2012) explored whether a stay abroad in a Spanish-speaking region where leísmo has been attested influenced learners’ rates and patterns of direct object form selection. The study employed a written contextualized task, administered to 33 English-speaking learners and 24 native speakers of Spanish in Leon, Spain. Each participant completed a different version of the same task during the first week of their stay (Time 1), again during their fourth week of the program (Time 2),

**EXAMPLE 8.4.** Object pronouns in Spanish

a. *No le vi ayer.* ‘I didn’t see her/him yesterday’ (leismo)

b. *No la/lo vi ayer.* ‘I didn’t see her/him yesterday’
and finally during their last (seventh) week in the program (Time 3). The native speaker comparison group completed the task only once. The linguistic factors manipulated in the written contextualized task included the number of the referent (singular or plural), co-referentiality (whether the referent was accompanied by a co-referential a + NP), the gender of the referent, telicity, and the animacy of the subject. The analysis of the data collected from these abroad learners showed that their rates of selection of *le(s)* varied in a U-shaped trend from Time 1 to Time 3: 58.6% > 41.4% > 46.6%. It was only at Time 1 that learners demonstrated native-like selection rates for *le(s)* (54.4% selection of *le(s)* for native speakers). With regard to predictors of selection for the learner group, Geeslin and her colleagues found that by Time 3 the predictive model for the selection of *le(s)* was similar to that found for the native speaker comparison group. Specifically, by Time 3 the learners’ model came to include telicity and animacy of the subject, two factors that are present in the native speaker predictive model as well. Thus, it appears that the learners were moving back toward the native-like rates of selection, but, unlike at the first test time, this pattern of selection was also constrained by the appropriate linguistic factors.

Salgado-Robles (2011) also examined development of this variable structure by 40 learners studying abroad in Spain. A unique component of his study is the comparison of development of *leísmo* by learners in two different study abroad contexts, one in Valladolid, where frequency of *le* use is higher, and the other in Seville, where *le* is less frequent. He found that both learner groups moved toward their respective regional norms of *le* use, either increasing use of *le* (in Valladolid) or decreasing use of *le* (in Seville) in the sociolinguistic interviews and written tasks analyzed. In a related study, Salgado-Robles and Ibarra (2012) provided an additional look at the acquisition of *leísmo* by 20 learners of Spanish studying abroad in Valladolid over a five-month period. The data were elicited through sociolinguistic-style interviews conducted with each participant, one before the stay abroad and the second one afterwards. The authors found that learners moved toward the native norm by increasing frequency of *le(s)* in contexts where a direct object clitic pronoun (i.e., *lo(s)*, *la(s)*) is prescribed. This was also the case for predictors of *le(s)* selection, where all but one factor present in the native speaker model was reflected in the learner model by the time of the second sociolinguistic interview. Relating this finding more generally to the study abroad context, we see that learners do exhibit sensitivity to local norms during a stay abroad and, over time, are able to incorporate those norms into their own developing grammars.

**Pragmatics**

In Chapter Two, we identified pragmatics as one area of the grammar that can vary according to features of the speaker, including gender, age, social class,
and geographic origin. It will be recalled that pragmatics generally focuses on **speech acts**, or utterances categorized based on the communicative function they serve, as in requests or apologies, but also includes work on politeness and forms of address. In fact, the survey of research on the acquisition of pragmatics in the study abroad context below covers a range of these topics, including politeness, requests and apologies, and use of forms of address.

We begin our discussion with a look at research, which often focuses on Japanese as a second language, exploring the impact of study abroad on politeness. A unique linguistic characteristic of politeness in Japanese and typologically related languages is the use of vocabulary and verb morphology to vary levels of politeness and formality in speech. Speakers of Japanese vary this morphological and lexical encoding of politeness and formality in response to aspects of the speech setting—for example, how they relate in age and social status to their interlocutor(s) and the social context in which speech is occurring (e.g., an informal context such as a gathering among friends or a formal context such as a business meeting or an academic lecture). This variable use of verbal morphology and lexical encoding to reflect politeness and formality is often referred to as the use of **honorifics**. Acquisition of the use of honorifics by learners whose first language does not encode politeness in the same way is notoriously difficult (e.g., Marriott, 1995), although there is empirical evidence demonstrating that such learners can indeed learn to express politeness in languages like Japanese in a native-like manner (e.g., Hashimoto, 1993).

Some of the earliest research to examine the acquisition of politeness in Japanese focused on Australian exchange students living and studying in Japan (Hashimoto, 1993; Marriott 1993, 1994). For example, Marriott conducted an oral proficiency interview with secondary level learners before and after an exchange, analyzing frequency of use of polite forms with other variants (e.g., plain form, omission of the predicate) by discourse type (e.g., conversation, picture description, role play). Marriott (1995) found that before going abroad, the eight learners used polite forms nearly exclusively. After their time abroad, learners increased use of the plain form, although the majority of those uses were deemed to be inappropriate. Omission of predicates, on the other hand, decreased from Time 1 to Time 2. Marriott also found that learners employed polite forms more in the role-play, which was designed to provide a context for the plain style of speech. Learners' use of plain forms, on the other hand, was greater during the conversation portion of the interview and the picture description. Marriott noted that learners appeared to be using polite forms more during monitored speech than casual speech, where the plain style forms appeared more.

Ishida (2009) provides another example of research on sociolinguistic competence in Japanese as a second language through her Conversation Analysis Approach to the study of the use of the Japanese particle *ne* by an
English-speaking learner, Fred, studying abroad in Japan for nine months. Pragmatically *ne* is used in ways similar to the tag question ‘right?’ Ishida conducted eight conversations with Fred and found that he increased his use of the particle *ne* from zero instances in the first two conversations to 22 instances in the seventh recorded conversation and 13 instances in the eighth. She further showed an increase in the types of uses, contrasting his early use of *ne* to introduce a topic or align his response to facilitate turn-taking in conversation with later use of *ne* to demonstrate alignment to his interlocutor’s utterance and to express agreement. Ishida concluded that Fred’s experience abroad not only facilitated use and subsequent repertoire of use of *ne*, but also his increasing participation in social interaction.

Studies on the development of pragmatic competence have also investigated the impact of study abroad on requests and apologies. With regard to requests, studies have been conducted with English-speaking learners of French (Cohen & Shively, 2007), English-speaking learners of Spanish (Cohen & Shively, 2007; Rodríguez, 2001; Shively & Cohen, 2008), English-speaking learners of Russian (Owen, 2001), German-speaking learners of English (Schauer, 2004), Irish English-speaking learners of German (Barron, 2003), and Japanese-speaking learners of English (Cole & Anderson, 2001). Studies contributing to the discussion of the impact of context of learning on the development of apologies are fewer and include investigations of English-speaking learners of French and Spanish (Cohen & Shively [2007] for both; Shively & Cohen [2008] for Spanish only) and Japanese-speaking learners of English (Kondo, 1997). We will focus our discussion on the most recent of those studies.

Schauer (2004) examined the pragmatic development of requests by 12 German adult learners of English studying abroad for an academic year at a British university. The task employed in Schauer’s study was the Multimedia Elicitation Task (MET), which elicits requests via the presentation of 16 scenarios manipulated for interlocutor status and degree of imposition. Learners completed the task after their arrival, halfway through the academic year, and again before their departure. Schauer found that lexical downgraders, such as ‘maybe’, were used earlier than syntactic ones, although learners’ use of syntactic downgraders, such as ‘it would be really nice if . . .’, increased over time. Schauer also reported some individual variation.

In related work, Cohen and Shively (2007) investigated the combined effect of pedagogical intervention and a semester-long study abroad experience on the acquisition of requests and apologies in French and Spanish by English-speaking learners.¹ They elicited data from 67 learners of Spanish and 19 learners of French using a written discourse completion task. In this task, learners were presented with portions of specific, contextualized dialogues and asked to complete them in writing. The discourse completion task was manipulated to vary social status, social distance, and either how severe the infraction was
(for apologies) or the extent of imposition (for requests). The learners in each study abroad group were randomly assigned to either the control group, which did not receive instruction, or the experimental group, which received pedagogical intervention. The pedagogical intervention group completed three tasks. First, they read *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Student’s Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use* (Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2002). Second, learners in this group attended a pre-study abroad orientation meeting to discuss the guide and receive an overview of speech acts in Spanish or French. Finally, each learner in the pedagogical intervention group submitted seven electronic journal entries related to their experiences abroad and their use of the guide. In their analysis, Cohen and Shively (2007) showed that there was significant improvement in speech act performance for both study abroad groups. There was no statistical difference in speech act performance between the group that received pedagogical intervention and the group that did not. Collectively, the findings of Cohen and Shively’s study suggest that experience abroad alone was enough to facilitate positive pragmatic development of apologies and requests.

In a follow up study, Shively and Cohen (2008) traced whether learners of Spanish studying abroad for a semester moved toward native-like norms of use of requests and apologies. They analyzed the data elicited by the same written discourse completion task in Cohen and Shively (2007) from the same 67 English-speaking learners of Spanish. Overall, learners’ use of requests and apologies moved toward native-like norms after a semester abroad. There were, however, uses that demonstrated a move away from native-like norms. For example, in requests learners demonstrated nonnative-like use of head act strategies (e.g., ¿Me podría dar . . . ?) and supportive moves (e.g., muchas gracias . . . muy amable.) in some dialogues after their time abroad. Likewise, with apologies, learners moved away from native-like norms of use in terms of “acknowledgement of responsibility” for the dialogue in which they, as students, had to apologize for missing a meeting with a “distinguished” professor for the second time. This research shows that learners do modify their request and apology strategies during a stay abroad and also that even following an extended stay abroad there remain differences between native speakers and learners.

Another area of acquisition of pragmatics that has been investigated in the study abroad context is use of address forms. Barron (2003) examined the impact of a 10-week study abroad experience on 33 Irish learners’ use of the German second-person singular pronouns. In German, the second-person singular pronoun you has two forms, *du* and *Sie*, the first characterized as “intimate/simple” and the second “polite/distant”. *Sie* is used with interlocutors for whom the speaker would use the interlocutor’s surname along with a title, whereas *du* is used with interlocutors with whom the speaker is on a
first-name basis. Barron’s participants completed a free-discourse completion task at the beginning, middle, and end of their time abroad. The task presented six scenarios detailing aspects of a situational and social context, and learners wrote a complete dialogue for each scenario. From Time 1 to Time 3, learners decreased the rate at which they switched between *du* and *Sie* in contexts where the switch did not fulfill a pragmatic function, especially in informal contexts. Additionally, in scenarios requiring reciprocal use of *du* and reciprocal use of *Sie*, learners demonstrated more target-like reciprocity in address behavior from Time 1 to Time 3. In sum, learners showed that they were acquiring more native-like patterns of use, but had not yet reached the target.

Finally, research has addressed learners’ awareness of pragmatic variation in the target language. Kinginger and Farrell (2004) measured learners’ meta-pragmatic awareness of the French forms of address *tu* and *vous*, as well as the impact of a semester-long study abroad stay in France on developing awareness and use of these forms. Meta-pragmatic awareness was elicited by means of a Language Awareness Interview, where learners chose the appropriate address form—*tu* or *vous*—for a series of interpersonal situations (six in total) presented to them, and then explained that choice. Kinginger and Farrell found that with the exception of two participants, learners demonstrated knowledge of use of *tu* and *vous* by interlocutor age and formality of the speech setting before going abroad. The two learners who did not do so were able to select appropriately after the stay abroad. Additionally, in the hypothetical situation involving a classmate, the researchers found a positive effect of the study abroad stay on changing learners’ selection from *vous* to *tu* between the pre-test and post-test. From this research and others like it (e.g., Schauer, 2009), we see again the positive impact of the study abroad setting on sociopragmatic competence, both production and awareness.

Taken together, the studies on the development of pragmatic abilities in the study abroad context generally provide support for the assertion that time spent abroad is beneficial for the acquisition of pragmatic abilities, such as the use of honorifics and the formulation of speech acts such as requests and apologies. Specifically, these investigations document development in learner grammars toward native norms during a stay abroad, while simultaneously noting areas of difference between natives and learners, even at the end of the stay abroad. Thus, the general tendency found for the acquisition of variable morphosyntactic structures also holds for pragmatics.

**Production and Perception of the Second Language Sound System**

As we move away from the fields of morphosyntax and pragmatics, we find that other areas of sociolinguistic competence examined in the study abroad
context have received less attention. For example, only a handful of studies exist that investigate the role of the study abroad setting in the production or perception of the second language sound system as it relates to the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. There are good studies of the impact of study abroad on speech perception, for example, but these do not address second language variation (e.g., Mora, 2008). Likewise there are good examples of research on the relationship between discourse style and Type I variation in the study abroad context. One such study, Díaz-Campos (2006), examined the role of discourse style in the acquisition and use of four groups of segments by English-speaking learners studying abroad in Alicante, Spain. The groups of segments included were word initial /p t k/ (e.g., perro ‘dog’, té ‘tea’, cama ‘bed’), intervocalic /b d g/ (e.g., lobo ‘wolf’, lado ‘side’, lago ‘lake’), the palatal nasal /ɲ/ (e.g., niño ‘child’), and the lateral /l/ in syllable final position (e.g., clavel ‘carnation’). Díaz-Campos conducted a Goldvarb analysis of read-aloud and interview data for each of the four segments under examination, finding that the interview style did, in fact, lead to more accurate production. A second interesting finding was that the study abroad group outperformed the at-home group on only two of the four segments (/p t k/ and /l/) examined, and the at-home group actually outperformed the abroad group on one (/b d g/). Thus, this study calls into question the assumption that study abroad always leads to more accurate production across structures. Nevertheless, these studies do not examine the second language acquisition of sociolinguistic competence (i.e., Type II) variation, to which we now turn.

In a study of sociolinguistic variation in speech production and the impact of study abroad, Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009), examined the deletion of word final /l/ in French by the same group of Irish learners described earlier for morphosyntactic variable structures. Regan and her colleagues (2009) analyzed tokens extracted from the same sociolinguistic interviews described previously. The analysis showed that with a deletion rate of 33%, the learners were far below the native norm reported in previous literature (nearly categorical deletion for il in Armstrong, 1996; 88% deletion of impersonal il in Ashby, 1984; and 94% deletion of impersonal il in Laks, 1980). Regarding the factors favoring /l/-deletion, the researchers found that female learners were more likely to delete /l/, and all learners favored /l/-deletion for impersonal il (e.g., Il est difficile de courir cinq miles ‘It’s hard to run five miles’). The results for gender are consistent with the findings reported by Armstrong (1996) for native speakers, leading the authors to conclude that, similar to morphosyntactic variation, the study abroad setting appears to facilitate acquisition of phonological variation. This study also demonstrated that learners are able to acquire both linguistic and social constraints on variable structures in the sound system, even in cases where the rates of use differ significantly from native speakers.
In a related study, Henriksen, Geeslin, and Willis (2010) examined the development of intonation in declaratives, absolute interrogatives, and pronominal interrogatives during a seven-week intensive immersion stay in Leon, Spain. The authors investigate the modifications made to each utterance type by four English-speaking learners over the course of the immersion program. They elicited data using a contextualized response reading task, which provided a meaningful context, and asked participants to read a response that would be spoken by one participant in a dialogue. The task allowed the researchers to control for the phonetic characteristics of each utterance while at the same time creating a more meaning-based task. Henriksen, Geeslin, and Willis analyzed the F0 contours and boundary movements in 96 target utterances produced at the beginning and end of the immersion stay and characterized the most frequent intonation strategy for each learner at both measurement times as well as the degree of variability found in each learner’s strategies. Because native speaker data on the same task are also available (Henriksen et al., 2010), it was possible to determine that learners were able to modify their intonation strategies over time and that they were moving in the direction of the native speaker target, by modifying their most frequent strategies and their final boundary tone inventory over the course of the immersion program. The reason that this study is important for research on second language variation is that the native speaker target toward which learners were moving is that which native speakers exhibit in Leon, Spain, on this type of task, but not necessarily what would be predicted by prior theoretical accounts. In other words, learners are able to modify their intonation patterns in accordance with local norms that may reflect both formality of the context as well as geographic location. More research of this kind in particular is needed, given the wide range of variability present in the prosodic systems of native speakers cross-dialectally (see also Henriksen, 2013).

Research on the second language acquisition of sociolinguistic variation in the sound system is still limited. Nevertheless, the studies to date suggest that the study abroad experience does indeed foster development of Type II variation. Given the growing interest in speech production and perception in second languages, it is likely that this will represent an area of exciting future growth.

Individual Differences and the Study Abroad Experience

In this section we turn to nonlinguistic characteristics and their impact on developing sociolinguistic competence. Many of the studies cited thus far have examined some aspect of learners’ external or social characteristics either to explain the individual differences observed in reported findings or to identify those external or social characteristics of the study abroad setting that may
facilitate greater access to native input and, subsequently, increased development in the second language. In this sense, the division may be seen as somewhat arbitrary because many of the studies reviewed below also focus on a particular aspect of the developing second language grammar. Nevertheless, the studies reviewed here have a central focus on the way in which factors related to the learner, the study abroad setting, or the patterns of language use during study abroad influence the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence in a second language. We divide these broadly into characteristics of the learner and characteristics of the learning context.

Individual Differences: Characteristics of the Learner

There are several learner characteristics that are known to have an impact on language learning in general. These range from biological characteristics, such as learner gender; to cognitive characteristics, such as measures of reading time or working memory; to social characteristics, such as identity (for an overview of the factors mentioned here, as well as several others, see Dörnyei, 2005, 2006; Ellis, 2004; Robinson, 2002; and Skehan, 1989). Nevertheless, in the context of study abroad, these differences are less widely studied and, when limited to research on the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence in the study abroad setting, the findings are quite limited. However, a handful of studies do point to the importance of examining these traits. One such characteristic, the learner’s second language proficiency, has generally been of interest for determining the relative phase at which variable structures come to emerge and to be constrained by relevant linguistic features. Findings related to proficiency that are exhibited in several studies include the greater rates of use of variable structures among advanced learners (e.g., ne deletion in Regan et al., 2009; Knouse, 2012). It is often difficult to examine the emergence of sociolinguistic variation and distinguish it from developmental variation, which is present at earlier stages (e.g., Geeslin, 2000, 2003; Gudmestad, 2012; Rehner, 2002). Despite this difficulty, however, research on second language variation in general suggests that sociolinguistic competence is acquired only after a certain level of proficiency has been achieved. What is more, even highly advanced learners may demonstrate differences from native speaker patterns of use on the same elicitation task (e.g., Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2011b). This finding appears to hold true in the study abroad context as well.

The role of a second learner characteristic, gender, has been examined in the context of the acquisition of a variable that acts as a sociolinguistic marker in the native speaker speech community. Examples of this type of sociolinguistic variable include ne deletion, the nous/on alternation, and /l/-deletion in French (Regan, Howard, & Lemée, 2009). For these three structures in particular, what emerges regarding the role of gender is that male and female learners,
like native speakers, demonstrate different patterns of variation. In the case of each variable structure under study, female learners (like their native speaker counterparts) preferred the more prestigious or conservative variant by demonstrating greater retention of "ne," greater frequency of use of "nous," and greater retention of word final /l/. More research is needed, of course, on other second languages and on a wider range of variable linguistic structures, but for now these studies offer compelling evidence for the continued examination of gender, as well other social characteristics of learners.

Learner identity has also been investigated in the context of study abroad, although in this case, research generally focuses on how the study abroad experience influences the development of learner identity in the second language. Nevertheless, because of approaches such as the Identity Approach (a social approach to second language acquisition discussed in Chapter Four of this volume; see, for example, Norton Peirce, 1995), we know that learner identity does, in turn, affect the development of second language competence and, for this reason, it is included in the present chapter. This body of work is best represented by the work of Aveni (2005). Aveni opens her volume by stating that language acquisition is the result of language in use for the purpose of communication. Furthermore, she notes that the way learners use language is related to how they see themselves or how they conceptualize their identity(ies). Aveni’s research on the experiences of learners of Russian in St. Petersburg has been important for bringing to light the factors affecting learners’ construction of their self-identities, and how the learner’s self is often developed and later reconstructed in the second language learning setting. Aveni examined factors related to the learner that included their attitudes toward their own second language communication abilities, how they compare themselves to others participating in the abroad learning experience, and familiarity with their interlocutors, to name a few. She also examines factors related to the external social context—for example, the attitudes of learners’ caretakers, the nature of feedback and correction provided to their speech in the second language, and the physical appearance and persona of others participating in the learning context. These factors do not work in isolation; rather, together they shape learners’ interaction with the learning context and, further, how learners come to present themselves within that context. Opportunities for use of and interaction in the second language largely depend on the interplay of learner identity and external environment, both understood to be socially constructed phenomena. Although this work does not address sociolinguistic competence directly, the factors under examination in this work undoubtedly influence its development and merit future study.

Other characteristics of the learner that have received attention in the general study abroad literature include attitudes, motivation, personality, and quantity and quality of contact and interaction with native speakers (e.g., Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsburg, 1995; DeKeyser, 1991; Freed, 1990; Freed,
Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Marion, 1980; Polanyi, 1995; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). These characteristics have yet to be the focus of detailed, empirical studies examining the impact of the stay abroad on acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. Nevertheless, there are some promising models for examining the influence of these extralinguistic factors during the stay abroad. For example, Isabelli-Garcia (2006) conducted an in-depth analysis of four American learners’ attitudes and social networks before, during, and after a semester-length stay abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She specifically wanted to relate these qualitative measures to potential gains observed in Spanish oral communication as demonstrated by their performance on an ACTFL-style Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview before and after studying abroad. To examine attitudes, she analyzed weekly journal entries completed by each learner. Learners’ social networks were examined via analysis of weekly network logs where learners indicated with whom they interacted and the potential relation among those interactants. Her analysis revealed that learners’ attitudes indeed had an impact on their desire and motivation to build and sustain social networks with native speakers in the target language community. This was particularly the case for one learner, Jennifer, whose negative attitudes toward the target language culture directly influenced her willingness to make friends with Argentines. Jennifer further demonstrated no development in overall oral proficiency after the time spent abroad. The social networks of another learner, Tom, were more complex and afforded more opportunities for interaction with native speakers in the target language community. Tom also showed improvement in overall oral proficiency after the study abroad program, moving from intermediate to intermediate high on the ACTFL oral proficiency scale. One aspect of Isabelli-Garcia’s findings worth highlighting is that not all learners’ attitudes remained stable over time. This was particularly evident in her analysis of the learners’ weekly diary entries, where attitudes fluctuated in the face of situation-specific challenges in the study abroad setting. Further research that connects individual characteristics with sociolinguistic variation is imperative, particularly in order to highlight qualitative differences in learners’ experiences abroad, as well as how opportunities for interaction in the second language community may differ from one learner to the next. Patterns of language contact have been particularly important for supporting the assertion that simply being in the study abroad setting is not enough (e.g., Freed, 1995), and this is likely true for the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence during the stay abroad as well.

**Individual Differences: Characteristics of the Abroad Context**

We now turn our attention to the characteristics of the study abroad setting and the development of sociolinguistic competence. Despite growing interest,
one of the only characteristics that has been examined is the nature of the living accommodations while abroad. For example, one of the independent variables in Knouse (2012) was whether study abroad learners participated in a homestay (i.e., stayed with a native-speaking host family). The inclusion of this factor reflected her hypothesis that the greater exposure provided in a homestay, as compared to residence in an apartment or dormitory, would lead to greater acquisition of the target speech segment under study, the Spanish /θ/. Knouse found that learners who stayed in a homestay environment produced [θ] more than those who stayed in dormitories (83.3% versus 16.7%, respectively), although this factor was not selected as a significant predictor variable for use of [θ] by learners. Thus, it does appear that the type of residence was at least weakly related to the acquisition and use of this geographically indexed variable.

Despite the limited empirical findings about the characteristics of the study abroad context related to the development of sociolinguistic competence, there are several assumptions generally held about the nature of the study abroad setting. Each of these constitutes an important area of future research. For example, Lafford (2006) notes that in comparison to the at-home learner, we generally believe that study abroad learners share several characteristics. The characteristics (and our underlying beliefs) are summarized in Table 8.3.

We have seen recent growth in studies that aim to empirically address the impact of these characteristics on gains in the second language, most notably in the areas of phonetic, grammatical, and overall proficiency development (Alvord & Christiansen, 2012; Freed, Dewey, Segalowitz, & Halter, 2004; Lafford, 2006). Furthermore, recent progress in the development and analysis of materials used in the qualitative study of these issues (cf. Friedman, 2012) will provide new resources for this field of inquiry. The area of research on the

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<th>TABLE 8.3</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(Assumed) characteristics of study abroad learners (Lafford, 2006)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>We assume that study abroad learners:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are exposed to a greater variety of authentic, discourse-level input</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are exposed to a greater variety of registers and speech styles in the second language</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interact with a greater variety of native speaker interlocutors (e.g., friends, family, service employees, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate greater use of communication strategies to assist in breakdowns in communication</td>
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relationship between the characteristics of the study abroad context and the development of sociolinguistic competence promises to be a challenging but profitable endeavor.

**The Effect of Dialect Exposure**

A final area of research related to sociolinguistic competence and experience abroad is the role of dialect exposure in developing second language grammars. One such study, Schmidt (2009), investigated the impact of dialect familiarity on listening comprehension in second language Spanish. Specifically, she examined whether a short-term stay abroad in the Dominican Republic positively affected learners’ performance on listening comprehension tasks. The participants of her study were 11 English-speaking learners of Spanish, ranging in language proficiency (self-rated using a nine-point Likert item assessment task) from low intermediate to near-native. The study abroad program lasted three weeks, and participants engaged with readings related to Dominican literature and culture (the majority written in English) as well as various interactions. Their exposure to Dominican Spanish came in a variety of forms, including face-to-face interactions with Dominican residents at local markets and shops, listening to the TV and radio, and attending guest lectures and guided tours given in Spanish. Learners did not receive explicit instruction on dialectal features of Dominican Spanish, with the exception of one lecture where an invited scholar presented aspects of Dominican vocabulary and syntax and also played speech samples representative of Dominican phonology.

To test the impact of dialect familiarity on listening comprehension, Schmidt (2009) had participants complete three listening comprehension tasks one week prior to leaving for the Dominican Republic and two days after their return to the US. The first task was a word comprehension task, where learners listened to a spoken word and then wrote down what they heard in Spanish, followed by its meaning in English. The format of the second and third tasks were the same, except learners had to listen to a phrase or entire sentence and write down what they heard, again followed by the meaning in English. Schmidt found significant improvement in the comprehension of spoken words and phrases by learners after just a three-week stay abroad. She also reported an effect for task; learners performed significantly better on the word-level task than the phrase-level task. Schmidt noted that difficulty above the level of the word in listening comprehension may be due to prosodic differences in Dominican Spanish (e.g. Willis, 2010). Lastly, Schmidt (2009) reported that although learners improved significantly in listening comprehension overall, there were specific segments that appeared to cause more difficulty in listening comprehension than others. For example,
/s/-deletion (e.g., *los lunes* ‘on Mondays’ [loˈlu.nes]) and lambdacism (e.g., *puerta* ‘door’ [puel.ta]), in particular, proved difficult in the listening comprehension tasks, perhaps due to differences in allophonic distribution in English (i.e., [Ø] is not an allophone of /s/, nor is [l] an allophone of the English rhotic, but these features constitute part of the Dominican Spanish phonological system). In contrast, /d/-deletion (e.g., *hablado* ‘spoken’ [a.ˈβlao]) and /n/-velarization (e.g., *pan* ‘bread’ [paŋ]) posed fewer difficulties in listening comprehension, a finding Schmidt suggests is likely due to learners’ previous familiarity with these phonological processes (intervocalic /d/ is already weakened across many dialects of Spanish and /n/-velarization categorically occurs when followed by a velar consonant, such as /k/ or /g/).

Further support for the positive effect of dialect familiarity is reported in Schmidt (2011), where she finds that learners’ perception of /s/-aspiration in Spanish correlates with previous study abroad experience in an /s/-aspiration dialectal region (see Chapter Seven).

The acquisition and use of the Spanish /θ/ by English-speaking learners had generated attention even before its empirical investigation. Occasionally, some of the learners who spend time studying abroad in the central to northern region of Spain adopt the use of the voiceless interdental fricative /θ/ (e.g., *cazar* ‘to hunt’ [ka.ˈθaɾ]), which is used instead of the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ (e.g., *casar* ‘to marry’ [ka.ˈsaɾ]) for the graphemes z, ci, and ce. The adoption of this phoneme by second language learners serves as a direct example of how dialect exposure impacts the second language system—in this case, the second language sound system. Why some learners choose to adopt this phoneme in their second language sound systems, and others do not, is not thoroughly understood. In fact, it appears that only a small portion of second learners make this choice (e.g., Geeslin & Gudmestad [2011a] found that of the 130 learners in their study, only nine of those who had spent time abroad in Spain used [θ] in their speech). There are a few examples of research exploring the second language acquisition of this geographically indexed phoneme.

Two recent examples of research on the second language acquisition of the interdental fricative /θ/ are Knouse (2012) and Ringer-Hilfinger (2012), each of whom investigated the impact of the study abroad experience on the use of this dialectal variant. Both studies followed a group of English-speaking learners studying abroad in Spain, either in Salamanca for six weeks (Knouse 2012) or in Madrid for an academic semester (Ringer-Hilfinger, 2012). Ringer-Hilfinger found that after a semester abroad, learners’ awareness of the contrast between /s/ and /θ/ (i.e., a phenomenon called *distinción* ‘distinction’) increased (as compared to two learners in the at-home setting), but use of the variant [θ] did not. Through an analysis of data elicited using a matched-guise test and an open-ended question on language use, Ringer-Hilfinger showed that many of the study abroad learners were hesitant to
adopt this phoneme because of their preference to speak like their friends or extended acquaintances that were native speakers of other varieties of Spanish. Similarly, Knouse (2012) encountered minimal use of /θ/ among her study abroad participants. Only a little over half of the participants (seven out of 15) employed the interdental fricative at least one time in the speaking tasks she administered (reading a passage and responding orally to a series of open-ended questions) after their time abroad. Unlike Ringer-Hilfinger's (2012) study, Knouse (2012) sought to determine the linguistic and social factors predicting use of /θ/ by learners. With regard to the linguistic factors, she found that the study abroad learners were more likely to employ /θ/ when the grapheme was a z. In terms of the social factors, Knouse found that beginner and intermediate learners (as compared to advanced learners) and Spanish majors or minors favored use of the interdental fricative. The finding for beginning and intermediate learners was exactly the opposite found by Geeslin and Gudmestad (2011a), who found that rates of use of /θ/ increased with proficiency and was only observed in advanced speakers with study abroad experience.

From this review it is clear that more research is needed on the effect of dialect exposure on the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. Replication studies will help us to sort out inconsistent findings. Likewise, studies on other second languages and with learners from a variety of different first language backgrounds will provide important avenues of expansion.

**STUDY ABROAD AND THE ACQUISITION OF SECOND LANGUAGE SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE**

Overall the findings from research conducted on the impact of the study abroad experience on the second language acquisition of sociolinguistic competence mirror, in a sense, what we know about the impact of study abroad on learners’ linguistic abilities more generally. We see benefits of study abroad across areas of the grammar with a need for considerably more research on the role of the characteristics of the individual and the study abroad setting on the development of second language sociolinguistic competence. More research in this area is also needed in the acquisition of vocabulary—particularly colloquial vocabulary—as demonstrated by the work of Dewaele and Regan (2001). Although the use of colloquial vocabulary and lexical expression by Dutch and Irish learners of French increased after a year abroad, frequency of use remained considerably lower than that observed in the native speaker control group. It is likely that as we start to develop and investigate these questions, we will turn to frameworks that allow us to examine in greater depth and with greater sophistication these important connections between social factors, individual factors, and linguistic development.

**COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION**

A. Comprehension

1. In the early research on study abroad, such as Magnan (1986), what measure was used to test development abroad?
2. What overarching question is at the heart of variationist studies of development abroad?
3. What evidence did Regan (1996) find for development of native-like *ne* deletion by learners abroad? What evidence did she find for learner differences in comparison to native speakers? What did Regan (2004) find with respect to *ne* deletion for learners who were analyzed one year after returning from study abroad?
4. What differences did Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009) report according to speaker gender for study abroad learners expressing *nous* and *on* in French?
5. According to Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009) what linguistic factors favored the use of the morphological future? How did Kanwit and Solon's (2013) two learner groups in Spain and Mexico differ in terms of selection of the morphological future after seven weeks abroad?
6. What development did Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler, Henriksen, and Killam (2012) note at Time 3 with respect to the role of linguistic factors on the selection of *le*? What difference did Salgado-Robles (2011) reveal between learners who had studied in Seville and those who had studied in Valladolid, with respect to use of *le*?
7. What was Marriott's (1995) finding with respect to the speech style that favors the use of polite forms following study abroad in Japan?
8. According to Schauer (2004), what did German-speaking learners of English use earlier: lexical downgraders or syntactic downgraders?

9. In Shively and Cohen (2008), what evidence is provided of learner movement toward native-like use of requests and apologies?

10. What possibility does the study of Henriksen, Geeslin, and Willis (2010) demonstrate for learners who have studied abroad?

11. What learner characteristics have been shown to be important with respect to development abroad?


B. Application

1. The current chapter presented study-abroad programs that contained numerous differences. What are some ways in which programs differ? After considering these differences, make a list of the qualities that you consider to be ideal for study abroad programs. Justify why each of the choices that you made is better than the alternative(s), drawing from the literature reviewed in this chapter and from any pertinent personal experiences.

2. During your study abroad, were there certain variables that you realized demonstrated regional variation? What were they? Once you were aware that local native speakers produced a form in a certain way, did you adopt that form? Why or why not? What effect did this have (or would it have had)? What benefits or risks were there in adopting the form? (If you have not studied abroad, then apply information from this chapter to a site where you would like to study.)

3. “Language learners usually sound more formal than native speakers”. First, use evidence from the current chapter to support this claim. Next, connect your own experiences as a learner (or those of someone you know) to further illustrate this point.

4. “Language learners usually sound more formal than native speakers”: perhaps you also noticed counterevidence to this claim in the current chapter. Provide evidence from this chapter to refute this statement. Then, connect your own experiences as a learner to shed further light on this idea.

5. With respect to regional language use, what sort of information that you did not possess would have been helpful for you before you studied abroad? Imagine that you are going to be preparing a group of learners to live in that location (or the locale of your choice). Make a list of linguistic essentials that will enable these learners to best fit in linguistically.
6. Pool together what you learned from reading about Marriott (1993, 1994, 1995), Ishida (2009), and Hashimoto (1993). Based on these studies, what would you do to prepare a group of learners about to depart for study abroad in Japan?

NOTES

1. Four of the participants in Cohen and Shively’s (2007) study did not speak English as a first language. The first languages of these participants include Bosnian, French, Hmong, and Russian.

2. F0 refers to fundamental frequency, which is a quantitative measure of pitch. Boundary movements are changes in intonational melodies at the edge of a phrase. Measuring the F0 at different locations, such as the beginning and the end of a phrase, tells us about changes in F0 over the course of the phrase. These changes indicate differences as to utterance types (e.g. interrogative, declarative, etc.) (Henriksen, 2013, p. 168).

3. Schmidt (2009) reported only the results for the word comprehension task and the phrase comprehension task in this study.
Section III

Implications of Research on the Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Competence in Second Languages
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Now that we have a clearer sense of which social factors are at play in second language acquisition and how they might impact language learning and use, we turn our attention to the implications of the findings from research on language variation for second language instruction. One of the most immediate implications is that awareness of linguistic variation makes us consider more carefully how we define “target” in the second language classroom. Perhaps even more broadly, we might ask what an appropriate goal is for second language learners. Thus, we begin here with a discussion of what might constitute a reasonable norm (or range of reasonable norms) for classroom instruction and how this might be identified. We will see that for some second languages, such as English, French, and Spanish, there is a wealth of analysis of the appropriate norms for instruction, whereas for other second languages the issue has been largely ignored. As the reader may now expect, knowledge of sociolinguistic variation suggests that the way in which we define norms should be directly linked to the specific language learning context in which instruction takes place.

The process of identifying an appropriate target for second language learners through an exploration of norms and standards further leads us to reconsider some of the ways in which this might impact the language classroom. For example, explicit grammar instruction may now be seen from a different perspective, one in which language variation is taken into account. Likewise, the instruction of Heritage speakers might be improved, in the sense that we may make the examples of language in the classroom more directly connected to their own language learning experiences and their professional and personal goals. Ultimately, the goal is to raise the consciousness of language instructors so that the process of selecting pedagogical materials and designing classroom activities is more closely allied with the development of sociolinguistic competence than would otherwise be the case. In sum, the goal of the current chapter
and the one that follows is to make the connection between the research on second language acquisition and learning in previous chapters to the practical issues faced by language instructors on a daily basis.

‘STANDARDS’, ‘NORMS’, AND ‘TARGETS’

Phrases such as “standard language”, or even more specifically “Standard English”, “Standard Spanish”, and the like, abound in contemporary speech. These phrases are often used to refer to what ought to be spoken, what we ought to teach, or even more simply, what is acceptable language. Nevertheless, it is actually quite complex to define the term standard. If we agree that standard language is what ought to be spoken in formal, educated contexts, we are still faced with questions such as who might decide this and how we know when we see examples of this standard. The answers to these questions may have to do with geopolitical boundaries, social distinctions, ethnic differences, or other individual characteristics.

One of the most basic definitions of standard language denotes any variety of a language that has gone through the process of standardization and been codified (see also Chapter Two for more about languages and varieties). In other words, standard language has been identified as a form through which business of all sorts (government, commerce, education, religion, news casting, etc.) should be conducted and has been codified, or described in written form, in dictionaries and/or grammars of that language. Simply put, this standard is seen in written government documents, trade documents, formal correspondence between important, powerful or respected people, and so on. This often also implies that it becomes prescribed for use in formal domains, such as schools, and is deemed to be “correct” or “proper” (e.g., Goldstein, 1987; Llamas & Stockwell, 2002). However, knowing what we know about linguistic variation, we are likely to have many questions. For example, which government identifies the standard? Can a single language have several standards? Why do some highly respected people use the standard while others do not? Clearly, the sociolinguistic knowledge we have developed over the last nine chapters allows us to explore this definition in greater depth.

There are many issues associated with the identification of a standard language, and discussion of these issues has filled volumes across centuries of scholarship (Hudson, 1996; Trudgill, 1992; Wardhaugh, 2010). For example, we might ask whether a standard must be defined as a binary option whereby language is either standard or nonstandard, or whether there are one or more options between the two (see Villa [1996] for discussion). Or we might consider how urban centers play a role in identifying standard language and how this might be linked to migration in and out of cities and to connections between urban centers across geopolitical lines; we might also consider how
this urban/rural distinction might interact with other relevant social factors (see Hidalgo [1990] for discussion). We may further wonder whether each urban center has its own standard (e.g., standard Spanish of Cuzco, standard English of New York, etc.) or whether there is a single, pan-national standard for a given language (see Auger [2002a] for an interesting discussion of Quebec French as well as Lipski [1983] for a cross-dialectal comparison of radio broadcasting in Latin American Spanish). Exploring the notion of standard language also raises issues of diachrony (studying a language over time) and synchrony (looking at language here and now). For example, can a standard change over time? In the case of some languages, like English, we might even wonder if a standard requires native speakers of that language—or perhaps, what exactly a native speaker is. Questions like these arise from the study of the global spread of English to locations where English as well as at least one other language are politically supported and where a language such as English would be learned by children, but, at the same time, would never be the first language of those speakers (Bolton, 2006; Bolton & Kachru, 2006; Crystal, 2003; Kachru, 1982, 1985, 1986, 1991; Thumboo, 2001). What is clear is that the definition of the term standard is widely discussed and remains controversial.

It is precisely because of the difficulties associated with the term standard that few linguists employ this term in their own work. Instead, linguists are interested in norms, a term taken to describe the most frequent forms used by a certain group in written or spoken language. Unlike a prescriptive norm (i.e., what ought to happen), the norm of interest to linguists is a descriptive norm. This means that it refers to how things actually happen, rather than what ought to be produced. In other words, the pursuit of linguists is to describe language, not to evaluate it in terms of its quality. The way in which a particular group speaks (or writes) is also known as a sociolect, as opposed to an idiolect, which refers to the speech of a single individual. The key difference between norms and standards is that norms are contextualized and refer to the patterns of language for a given group in a given context. We can quickly infer that some contexts require more formal language than others, and even that some sociolects will be stigmatized, whereas others will meet with certain prestige. As mentioned in earlier chapters, one of the central pursuits of sociolinguistics is, in fact, exploring the attitudinal correlates of language forms. In other words, sociolinguists seek to understand whether a given form meets with prestige or stigma as well as the linguistic and social contextual features that are associated with the use of that form. In sum, linguists seek to describe language as it occurs, and sociolinguists seek to understand the connection between language and other factors such as attitudes or social characteristics. Figure 9.1 contains a list of questions that illustrate how we might explore the degree to which a given variety meets with prestige or stigma.
As we examine the list of questions in Figure 9.1 it becomes quite apparent that many different factors are involved in identifying the prestige variant. In an interesting discussion of Chicano Spanish (and English), Galindo (1995) notes the importance of examining speakers’ attitudes toward their own varieties of a language and toward other varieties of the same language. Additionally, in bilingual communities, attitudes toward the dominant (or minority) language interact with the process of identifying the standard for a given speech community. These attitudes, in turn, are influenced by factors such as gender, ethnicity, and social class. In Galindo’s study, speakers noted that certain varieties were not appropriate for girls, for example. In fact, all of the sociolinguistic variables examined in earlier chapters are intricately related to the variety of a language we choose to speak and to the linguistic norms of a given speech community. In particular, Galindo notes that there are both intraethnic attitudes and interethnic attitudes, and in order to understand the norms for a given community we must consider both of these. For the purposes of the language instructor, what matters most is that we understand that norms for a given sociolect are not arbitrary but rather a reflection of our attitudes toward that group as a result of numerous social factors.

Before we move to the norms for the language classroom, it is reasonable to briefly consider why it is the case that any group or individual would opt to speak in any way other than following the norms for prestige. Put differently, why doesn’t everyone always seek to employ the prestigious variety of a language? The answer to this question lies in the identity of the speakers themselves. We don’t all want to sound like college professors (even those of us who are college professors don’t choose to sound that way all the time!). This is because not every speaker shares that identity and, in fact, those of us who do don’t usually have a single identity, but rather we speak according to the context.

- Has the variety been standardized and codified institutionally?
- Are there living speakers of the variety?
- Do the speakers have a sense of the long history of their variety?
- Do the speakers consider their variety to be “autonomous”?
- Do the speakers use the variety for all social functions? Are the contexts of use or scope of usage reduced?
- Do the speakers consider their variety “pure” or a “mixture” of other forms?
- Are there unofficial rules of the variety even where there is no codified grammar book; is there a sense of a “good” and “bad” form?

**FIGURE 9.1** List adapted from Bell (1976) to examine prestige
in which we find ourselves. In other words, language allows us to express our identity and to respond to a given speech context. This would be impossible if we only employed the prestige variants all the time. Language also allows us to connect with others who share certain characteristics. Early in this section we posed the question of why even some highly educated and influential people do not choose to use standard language. Several current politicians come to mind in this case, and it is likely that these individuals have selected the forms of the community of voters with whom they hope to identify, despite having a different individual background. In any of these instances, we use the term **language loyalty** to refer to a speaker’s willingness to project an identity that is not associated with the prestige variety. This loyalty explains why non-prestige varieties are used and maintained, even in the face of institutional pressure to conform to the prestige norms. It is important as we explore the application of these terms to the language classroom that we keep in mind the role of non-prestige varieties in expressing certain social, ethnic, and individual identities.

Now that we have discussed the difference between standard language and norms for a given speech community, we turn our attention to the issue of exactly what the **target** for second language learners might be. Target is a term that was defined in Chapter One as the second language being acquired by the second language learner. We now see that this definition must be clarified to include an understanding of the many varieties of each language that exist. McGroarty (1996) notes that there is a certain tension between the way linguists view norms, as the most frequently used forms, and the way the general public views them, as language that is codified in grammars and dictionaries. In fact, this contrast means that linguists often turn their attention to **registers**, or language used for a given purpose or in a given context, whereas the general public has particular interests in mind when thinking of language learning. In particular, the assumption is that schools serve the function of teaching written language, and, thus, teachers must be defenders of prescriptive linguistic norms. Likewise, Hidalgo (1987) explores this idea and notes that because standard language is an idealization, the goal of education (in the eyes of the general public) is to eradicate variation. Train (2002) expands on this idea, noting that standards are actually defined through variation in opposition to a standard, but that standardization does indeed seek to institutionalize a set of beliefs about variation. Clearly, the issue of which variety to teach is more complicated than the age-old debates such as whether to teach American English or British English, for example. Instead, the conversation about what the norms for instruction should be must take into account both national standards and acceptable local features of all levels of the grammar, along with their history and their connection to geography, politics, and economics.

Research on sociolinguistic variation makes it clear that language learners will necessarily confront a range of varieties of a language; thus, a view of the
target as monolithic is not appropriate. What is more, even a single “variety” of a language contains forms that are in variation with one another for a single speaker. This makes determining the target for instruction especially complex. The norms for instruction are often referred to as pedagogical norms, and entire volumes have been written to discuss the process of selecting an appropriate classroom target (e.g., Blyth, 2002; Gass, Bardovi-Harlig, Magnan, & Walz, 2002). Even before he first used this term, Albert Valdman (2002) explored the idea of the pedagogical norm as a solution to dealing with variation in an instructed setting. In their introduction to a volume in his honor, Bardovi-Harlig and Gass (2002) aptly note that pedagogical norms involve research into the norms of actual language use and that the implementation of those norms for pedagogical purposes has wide-sweeping implications ranging from designing textbook materials to creating daily classroom activities. Magnan and Walz (2002) trace the development of the pedagogical norm from the times of contrastive analysis (see Chapter One for a brief review), during which the norms and sequences of instruction were based nearly exclusively on a comparison of the first and the second languages, to the present day. The interest in the 1970s in linguistic variation led instructors to recognize that the standard enjoyed prestige for political, economic, and social reasons, rather than linguistic superiority of any sort (Bardovi-Harlig & Gass, 2002). Later developments led to the adoption of multi-norm models and the understanding that norms represent different groups in different social circumstances (Magnan & Walz, 2002). In one of his more recent accounts of the information that should be taken into account when determining the pedagogical norm, Valdman (2002) identifies three factors that should be used to identify the norm for approximation to a target language: linguistic, sociopsychological, and acquisitional (p. 61). Thus, we see that the grammar of a language and the field of sociopragmatics are integrated by accounting for a range of authentic communicative situations and texts thereby reflecting a functional use of the language. This stands in contrast to approaches that offer the planned discourse of educated native speakers as the goal for language learners. In fact, Valdman notes that this is especially inappropriate for beginning and intermediate learners. The third factor that Valdman addresses is the acquisitional factor; in so doing, he successfully addresses the orders of instruction of forms and the selection of forms for instruction while accounting for the instructed learning context. Valdman notes that some forms are acquired more easily than others and the goal of language instruction should be to teach those forms that are not only functionally important and a reflection of actual language use, but also those that are manageable for learners at a given level of proficiency. He uses question formation in French to illustrate these ideas, noting that sociolinguistic research reveals that while fronting
and in-situ question forms are the most frequently used among middle-class speakers, inversion is hardly ever used in neutral conversations (Behnstedt, 1973; Coveney, 1996). Using acquisitional data, however, he explains that although inversion is quite complicated for learners to produce, given the number of exceptions to its formation, fronting is generally more straightforward for second language learners and, thus, sociolinguistics and acquisition converge to identify fronting as the appropriate starting point for second language instruction. He recommends that instruction about question formation using *est-ce que* follow that which introduces fronting, and that inversion be taught as a characteristic of writing at slightly later stages of development. This analysis of question formation and the pedagogical norm is summarized in Table 9.1. It is important also to note that several other means of question formation exist, but these options are selected for the functions they fulfill, their ease of processability, and their ability to assist learners in developing functional competence.

An important aspect of the conversation about pedagogical norms is the metalinguistic knowledge that it brings to the classroom (in addition to acquisition of linguistic forms themselves). Valdman addresses this specifically in his 2002 formulation of the pedagogical norm, but the awareness of norms of use is inherent in earlier treatments as well. Classic works such as those by Keller (1982) remind the reader that the goal of (bilingual) education ought to be a consciousness-raising campaign through which learners become aware that all speakers control a vernacular and that these vernaculars are not only acceptable but are, in fact, essential in certain situations. What is more, learners must come to recognize that no single vernacular is superior to another. Train (2002) notes that the goal of second language instruction should be a critical awareness that allows learners to see variation as inherent to all languages and that explores the link between language attitudes and beliefs and the construction of individual identities through language. The discussion of pedagogical norms is equally relevant for the norms for instruction of Heritage speakers of Spanish (in the US classroom). For example, over thirty years ago scholars noted that learners ought to be made aware of the many social functions of language, acquiring the ability to fulfill these functions by making use of several varieties of a language, and that we might avoid a prescriptivist (and sometimes racist) approach through sociolinguistic training, including critical evaluation of norms set by dominant social groups (e.g., García-Moya, 1981; Sánchez, 1981; Valdés, 1995). These ideas remain relevant today, and, as Valdman (1988) noted, the range of norms we select for the classroom ought to be a function of second language proficiency as well as general linguistic sophistication of the learners. These themes will be explored in the second half of this chapter as we examine the implications of pedagogical norms for classroom instruction.
### Table 9.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question type</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Sociolinguistic patterns</th>
<th>Acquisitional patterns</th>
<th>Recommendation for instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fronting</td>
<td>Où tu vas?</td>
<td>More frequently occurring but stigmatized; does not share all functions with in situ</td>
<td>Easily learned (Valdman, 1975, 1976) and seems like easiest variant to process</td>
<td>Early instruction for oral production (and comprehension)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In situ</td>
<td>Tu vas où?</td>
<td>More frequently occurring but stigmatized; does not share all functions with fronting</td>
<td>Likely easily learned, since syntactically less complex</td>
<td>Include in input so that receptive abilities develop for oral production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est-ce que</td>
<td>Où est-ce que tu vas?</td>
<td>Subject to wide variation; more neutral than inversion and less stigmatized than fronting and in situ</td>
<td>Likely easily learned and used (based on contrastive analysis)</td>
<td>Include for instruction at a later stage for oral production (and even later for comprehension and production in writing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inversion</td>
<td>Où vas-tu?</td>
<td>Relatively rare in spoken French (especially in informal interactions)</td>
<td>Subject to many syntactic constraints; acquired late</td>
<td>Include only for written mode; later than instruction with fronting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOW ARE NORMS RELATED TO LANGUAGE VARIATION?**

In the first several chapters of this book we examined basic facts of language variation and, especially, the ways in which language variation is important in considering the process of acquiring sociolinguistic competence. Returning to the definition proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) (see Chapter One...
for details), we will recall that this ability refers to the capacity to take into account the context of interaction in order to properly interpret or produce the social messages that accompany a linguistic form. More simply put, this means that we hope that our second language students will develop the tools to respond appropriately to the social (interactional) situations in which they find themselves. In this sense, we seek to help learners acquire a second language grammar that includes linguistic variation. This may contrast somewhat with a portion of the research cited in the previous section in which “standards” or even “norms” are viewed as unchanging for a given speech community. For example, selecting a linguistic standard may have been viewed as “picking the right variety”, rather than the right variants for a given circumstance. In some cases this has even been reduced to purely geographical considerations, ignoring social characteristics completely. Likewise, even if norm is taken to refer to the most frequent form used by a given speech community, we might mistakenly decide that we simply need to identify that “most frequent form” and use that as our pedagogical model. Nevertheless, what is important to consider is that the norm itself includes variable structures. If some forms are used most often, this implies that others are also used. If we return to the idea of sociolinguistic competence, we can easily see that our target for acquisition must be a variable target. Otherwise, second language learners will not be able to demonstrate precisely the linguistic variation that native speakers use to respond to differing situations.

There are several concepts related to sociolinguistic variation that will be useful to recall as we explore the implications of selecting a target for language instruction. For example, it is important to consider that language varies across a range of characteristics. Geography, for example, is likely what we think of first when we think of language variation. We know that languages are spoken in slightly different ways from one location to another. In cases like Spanish, English, Portuguese, and French, where different nations on different continents all speak the same language, the differences are easily noticed by all speakers. That said, selecting US English as the target of second language learners in the US, or Canadian French for second language learners of French in Canada, is not likely to attract attention. In contrast, when we explore the variants associated particularly with men or with women, those that vary according to social class or those that vary with age, we enter into a more subtle conversation about the target for language learners. The selection of a single non-variable target for all contexts and all learners is likely to lead second language learners to speak like highly educated, upper-middle-class women in a formal situation. This works well if these social characteristics apply, but not so well, for others. What is more, even speakers who do fit that social description need to be able to sound more or less formal depending on the context of their interactions. Thus, it is important to remind ourselves that linguistic variation is not limited to geography and, in fact, there are several
other social factors that must be accounted for in selecting an appropriate target (or range of targets) for second language classrooms.

Another important fact about language variation is that we vary our speech from one setting to another. For native speakers, this has been explored as a function of the formality of the context as well as a function of the audience of our utterances (see Chapters Two and Three for details). For second language learners, we often see evidence of task-based variation. This has been explained as a function of attention paid to the task, the demands of the task (cognitive, time pressure, etc.), as well as a host of other factors (see also Chapter Seven). In both cases what is important to recognize is that an important part of using a language to communicate effectively includes precisely this type of variation. Although it may prove quite difficult to represent all combinations of all social factors equally well in a language classroom, and one might even assess the disadvantages of doing so, it is, in fact, quite simple to include a variety of tasks for interaction in the language classroom. Once we begin to deliberately design tasks to represent a range of social situations and provide students with tools to respond appropriately, we are on our way to helping students to develop communicative competence. Practical ideas for how this might be accomplished will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter, but the key issue for the current conversation is that we must connect the target we select for language instruction to social variation, geographic variation, and also to situational (or task) variation.

A final important concept to bear in mind is that language variation affects all levels of the grammar. In Chapter Two we explored examples of variation in lexical choices, variation in morphosyntax, variation in the sound system, and variation in pragmatic aspects of the grammar. As far as linguistic analysis goes, there was little difference to be seen: all of these variants were a function of the confluence of social, situational, linguistic, and individual factors. Nevertheless, there are likely some important differences between levels of the grammar as we explore the selection of a target for language learners. For example, whether one uses the word *durazno* or the word *melocotón* for ‘peach’ in Spanish is not likely to attract a great deal of attention. In contrast, we tend to expect that there is a “correct” form for a given verb tense and this may lead us to consider the importance of pedagogical norms differently for different features of the second language grammar. This idea will also be explored in greater depth in the discussion that follows.

**HOW DOES THE IDENTIFICATION OF LINGUISTIC NORMS AFFECT THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM?**

We began this chapter with a discussion of the notion of standard language, the linguist’s pursuit of identifying speech norms for a given community,
and the language instructor's task of clarifying the target for second language learners. Next, we identified some of the facts about language variation in general that might be most relevant when considering targets and language learning. Our goal for the remainder of the chapter is to explore some of the areas of instruction that are likely to be most directly connected to the selection of a pedagogical norm. It may be helpful as we explore these areas of instruction to bear in mind the research reviewed in earlier chapters. For example, Nagy, Blondeau, and Auger's (2003) study of Anglophones in Montreal connected the degree of classroom instruction and contact outside the classroom to the acquisition of subject doubling, a linguistic feature associated with the French spoken in Quebec. Their study contrasted learners who participated in French as a foreign language class, those who were part of French immersion programs, and those who attended schools in which French language was the medium for all instruction. They developed an integration index to reflect the degree to which speakers were involved in the Francophone community outside the context of instruction. Their results showed that the integration index was indeed related to the rates of use of subject doubling but that other factors were also important. For example, these learners were sensitive to several (but not all) of the linguistic factors that determined use for native speakers in the region. Additionally, the analysis showed that a speaker's recent environment had an important effect on rates of subject doubling, such that speakers who used French at work (currently) were more likely to have higher rates of use. Finally, they cautioned that their results might be indicative of incomplete acquisition or of attitudinal factors and that only further research would be able to distinguish between these two effects. Returning to the discussion of pedagogical norms and targets, these results demonstrate that regional variants can be acquired, that this appears to be done through interaction, and that this is likely an important part of developing competence that allows one to function outside the classroom in the target language. Finally, although the learners who had less interaction with native French speakers outside the classroom tended to show lower rates of use of this form, the positive upshot is that they, too, had acquired some use of this form. The purpose of the current chapter is not to assess how one might accomplish the goal of providing the instruction necessary for the development of sociolinguistic competence, which will be addressed in Chapter Ten, but rather to discuss some of the bigger issues related to pedagogical norms which ought to further motivate us to use our knowledge of language variation to improve classroom instruction.

Grammar Instruction

In Chapter One we discussed the importance of the role of input, regardless of the theoretical model to which one subscribes. This means that a good
instructional model provides plenty of input (language in context). Nevertheless, when we think of the type of instruction that takes place in the language classroom, we also call to mind the study of the grammatical rules that govern a given language. The discussion in Chapter One also explored the limits of metalinguistic knowledge on developing grammars but identified some specific ways in which a focus on grammatical forms might positively influence learner grammars. If we take as a starting point that acquisition proceeds as learners connect form(s) to meaning(s), then we can also imagine that one of the central roles of the language classroom is to foster this connection formation. To be sure, these connections will be imagined to take differing forms depending on the theoretical model one follows. Nevertheless, theoretical models ranging from neural networks (e.g., Connectionism) to parameter resetting (e.g., Universal Grammar) recognize that the evidence provided through formal instruction of grammatical points can be of some value. Thus, leaving aside the debate over the specific role that metalinguistic knowledge plays, if we assume that it is of some benefit, we can then consider the connection between instruction of grammatical forms and the identification of a pedagogical norm.

One of the first issues that arises as we consider instruction focused on forms of a grammar is the very definition of grammaticality. If we think of traditional definitions of standard language, then a grammatical form is one which is “correct” or “proper”, but if we move toward an understanding of norms of speech, our target for language learners will include variation. This means that there may be more than one correct form and that certain forms may enjoy varying degrees of acceptability. In other words, we move away from a binary definition of “correct” and “incorrect” and toward an understanding that some forms are acceptable in some contexts, and, in some cases, there is simply more than one acceptable form. It is important to caution the reader that we do not intend to advocate for an “anything goes” approach. Instead, in teaching grammar, as with other aspects of the language, we need to invoke the concept of variation such that “appropriateness” is context-dependent. Before we explore this idea further, it may be helpful to exemplify these degrees of acceptability. Table 9.2 below contains a list of utterances, some of which are widely acceptable and others of which are widely unacceptable. As you read through these utterances, consider ranking them on a scale of 0–10 where 0 is completely unacceptable and 10 is completely acceptable.

As you rated each sentence, it is likely that some forms struck you as completely incorrect or ungrammatical and others are fully acceptable. The cases in between, however, are the most relevant for the current discussion. In the cases where an utterance was ranked somewhere between 0 and 10, you may have thought about when it would be appropriate to use a given form, who might use that form, or where it might be used appropriately. In these instances, our
knowledge of sociolinguistic variation tells us that there are several factors that
determine just how widely acceptable a form is, and it is precisely these factors
that might guide our instruction of grammatical forms. For example, some
forms are informal but appropriate for use by speakers regardless of individual
characteristics. Other forms are less widely used, but this is because they are
geographically limited in their extension. In both of these cases, the forms are
likely quite appropriate for inclusion in the language classroom and ought to
be presented along with information regarding the factors that govern their
use. Relating this back to the selection of a pedagogical norm for a given class-
room environment, we might consider whether the form in question is widely
used in the community that represents the best target for that set of learn-
ers. Certainly a form that is widely used in the target speech community is
a better candidate than a form that is perfectly acceptable but only used in
a geographic region with which learners have little contact. Thus, one clear
guideline for the instruction of grammatical forms as it relates to pedagogi-
cal norms is that among forms which are generally acceptable but might not
share the same frequency of use across speech communities (e.g., those that
are limited geographically in extension), those that are the best candidates for
instruction are those that are most likely to be heard by the learner in future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>How acceptable?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you like them apples?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It ain’t over until I say so.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marla is the woman I spoke to.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bret, Jordan, and myself are going to a concert.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He don’t have no time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are you at?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You coming along?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fact was evidenced by later research.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A classmate asked me to help them with their homework.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section III: Implications

interactions. To be sure, for some foreign language environments the implication is actually that a range of forms should be taught precisely because learners may encounter speakers from several different geographic regions in their future interactions.

Another important consideration has to do with forms that vary in acceptance rates by social class and, therefore, carry a degree of social stigma in some circumstances. In such cases, the learner might benefit from exposure in the input to such forms, but these forms are not likely to be the best candidates for formal instruction at early levels of proficiency. Second language learners tend to acquire non-variant forms first (i.e., those that enjoy a one-to-one connection between form and meaning) and this is likely also true for forms that vary according to social factors. Thus, although we can certainly see room for inclusion of these features at higher levels of proficiency, learners are likely best served through formal instruction of the most widely accepted forms at early levels of development. The degree to which this is true is also likely to be a function of the area of the grammar taught. In Chapter Three we saw that variation in lexical items tends to carry less stigma and is often a function of geography. In contrast, variation at the level of morphosyntax is generally less widely accepted. For example, Rickford (1996) notes that variation in phonology and syntax enjoy less acceptance than that at the lexical level in a given language. Even as we explore variation in morphosyntax we see that certain differences, such as variation between two existing forms (e.g., future time forms in Spanish: *voy a hablar* ‘I'm going to speak’ and *hablaré* ‘I will speak’), may be less stigmatized than variation that includes an innovative form (e.g., *dijistes* in Spanish: ‘you said’, where the ‘s’ morphology associated with second-person singular forms is extended to the preterit form, which prescriptively would be *dijiste*; see Chapter Two for details of research by Barnes [2012] on this issue). In general it is likely that variability is less tolerated at the level of morphosyntax than in other areas of the grammar, and these degrees of acceptance of variability might also guide our selection of forms for focused instruction.

Thus far we have noted firstly that even variable forms differ in their range of acceptability across speech communities. We have further noted that when there is a clear target community for language instruction it is precisely the variants used by this community that make sense to include in formal grammar exercises. Likewise, those forms that share a lesser degree of social stigma, particularly at the level of morphosyntax, where variation appears to be less tolerated than in other areas, are good candidates for formal instruction at lower levels of proficiency. Nevertheless, it is important to end here with a word of caution: while clearly one can err by including forms that are stigmatized and failing to provide learners with sufficient information to use these forms in appropriate contexts, it is equally possible to err in some cases on the side of hyper-formal language. Even if we tend to expect second language speakers to
be slightly more polite than native speakers, learners who are too formal might also be viewed as off-putting to native speakers of the language. For example, the use of preposition-stranding in English, while technically incorrect, is so commonplace in US speech that failure to do so in some contexts sounds stifled or even snobbish. For most speakers, it would be quite odd to hear someone pose the question “to whom are you speaking?” as opposed to “who are you talking to?” in informal conversational exchanges. It is easy to imagine similar parallels in the context of learning Spanish in the Southwestern US or learning French in Canada, where use of a form from Peninsular Spanish or European French could alienate the listener (see Auger, 2002b; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006; and Villa, 1996). In these cases, sensitivity to regional norms is essential so that learners have the tools to initiate and continue the interactions that will provide them with additional input and allow them to further their development in the language. At higher levels of ability, use of excessively prescriptive grammatical forms may impede a learner’s ability to express their individual identity as well. Interesting research out of New York City, for example, has shown that second language learners of English do not always identify with the same ethnic groups and that the language they acquire differs not according to their classroom instruction but rather based on the social groups with which they most identify (Eisenstein, 1986). To this end, focus on form(s) should not entail subscription to a single target for all learners. Instead, it will be important to consider the degrees of acceptability of grammatical forms as well as the proficiency of the learner and to create instructional materials accordingly. The earlier discussion of question formation in French is an excellent example of how these factors interact to determine appropriate forms for instruction (e.g., Valdman, 2002). At the outset we mentioned that teaching grammar in context is an appropriate way to provide input as well as maximize the benefits of formal instruction. It should be clear from the discussion thus far that this approach to formal grammar instruction allows us to provide the additional information regarding use of a form essential to the successful communication on the part of the learner. Furthermore, it enables us to contextualize tasks and assessments in order to include variables such as speaker and setting in those measures. Thus, regardless of the theoretical framework or the pedagogical approach employed, we can see that when considering the pedagogical norm for instruction of second language grammar, providing forms in context—linguistic and social context to be exact—will provide learners with the tools to use these forms effectively in the future.

**Heritage Speakers**

Another important consideration related to the selection of a pedagogical norm is that of instruction for Heritage speakers of a language. Although there
is some debate, a **Heritage speaker** is generally understood to be an individual who learns a language through interactions with one or more family members in a home environment from a very early age. Such speakers are often characterized by their native-like comprehension despite limited access to formal varieties of the language or formal education in that language. Although in the US one of the most numerous groups of Heritage speakers includes those who learn Spanish at home (see La Corte & Canabal [2002] and Potowski [2013] for reviews), the term should be understood to include speakers of any language that is not the medium of communication or formal instruction outside the home. In some geographic areas there are enough speakers with the same Heritage background to offer classes with curriculum and materials specifically designed for Heritage learners. In other cases, Heritage learners enroll in the same language classes as learners without this background. No matter the learning context or the number of Heritage speakers of a given language in that context, the issue of pedagogical norm is central to providing quality instruction to all learners.

It can also be important to reflect on the impact of Heritage speakers on language education in a given institutional context. For example, in assessing the impact of Spanish Heritage speakers in the US, Potowski and Carreira (2004), note that the extent to which this group has influenced Spanish language education is not a trivial matter. Although the US has the greatest number of Spanish speakers worldwide, the historical and cultural aspects related to this language have not necessarily enjoyed a prominent role in US history and culture. This has facilitated a Spanish educational context in the US that aims to integrate Spanish speakers into (more often than not) English-speaking learners’ Spanish language courses, rather than the integration of Heritage speakers and second language learners into courses suitable to their respective linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Potowski & Carreira, 2004, p. 422). This reality carries important implications for the examination of learner goals, particularly for Heritage speakers.

Generally speaking, the goal of most language learners, Heritage or not, is to acquire the ability to communicate effectively in a given language. By this we do not simply mean enjoying a nice conversation, but rather possessing the necessary written and oral skills to achieve one’s goals (social, professional, economic, academic, etc.) across a range of contexts and situations. In other words, communicative competence requires a learner to function in formal and informal settings both in written and oral modes. This means that students who do not have exposure to a language outside of the classroom must have access to informal registers, to regional varieties, and to a range of social and professional interactions. When viewed in this way, Heritage speakers can be seen to have similar goals. The key distinction is that Heritage speakers are likely to have access to informal situations with greater frequency than
formal situations, and the role of classroom instruction is to provide access to formal registers in writing and speaking. It should be clear that if we view the goal of instruction as developing communicative competence and we recognize that the pedagogical norm ought to include a range of forms along with information about when such forms are appropriate, this information might guide language teachers toward effective course materials for both Heritage and non-Heritage learners alike. This idea is echoed by some of the leading practitioners in the field, and textbooks for intermediate learners have been designed to meet the goals of diverse learner populations by following precisely this interpretation of target (cf. Potowski, 2013).

A second important consideration when thinking of Heritage speakers, whether in separate or combined classes with non-Heritage learners, is the message we send about language attitudes. As we mentioned briefly in the previous section, using a variety of a language that does not correspond with local speech communities may unnecessarily alienate local speakers. Additionally, failure to use the local variety of a language as the basis for instruction may send the message that this variety is somehow inferior to others or reinforce use of dominant, non-local language variety (cf. Leeman, 2005, 2012). Villa (1996) notes this by suggesting that the community variety should be the basis for classroom instruction while at the same time serving as a springboard for developing respect for formal written standards that likely enjoy more trans-geographic distribution. Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006) provide an excellent discussion of the case of US Spanish in the language classroom in Texas. They provide several good arguments in favor of incorporating US Spanish in the classroom. First, they note that the professional goals of all students, Heritage or otherwise, are likely linked to economic success that comes from the ability to use Spanish in the workplace. Obviously, an inability to use the local variety will thwart one’s success in this area. Second, they note that the very selection of pedagogical materials reveals information about the language attitudes of the course designers, such that a failure to include the local variety of Spanish may send an unintended message about prestige (see also Leeman, 2012). Research has documented both that language instructors often have negative attitudes toward local (contact) varieties (Valdés, González, López García, & Márquez, 2003) and that Heritage speakers are aware of negative attitudes toward their own language varieties (Bernal-Enríquez & Chávez, 2003). McGroarty (1996) explores the relationship among motivation, attitude, and learner outcomes and notes that the degree to which studying a second language and/or studying sociolinguistics impacts general language attitudes is influenced by the length of study and the quality of that instruction. Leeman (2012) has shown us how prevailing language ideologies impact not only the pedagogical materials selected (see also Leeman & Martínez [2007] for discussion of language ideologies present in Spanish Heritage language textbooks), but also which
varieties may be considered in creating and revising educational policy and curricula, how learners are assessed, and even who the preferred instructor is. With regard to assessment, a particular challenge educators and researchers face is the development of placement exams that account for the variation present in Heritage speakers’ linguistic knowledge and, thus, place them in appropriate instructional courses (e.g., Beaudrie & Ducar, 2012; Fairclough, 2006; Potowski, Parada, & Morgan-Short, 2012). Regardless of whether or not an institution offers courses for Heritage speakers, an implication is that these high-stakes exams should directly respond to the variation present between the home variety and the academic variety of the Heritage speakers within each individual institutional context. As language instructors and/or program administrators, one of our primary goals should be to instill a respect for the diversity of varieties that exist, as well as the competence required to understand the norms of use in a wide range of contexts (cf. Potowski & Carreira, 2004). Again, the position of the authors cited here is not that the local variety ought to stand in for all instructional purposes but rather that part of acquiring a second language ought to be developing an understanding of language variation and with that understanding, an awareness of the value of both local varieties and formal written and oral varieties.

**Second Dialect Acquisition**

A final area of discussion that is intricately linked to geographic variation and to Heritage speakers is that of **second dialect acquisition**. This construct refers to the addition of another variety of a language. This variety may differ by register (more or less formal), by geography, by ethnicity, or any of the other social factors examined in earlier chapters. In many instances this term has been used to describe the appropriate pedagogical goals for Heritage speakers (e.g., Martínez, 2003; Valdés, 1997), but it is also equally applicable to varieties that differ by ethnicity or geography. For example, classroom learners of German who find themselves in Austria, learners of French who spend time in Montreal, or learners of Spanish who study abroad in the Dominican Republic are all likely to encounter a variety of the language that is different from most of the input to which they were exposed in the classroom setting. The purpose of raising this issue as part of the discussion of targets for acquisition is twofold. First, it is helpful to remember, as was mentioned above, that several varieties might have a valid place in the classroom. The second is to make the connection with research reported in recent chapters regarding the acquisition of social variation, particularly in the study abroad environment. From the review of that literature, we saw that learners are, indeed, quite capable of adding the variants of an additional variety to their linguistic repertoire. Moreover, they are able with time to acquire the constraints on use that influence
both frequency of occurrence of a form and the contexts for that use. The acquisition of features from a new variety extends across areas of the grammar as well. Table 9.3 provides a summary of evidence of the ability of learners to acquire a second dialect.

The research summarized in Table 9.3 demonstrates that learners at a range of proficiency levels are able to acquire the features of additional varieties of a language. This appears to be true for learners whose previous experience was relatively mono-dialectal and for learners who likely received input from a range of varieties of the second language over their years of study. Returning, then, to the idea of pedagogical norms, the implication is that there is no single appropriate starting point for second language acquisition. One can define “target” according to community, learning context, learner goals, and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Region of study</th>
<th>Variant(s) acquired</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| French   | France (e.g., Regan, Howard, & Lemée, 2009) | Ne deletion  
Not/on alternation  
Word final /l/-deletion  
Future-time expression |
| Japanese | Japan (e.g., Ishida, 2006; Marriott, 1995) | Use of discourse marker  
ne  
Alternation of polite and casual forms |
| Spanish  | Dominican Republic (Schmidt, 2009)  
Spain (Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler, Henriksen, & Killam, 2012; Knouse, 2012; Ringer-Hilfinger, 2012)  
Cross-regional comparison (e.g., Kanwit, Fafulas, & Geeslin, 2011; Kanwit & Solon, 2013; Salgado-Robles, 2011) | Multiple variants associated with the DR  
Spanish /θ/  
Leismo, future-time expression, present, copula contrast, simple present/present progressive alternation, simple past/present perfect alternation |
the like, and learners will be able to acquire additional varieties as their needs and circumstances dictate. What is more, we can also make a case for the value of including sociolinguistic variation in the classroom from the start so that learners are aware that linguistic variation is, in fact, an important part of any language.

**Materials Selection and Development**

As we have explored the tradition of identifying linguistic standards, norms of use, and appropriate pedagogical norms for a given classroom setting, we have made the point that knowledge of sociolinguistic variation is helpful for language instructors and for language learners. What is more, the inclusion of language across registers, dialects, and social groups in the language classroom provides benefits to learners which include the ability to initiate and continue conversations, to connect with those in the community as well as those beyond, to use language in formal workplace environments, and to view language variation as a natural and essential part of all languages. Generally speaking, language teachers readily accept these ideas but may find themselves uncertain of exactly how to create a classroom environment in which such goals are met. In fact, Pérez-Leroux and Glass (2000) perceive this need and demonstrate how the use of scenarios in which instructors confront the overly prescriptive use of language in textbooks in order to explore these issues can be useful in teacher training. In the next chapter we will find more specific instructional guidelines, but in light of having explored the selection of appropriate targets for language instruction, we conclude this chapter with some guidelines for the selection and development of classroom materials.

*Find an Audience*

Learners come to language classes with goals ranging from earning a good grade, to meeting an academic requirement, and to learning to speak to a distant family member. It would be quite rare for all learners in a given classroom to have identical goals. Nevertheless, communicative competence entails effective language use in context. Language teachers who can identify relevant contexts and provide learners with the tools to communicate with relevant audiences will foster communicative competence.

*Know About Naturally Occurring Input*

For many second language learners, sources of input in the target language abound. This might include local communities, previous language instructors, study abroad opportunities, or access to language through technology or print
media. In every case, instructors should seek to identify the input to which a learner has access. Doing so allows a teacher to maximize available resources and foster a diversity of experience by compensating for input that is not readily available (by providing access to additional varieties and/or contexts of use).

**Recognize Unspoken Messages**

Given the importance of language attitudes in second language acquisition, motivation, and expression of individual identities, language instructors must understand that the materials provided for classroom instruction send a message to students. Classroom materials that include examples of many varieties of a language along with a sociolinguistic analysis of norms of use send the message that language variation is an important part of communication, rather than something that must be eradicated.

**Get Personal**

Part of learning a language is making connections between linguistic forms and social meanings. These meanings can be personal in terms of experience, interest, and identity. Rickford (1996) notes that the dialects of teachers and students matter, and that part of gaining competence in language rests on understanding the variability in our own language. The successful instructor is one who can demonstrate the connections between language and experience, and there is no better set of examples than our own experiences. There is no correct set of experiences and no best variety of a language. Thus, one of the best resources that language instructors have is their own personal interest and knowledge.

**Shake It Up a Bit!**

If we are to provide students with the opportunities to develop sociolinguistic competence, this entails creating a range of contexts for interaction, providing exposure to different types of speech and to a wide range of speakers, and providing some knowledge of the factors that influence the linguistic forms we choose in those diverse situations. In addition to holding our students’ interest, we would do well to explore the resources available to us through existing technologies and to integrate new samples of language into the classroom. Auger (2002a, 2002b) provides a detailed exploration of how film or music might be integrated into the language classroom as a means for representing regional dialects. Several new language texts also include links to websites that assist with this endeavor. In sum, a little exploration is likely to uncover exciting new examples of language from which our students can benefit.
HOW ARE CLASSROOM LEARNERS DIFFERENT FROM NATURALISTIC LEARNERS?

The guidelines above for selecting materials after appropriate targets and pedagogical norms have been identified demonstrate that the second language classroom generally differs from naturalistic contexts of learning in several ways. An awareness of these differences as they relate to pedagogical norms and material development is a good starting point for improving classroom instruction. First, we note that classroom learners have access to a reduced range of language varieties and to contexts for interaction. In the case of Heritage speakers, this often means exposure to informal situations in the local variety of a language (or the variety spoken by family members) rather than broad exposure to formal language from a wider range of speakers. For non-Heritage learners, this means access to largely formal contexts of use and a general lack of access to any local variety. In both cases, an awareness of this on the part of the instructor can serve as a useful guide in providing a broader range of input and contexts for interaction. McGroarty (1996) referred to this as the diversification of opportunities to produce appropriate language, and this appears to be an essential part of building competence for all groups of learners.

A second difference is that classroom learners may lack a personal connection to the second language. In naturalistic settings the language learner may view the target language positively or negatively (see discussions of the work by Norton Peirce, for example, in Chapter Four), but through direct contact learners have a personal relationship to the target. A second language classroom, however, does not necessarily allow students to make a personal connection with speakers of the language. In order for learners to acquire multiple functions of a language, it will be important to explore the ways in which learners might personalize their experience with the language. This is likely most connected to individual student goals and a consideration of the audience(s) for language use.

A third key distinction is that classroom second language learners may have more shallow contact with a broader range of varieties, particularly those with different geographic associations. For example, many native speakers or naturalistic learners of a given language specialize in one and only one geographic variety of a language. In contrast, classroom learners of a language may have instructors from different geographic regions for each course they take, may study abroad in a completely different location, and may have access at the same time to textbook materials representing several additional varieties. To be sure, this is a positive characteristic of classroom learning, but one that can catch an instructor unprepared for questions such as “Which variety should I study?” or “Which variety is the best one?” Thus, as we recognize these
multiple points of contact, we must necessarily redefine “target” as something that encompasses several varieties and we must advocate for representation of a variety of groups of speakers in order to best prepare students and also to establish positive attitudes toward linguistic variation. Auger (2002b) notes that the goals for immersion learners and for foreign language learners differ, but even in contexts with a multi-norm target such as the typical foreign language classroom, the study of a particular regional variety will show learners that language is not monolithic, will better prepare them for all interactions, and will provide them with the essential tools to understand an additional sociolinguistic situation. Each of these benefits exists even in cases where the student in question does not interact with speakers of that variety of the language on a regular basis.

We conclude with one final distinction between second language learners and native speakers, and perhaps even between classroom learners of a second language and naturalistic learners—that is, the expectations of native speakers regarding the forms that nonnative speakers should use in a second language. We have seen in earlier chapters that there are cases where nonnative speakers appear to overshoot the target norm in their use of the informal variant (e.g., –in vs. –ing; Adamson & Regan, 1991). Likewise, we have identified benefits of acquiring informal registers for second language learners, such as making connections with target communities and fostering personal relationships that allow for continued interaction and acquisition. Nevertheless, research has documented cases in which nonnative speakers were perceived as impolite because they did not master native strategies (e.g., Tanaka, 1988). In fact, it may be the case that use of slightly more mitigation or slightly higher degrees of politeness compensates for other nonnative features in the grammar. Thus, it is important to bear in mind that it may also be quite possible that certain variants, even those that are widely used by certain speakers in the target language, will not serve a nonnative speaker well in his or her efforts to make personal connections. Again, the central theme remains that learners benefit from awareness of sociolinguistic variation, and this is true even in cases where the expectations for nonnative speakers differ from those for native speakers of a language.

**SUMMARY**

In this chapter we explored the ways in which sociolinguistic variation might be accounted for within the pedagogical norms we select for second language instruction. We noted that linguists seek to describe the norms of use for a given community, including those norms that vary across speakers, linguistic contexts, and interactional contexts, and that language learners will develop communicative competence through an understanding of and exposure to
these same facts. It was suggested that the second language classroom materials should be a reflection of the local communities of practice, of the goals and potential audience of the learners, and of the personal experiences of the language instructor. Our focus throughout has been on the establishment of an understanding of linguistic variation and a positive attitude toward multiple varieties of the target language. This chapter has served to explore the philosophical considerations and big-picture decisions a language instructor must make, and the chapter that follows will connect these ideas to practical suggestions for implementation.

**READING BEYOND THE TEXT**


**COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION**

A. Comprehension

1. How is “standard” language defined? What term do linguists now use more commonly than “standard”?
2. What is the difference between prescriptive norms and descriptive norms?
3. What is a sociolect?
4. What do sociolinguists seek to understand, with respect to social characteristics?
5. List three questions that may help to determine whether a variety is awarded prestige or stigma.
6. What is language loyalty?
7. According to Train (2002), what is the relationship between variation and standardization?
8. What three factors did Valdman (2002) state should be used to identify target norms?
10. What does Keller (1982) say should be the goal of bilingual education?
11. In Nagy, Blondeau, and Auger (2003), what factors were associated with subject doubling in French?
12. What characteristics are generally associated with Heritage speakers? Do some characteristics vary from one Heritage speaker to another more than others?
13. What is second dialect acquisition?
14. What are three ways in which classroom and naturalistic learners differ?

B. Application

1. Given what you have read about sociolinguistic variation thus far, how has your concept of what should be taught in the classroom changed? If you are a teacher, how does this affect what you might teach? If you are a student, how does this affect what you might learn?
2. Do you use any lexical items (i.e., vocabulary), phrases, morphosyntactic structures, or pronunciations that are not considered “standard”? What is the effect when you use this item/these items? How do people react? How does that make you feel? Do you ever use certain items for a specific effect or in a certain context? Are there any contexts in which you would not use such items? If you don’t think that you ever use any “nonstandard” language, then think of someone you know who does and respond from that perspective.
3. Think of a common prescriptive norm for English or another language that you speak. Write out this norm and then rewrite it as a descriptive norm, thinking about how speakers actually use that form, along with other possible variants. (For example, “In English, double negatives are never permitted and are grammatically incorrect in all contexts.”)
4. Do you think speakers find some of the following items more “acceptable” than others?
   1a. Oh, just put it in the ice box. (for ‘freezer’)
   1b. That river is full of crawdads. (for ‘crawfish/crayfish’)
   1c. The child threw a hissy fit. (for ‘tantrum’)
   2a. He ain’t got a clue.
   2b. I was just axin’ a question.
   2c. I might could meet you after class.
Use the conclusions of Rickford (1996) to inform your response. Then, come up with examples of your own from English or another language you know.

5. Using the guidelines for material selection and development from the current chapter, create a sample lesson plan in which you indicate your audience, account for naturally occurring input, demonstrate how you will recognize unspoken messages, show evidence of getting personal, and use an activity to *shake it up*. 
Integrating Sociolinguistics Into the Second Language Classroom

One of the overarching goals of this volume is to acquaint the language instructor or curriculum developer with the basic facts about sociolinguistics and the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation in second languages. This knowledge, in turn, should positively impact the learning environment and the outcomes of learners who seek to develop communicative competence in a second language. In addition to the big-picture implications of knowing about sociolinguistic variation, such as an informed process of target norm evaluation and selection (see Chapter Nine), an understanding of language variation should impact daily lesson plans and material selection. We begin this chapter with a few scenarios that demonstrate that sociolinguistic variation is present in every lesson simply because the language used will represent some, but not all, speakers of a language. Thus, even when these decisions are not conscious, we decide which speakers are represented in our classrooms through our selection of materials that provide input to learners, through our explanations of grammatical phenomena, and through our articulation of learning objectives for each lesson we teach. The following examples of classroom events and interactions demonstrate scenarios in which a teacher’s knowledge of sociolinguistic variation can serve as a tremendous support. We begin with the example shown in Scenario 1.

Although the first response in Scenario 1 is not incorrect, it lacks important details. First, it does not correctly identify the sound that the learners heard, and it does not identify the linguistic contexts in which that sound occurs. This information is essential for improving learner comprehension of that variety; it is especially important if learners intend to spend time in Spain at some point in the future since they are likely to come into contact with such speakers again. Finally, if the instructor does not address the question of the ‘lisp’ by noting that this speech community is able to produce ‘s’ in other contexts, the learner may develop a less positive view of this variety of Spanish, believing that what they do is strange or substandard in some way.
SCENARIO 1

The context: Students are engaged in a Spanish listening comprehension activity using pre-recorded materials supplied by the textbook company. Students are to listen carefully to decide whether Susana does or does not like certain activities.

Student question: Why does the man lisp?

Possible response: He’s from Spain.

Sociolinguistically informed response: Speakers from Spain use the sound ‘th’ (called a ‘theta’) in words where the letters ‘ci’, ‘ce’, and ‘z’ appear. These speakers have no trouble producing the ‘s’ sound as well, and they do so in words such as ‘sala’. This is an example of geographic variation.

SCENARIO 2A

The context: Students at the very beginning of French study are learning how to talk about things they do alone and things they have in common with all of their classmates, using the forms je ‘I’ and nous ‘we’ along with the appropriate verb forms, according to the meaning they wish to express.

Student comment: My French-speaking boyfriend says on ‘one’, not nous ‘we’.

Possible response: That’s informal French.

Sociolinguistically informed response: Actually, in conversational French there is a change taking place in which the pronoun on ‘one’ is being used more instead of nous ‘we’. This is more common in spoken French, especially in informal settings, such as in conversations among friends, but it is becoming even more frequent for many speakers.

As with Scenario 1, the possible response given in scenario 2A is correct, but it does not cover some important territory. Without defining informal, learners may assume this means “incorrect” or “uneducated”. Also, the identification of on as a pronoun that is being used in a specific linguistic context (that where nous used to occur exclusively) gives learners the information they need to understand sentences that are formed with on rather than nous and to know how to interpret this
SCENARIO 2B

The context: A continuation of the conversation in Scenario 2a. After the teacher provides a response, the student asks a follow-up question.

Student question: Does he say that because he speaks Canadian French instead of real French?

Sociolinguistically informed response: There are actually many kinds of “real” French, including that spoken in France, Canada, and Africa. Each type of French has characteristics that are unique, and each shares certain basic rules so that all three have quite a bit in common. The use of *on* instead of *nous* is actually found in both France and Canada.

meaning, both linguistically and socially. Finally, the detail about the increasing frequency of this usage is important so that learners know that this is not a “strange” thing to do, but rather quite acceptable across speech communities.

You don’t need to be an expert on sociolinguistics to respond appropriately to the student’s question in Scenario 2b. No matter what language you teach, you’ve dealt with language prejudice extensively enough to know that encouraging stereotypes and fostering disparaging views of any variety of the language you teach has no place in the classroom. Still, what sociolinguistics helps us to do is add concrete information to our response by providing specific facts about whether or not a certain phenomenon is found in all varieties or only in some. This allows teachers to present technical information and give students the concrete facts necessary for them to also see the value of each variety of a language.

HOW MUCH DOES A TEACHER NEED TO KNOW TO INTEGRATE SOCIOLINGUISTICS?

We imagine that those who take the time to read this book are aware of the importance of sociolinguistic variation in learning to use a second language and also have an interest in using this information in daily classroom activities. Nevertheless, the thought of doing so can be overwhelming, especially in contexts where classroom materials do not support this type of innovation. A question that often arises is how a language instructor without a background in sociolinguistics can successfully reach the goal of integrating a *multi-norm model* into his or her classroom. Put another way, one wonders just how much an instructor needs to know about sociolinguistics to achieve this goal. The objective of the remainder of this chapter is to summarize the most basic concepts about language variation and to provide ideas for incorporating this knowledge into the second language classroom. Like every other classroom
innovation, those that work best involve the gradual development and integration of quality materials and activities and take into account the factors unique to the specific classroom. In this sense, we seek to provide ideas as a starting point for the application and inclusion of sociolinguistic variation in such a way that new developments are balanced with the genuine logistical concerns of classroom teachers who may have limited time (or freedom) for broad-sweeping changes.

To this end, the remainder of this section is devoted to the summary of basic facts about linguistic variation in second languages tailored specifically to language instructors. These are likely ideas that language instructors already know and most certainly they are concepts covered in the present volume. This knowledge can serve as a cornerstone for the integration of sociolinguistically informed materials and activities in the second language classroom.

**All Speakers Vary Their Language**

One of the greatest detriments to developing sociolinguistic competence is the idea that “good” speakers of a language use “correct” forms all of the time. In fact, good language users are able to respond appropriately to a broad range of speech contexts. This response is a function of the identity of the speaker, the characteristics of the hearer(s), the topic of interaction, the context of the interaction, the relationship between the speakers, and, equally important, the linguistic characteristics of the utterance itself. By recognizing that language variation is a natural part of communication—and, thus, necessary for communicative competence—and that variation is a complex skill that takes time to develop, language instructors become better equipped to help learners develop these abilities in the classroom setting. This basic knowledge means that we understand that variation is systematic (i.e., governed by a range of factors). In short, knowing that variation exists and that it is governed by a system of constraints is an important step and it does not entail knowing every detail of variation for a language with a broad range of speech communities.

**Language Varies at All Levels of the Grammar**

Language instructors must also remember that variation occurs in the sound system, in the morphosyntax of a language, in the norms for politeness, and in the lexical items chosen during diverse interactions. It may well be the case that variation at some levels of the grammar more directly affects certain communicative abilities. For example, variation in the sound system may make certain speakers more difficult to understand for second language learners who have no previous exposure, whereas variation at the level of a single lexical item may pose less of an immediate complication. Likewise, some variation at the
level of morphosyntax is more widely restricted to certain social groups than variation at other levels. A basic understanding of the fact that variation affects all levels of a grammar is important as we move toward integrating variation into the language classroom because this knowledge helps us determine which examples make better pedagogical tools for exposing learners to variation and improving their overall communicative ability. What is more, it helps us avoid reducing variation to a phenomenon limited to vocabulary choice across geographic regions (e.g., the 'soda' vs. 'pop' debate).

Our Language Choices Reflect Who We Are

It is likely the case that second language learners first recognize linguistic variation as a function of geography and, likely, one related to the sound system. In our first language it is contact with people from other regions who sound different to us that first brings this issue to light. For second language learners, not only might a speaker sound “different”, they might also present a new challenge for comprehension during early encounters. Nevertheless, it is important that language instructors (and really all speakers) know that variation reflects not only where we are from but also who we are. When one speaks, one reveals information about gender, level of education, social class, and ethnicity, in addition to geography. To be sure, understanding this fact about variation is not the same as knowing the patterns of use for every single linguistic variant in the way a sociolinguist researching the topic would. Nevertheless, the idea that the language we produce reflects our identity (in both conscious and unconscious ways) is the cornerstone for bringing effective examples of variation into the language classroom.

We Use Language Differently in Different Contexts

Perhaps the most important type of variation for language learners to acquire is the ability to modify the language they produce from one context to another. This ability entails designing language for a particular audience, such that we do not speak the same way with strangers as with friends, or with members of our own speech community, as we do with those outside our community. Much of the research reviewed in earlier chapters has shown that Heritage learners often need additional exposure to more formal contexts and second language learners often lack the ability to reflect the informality of a situation. In both cases, there are important functions of language that cannot be fulfilled. As language instructors, the understanding of this type of variation will encourage our creativity and our efforts to design activities that allow learners to use language in a range of contexts. Even beginning with a basic contrast between formal and informal contexts will support the development of this
type of variation. Language instructors who bear in mind the type of variation that occurs across contexts will be able to provide varied opportunities for interaction and a wider range of input even in the classroom setting.

Being Polite Is About Varying Our Language Appropriately

Even instructors who are new to the world of sociolinguistic variation are likely experienced in teaching learners how to be polite in certain situations. For example, although it is rare to see a full treatment of pragmatic variation when teaching a given speech act, such as a request, language teachers do indeed provide at least lexical means for expressing politeness (e.g., “please”) when making a request. Thus, it may be helpful to remember that “being polite” is really just another case of language variation. We modify verb forms, lexical items, and discourse structure according to the level of imposition of our request and our relationship to the person from whom we are requesting something, making politeness a great example to demonstrate variation at more than one level of the grammar as well as a response to the characteristics of the listener. What is often missing, however, is that “becoming less polite” is an equally important case of language variation. Certainly learners who do not know how to express solidarity with a hearer will not build friendships effectively and will be denied future opportunities for interaction. The language instructor who takes the notion of politeness and connects it to language variation, both in the direction of increased formality and decreased formality, is likely to be able to call upon a great deal of existing knowledge and provide a range of meaningful examples of linguistic variation in the classroom.

SUMMARY

This section is intentionally brief and absent of references to specific research studies. Although in-depth knowledge of how linguistic and extralinguistic factors constrain the use of a given form at any level of the grammar for native speakers of a language can be useful, the integration of sociolinguistic variation does not require this level of expertise from all instructors. Instead, it is much more important that language instructors understand the basic facts upon which such research is built. For example, variation is an inherent and systematic part of natural languages and, what is more, the ability to vary one’s language is essential to effective communication. Likewise, it is important to know that language varies as a function of identity, geography, formality of the context, and inherent characteristics of the speaker and that this variation occurs at all levels of the grammar. In other words, knowing how sociolinguistic variation works is more important than having expertise regarding specific cases of sociolinguistic variation. Taking this as a starting point, the remainder
of the chapter is dedicated to an exploration of how language instructors might begin to show such knowledge of linguistic variation in their planning and implementation of classroom activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

We turn now to some practical suggestions for increasing the linguistic variation in the language classroom. As will be seen, the manner in which this is accomplished and the degree to which it is done will vary according to the proficiency of the learner. Likewise, learner goals and learning contexts will differ, and this, too, will influence pedagogical decisions. The following suggestions are intended to initiate language instructor reflection on this issue and encourage exploration of new instructional goals while at the same time meeting the existing demands—logistic, personal, and academic—of the student populations instructors serve.

Be Aware of the Process of Target Selection

The previous chapter explored the issue of selecting norms for instruction in depth. We noted earlier that language instructors and curriculum developers must recognize that they have tremendous influence on language attitudes and the evaluation of linguistic varieties. The target they select will be viewed as “correct” and a “good model” of language for a given learner group. This means that there is a great deal of responsibility associated with determining appropriate course materials; the process of selection delivers an unspoken message. The very first step toward integrating linguistic variation in the classroom is to recognize these facts. In so doing, we can consciously explore the process of selecting materials. This, in turn, will help us to determine whether we have represented several different speech communities in our classroom materials. For example, when we bring materials in to provide examples of written or spoken input, do they come from different sources? Do we include male and female speakers and writers? Do the topic and purpose of communication range from formal to informal? When we ask our students to complete tasks or assessments, do we include contextual, speaker-specific information in the instructions to guide their production? Recalling from Chapter One that two key elements in fostering acquisition are provision of input and the opportunity for interaction, an effort to increase the types of input and types of interactions is likely quite consistent with most all existing course goals.

Moving immediately beyond the general considerations of representation, there are likely also some important learner-specific characteristics that might influence the selection of input sources in the classroom. For example, learners in a region where the target language is spoken by a local group,
whether large or small, are likely to profit tremendously from inclusion in the classroom of the local variety along with other varieties that are likely found in existing textbook materials. This is consistent with recommendations made by Auger (2003) for Canadian French and by Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006) for US Spanish. Other relevant factors might be slightly less obvious but equally important. For example, some secondary schools may make an annual trip to visit a country or city where the target is spoken, some universities may sponsor study abroad in a limited number of target regions, and some language learners may have professional goals that are tightly linked to the ability to speak a given variety of a second language. In all of these cases, representation of the appropriate speech communities will foster communicative abilities that are essential for that learner population. There may also be individual student considerations that influence the selection of course materials. For example, a student with a relative from a given speech community might encourage an instructor to seek examples of the variety of language spoken by that group.

It bears mentioning that it is equally important to include a variety of types of input, even those that do not correspond directly to learner goals. This is because it will foster learners’ ability to comprehend a wide range of speakers, and it will further encourage the view of language variation as something natural and inherent in language. Table 10.1 provides a checklist or rubric that can be used to evaluate the degree to which linguistic diversity has been represented in the classroom. It is aimed toward including linguistic variation along geographic, social, and formal lines so that the ability to vary speech across contexts is accessible to learners. The rubric can be applied to evaluate an entire textbook or a single day’s lesson plan. When used on a smaller scale, the expectation would not be to meet all of these criteria but rather to see them vary from one day to the next. In this way, the rubric might be used to keep track of the materials used each day and could be tabulated at the end of an academic term to provide an overview of coverage. What is more, if the answer to most of these questions is negative based on an evaluation of existing course materials, then innovation can begin with a single additional opportunity for input or interaction.

In sum, with the support of a checklist such as the one in Table 10.1, instructors can begin by determining whether they are representing several speech communities in their instructional materials. If they find that a good range of speakers and contexts is not already present in the instructional materials they use, they may evaluate who their students are in order to best expand the examples of input already present and to diversify the types of interactions in which students already participate. This should include not only geographic variation but also examples of male and female, old and young speakers, as well as formal and informal settings. Once a need for expansion is identified, new sources of input can be identified and incorporated into the classroom. In order to complete this next step effectively, we can follow several of the suggestions below to
create additional activities or materials that support the acquisition of sociolin-
guistic competence and make good use of these new sources of input.

**Creating Effective Course Materials**

Leaving aside the issue of linguistic variation momentarily, there are sev-
eral characteristics of effective course materials that remain constant. Good
learning activities take into account **learner goals**. This means that the same materials may need to be modified across learner populations and across learning contexts. It also means that certain goals, such as developing the ability to communicate, are likely to be the same for all. Likewise, good activities provide input to the learner. Clearly the field of second language acquisition is home to a wide range of theories of learning, but none claims that acquisition proceeds without input. In fact, although the role of input is believed to be different across theories, its importance is constant. To be clear, input means **samples of language**, rather than explanations of how language works. It should be recalled that there is considerable debate about whether metalinguistic knowledge can directly impact the developing learner grammar. While some accounts posit that this is possible, most adopt an intermediate position that allows for metalinguistic knowledge to assist learners in noticing a gap in their developing grammars, noticing a form, and then making the connection between that form and its meaning(s), using a form with increasing facility, and so on. To our knowledge, there is no account of second language acquisition that claims that metalinguistic knowledge alone is sufficient for acquisition. This means that good materials do more than deliver explanations of how a structure works. Finally, good learning activities include opportunities to interact with input in a variety of ways. This may include speaking with others or working with a written text or a recording of speech to comprehend the content delivered. Interaction also implies activity on the part of the learner such that a response of some sort is required. In other words, learners must do something with the information in the input as well. These facts about effective materials should be held constant when working to include materials that incorporate linguistic variation in the classroom, just as they would be with any other pedagogical goal in mind.

Once we have selected our source for input, perhaps, as suggested by Auger (2003), a pop music sample from a given speech community, the next step is to determine how this input connects to existing classroom goals. For example, a colleague of mine once shared the lyrics to a song by Ricardo Arjona, who resides in Mexico City and sings about life in that city. The song “el Taxista” is about a taxicab driver who picks up a wealthy woman who is crying. The song includes a narrative about the events of that evening, all recounted using the preterit and imperfect past tense forms in Spanish. We came to use this song as a way to afford students input that was germane to developing the aspectual contrast between the preterit and imperfect. Students listened to the song while noting the past time forms (e.g., by marking them as they heard them or filling in blanks with the forms they heard). The song itself has some regional vocabulary and, of course, is sung by a male from a particular geographic region (Arjona is Guatemalan), but the focus of the lesson may remain on the grammatical form under study. In this way, the song adds to the classroom materials
but does not supersede the existing curricular goals. What is more, different approaches might require learners to respond to this input in different ways. Some might focus on comprehension, others on noticing the verb forms, and still others on the narrative structure itself. In all cases, the song provides input that can serve as the basis for these activities. What is especially important to note is that bringing diverse forms of input into the classroom does not entail excessive explanation about the variation contained in it. Instead, it simply provides an example of real language used in a real-life context. The inclusion of a single pop song serves the goal of bringing authentic input, with all of its inherent linguistic variation, to the language classroom. Its value, however, is not only in the input it provides but in the contrastive input it provides when juxtaposed with materials from other speakers and other speech communities.

It is also possible that the goal of an activity of the sort described above is indeed to develop an understanding of how language varies across speech populations. Taking for example the phenomena of “g-dropping” (runnin’ vs. running) in English, of variation in future time reference forms in Spanish (voy a caminar vs. caminaré), and of first-person plural pronominal forms in French (on vs. nous), in all cases the first form in the pair is extremely widespread and the second form might seem excessively formal in certain contexts or certain speech communities. In all cases, the key difference from one context to another, one speaker to another, and one situation to another is one of rates of use of each form. Thus, it is quite possible to design a classroom activity around the exploration of differences in frequency of use of these forms across contexts. This might entail comparing pop songs from different regions, movie clips with different settings, or a dialogue between two friends as compared to two strangers. In such cases, learners might analyze the ways in which these forms are used and grow to associate each with certain sociolinguistic facts as well. Nevertheless, this should be an additional goal, secondary to continually providing input for language development and opportunities for learners to interact with that input, rather than replacing those goals with goals based exclusively on analyzing linguistic variation. The finding that second language learners do not acquire sociolinguistic variation in the traditional classroom setting is nearly always attributed to lack of exposure in the input rather than lack of additional explanations of variation. Thus, even when one of the goals of a classroom activity is to foster the development of sociolinguistic knowledge in a second language, it is essential to hold constant the facts about effective classroom materials and activities.

**Setting Reasonable Expectations**

As should be clear from the two preceding sections, integrating linguistic variation into the second language classroom involves a conscious decision
to diversify the input to which students have access and a continued commitment to employ best practices in the second language classroom. Once such input has been identified and selected, the next step must be to decide what students should do with that input. This requires a careful consideration of the appropriate goals for learners with different levels of ability in the second language. It is likely that nearly all sources of input can work well for all levels of learners, but this is only true if the expectations placed on students vary from one ability level to another. Failure to consider not only the input source but also the classroom activities designed to guide students’ interaction with the input may lead to frustration on the part of the learners and, unfortunately, to the inaccurate conclusion that students simply “aren’t ready” for linguistic variation.

It was mentioned earlier that new sources of input should be connected to existing curricular goals. One way in which proficiency level should mediate these connections has to do with the types of variation that are present (or explored) in a given input sample. We recall that linguistic variation occurs at all levels of the grammar, from the sound system to lexical choices. What is more, some types of variation are largely representative of geographic differences between speech communities, while others are more complex indicators of other social factors. Taking these facts into account, we can see that at lower levels of proficiency it might make best sense to include input that exemplifies geographic variation and, most likely, variation at the level of the lexicon or the sound system. This is because learners at this level can benefit maximally from simple exposure to the geographic differences they will encounter as they travel or meet different speakers, even in purely academic settings. What is more, features that vary geographically still represent a simple one-to-one connection such that use of a given variant (e.g., a particular word or a given realization of a phoneme) can be connected with the region from which a given speaker hails. At early levels of proficiency, the focus of the activity will not likely be a discussion of linguistic variation and, thus, incorporation of geographic features is unlikely to decrease students’ ability to complete the planned activity.

With more advanced learners, it is possible to explore variation at other levels of the grammar and variation that is conditioned by more than one factor (e.g., geography). For example, intermediate learners are able to begin to employ various forms for pragmatic ends. This means that the introduction of lexical items and verb forms that are used to express politeness, for example, can be included in input and may even be the focus of classroom activities. Students at this level are able to begin to understand the role of factors like the degree of imposition of a request and the closeness of the relationship between speakers. Activities might be as simple as deciding whether a speaker is requesting something from a friend or a teacher based on oral or written
prompts that include differing lexical items and/or verb forms. To be sure, this does not mean that regular classroom activities which focus on provision of additional input should be replaced with extensive metalinguistic explanations. Additionally, it does not mean that learners must be able to produce each of these forms. As with other structures, a focus on providing input and beginning with comprehension are good practices.

Finally, the most advanced language learners should have access to input that varies not only along geographic lines but also along social lines. Depending on the language and the learning context, this might include input samples from local Heritage speakers or samples from various ethnic groups and should most certainly include examples of formal and informal speech produced by males and females of various ages. At this level it is also appropriate to expect learners to begin to produce utterances that vary according to context. For example, learners at this level are likely to benefit from interactions with a variety of input sources: classroom activities that mirror a range of interaction goals and contexts and curricular goals that span the levels of the grammar and include variation that is both geographic and social. Of course a learner who has had exposure to varying input sources since the early levels of study is well poised to make the most of these opportunities. Although at this level a certain amount of explanation of how a structure varies can prove useful, it should not supersede the importance of input and interaction.

In the remainder of this section we provide three sample activities (Examples 10.1, 10.2, and 10.3) for the same input source in order to demonstrate how this might work. The activities are second language neutral, in the sense that they should work with any language, and, thus, instructors can adapt these to the languages they teach. The examples are given in English below only to serve as a model, and in order to implement this activity, the materials should be recreated in the target language. The input source for all three

**EXAMPLE 10.1.** Sample activity for lower proficiency

Instructions: According to the radio advertisement, which products are on sale at the pharmacy? Mark all that apply.

1. ___ Toothpaste
2. ___ Make-up
3. ___ Shampoo
4. ___ Cold medicine
5. ___ Bandages
6. ___ Potato chips
EXAMPLE 10.2. Sample activity for intermediate proficiency

Instructions: As you listen, identify the commands in the radio advertisement. At PharmaDrug we have all your medical needs covered—and more! *Come in today* for great deals on over-the-counter medications, personal care products, and more! Now, for a limited time, new customers have the opportunity to enroll in our money-saving frequent shopper club at no additional cost. *Don’t miss out* on this great offer—*hurry up and shop today*!

EXAMPLE 10.3. Sample activity for advanced proficiency

Instructions: Based on the advertisement, decide whether the following sentences are true (T) or false (F).

1. ___ Purchasing two boxes of FluMed is a better deal than purchasing one box of MediFlu.
2. ___ For a quick snack, a box of cookies gets you more for your money.
3. ___ If you don’t mind the price, Claudette mascara is the best because it doesn’t run.
4. ___ The bandages that are on sale are better for kids.
5. ___ Someone with dry hair should purchase Salon shampoo.
6. ___ You normally have to pay to join the frequent shopper club, so signing up now is a good deal.
7. ___ Dentbright toothpaste makes your teeth whiter than any other toothpaste.

activities comes from internet radio and includes examples of several radio commercials. These should be readily accessible to all instructors and, because radio broadcasts are in the public domain, these are budget-friendly additions to the language classroom. The reader may modify the content to fit the radio announcements that are most readily available to them in the language they teach. These examples provide a reasonable goal for each of three different levels of learners. Furthermore, with any single input source, instructors can design several activities that are appropriate for a range of abilities.

These examples show that, when using the same (or similar) input source, what changes across levels of proficiency are the curricular goals and the ways in which learners are asked to interact with the input, rather than the
input source itself. The reader might correctly note that the suggestions above resemble ideas for integrating authentic materials into the classroom, rather than suggestions for teaching linguistic variation. This is because if instructors make a conscious decision to incorporate linguistic diversity in the language classroom, and from there, continue to use their expertise to create interaction-rich, appropriate classroom activities that are linked to immediate curricular goals—as well as the overarching goal of fostering the development of communicative competence—then the activities that are designed to increase students’ access to examples of linguistic variation should fit seamlessly into existing materials. In other words, what changes is the type of oral or written texts (both from traditional textbooks and from one instance to another), rather than the types of activities in which learners participate.

Maximizing the Range of Varieties in the Language Classroom

It has been stated throughout this chapter, as well as in earlier ones, that regardless of theoretical approach, the key ingredient for second language development is input. Thus, each authentic text provides important information to the language learner. What is more, as these texts differ from one another by the speech community each represents, they share a comparative value that allows learners to develop knowledge of how the second language varies from one context to another. In this sense, one of the key activities of language instructors and curriculum developers should be the identification of appropriate examples of language in use for the classroom. In order to make this manageable for those who have not previously attempted to integrate a variety of input sources into the language classroom, we end with some suggestions about how to go about finding such texts. One excellent source of inspiration is personal experience. Each of us as language learners and language instructors has a variety of points of contact with the language we teach. These points of contact range from media sources to travel to friendships, and each is a valid connection to language use. By bringing in language sources that are familiar to us, we are likely to also share our enthusiasm for the experiences that language learning can bring. This might include a radio clip from a location that we have visited, a quick recording of a friend reading a passage or telling a personal narrative, a movie clip set in an area we have lived, and so on. Although the ultimate goal is to bring in several different examples of language in use, it makes good sense to begin with what we know.

Along these same lines, there are other ways to identify useful input sources for the language classroom. Our own students may also have personal experiences or strong interests in a certain speech community or a geographic region, and this can guide our search for new materials as well. Likewise, there are often world events that take center stage and are related to the target language.
For example, a country that speaks the target language may be the upcoming host of the Olympic Games, may have experienced an unusual natural disaster, or may be the location of political change. In all cases, these events are likely to be actively reported in newspapers and on television and radio broadcasts throughout the world. Not only do they provide good sources of input, but they also have the added benefit of educating learners about the political, economic, and cultural context of a region where the target language is spoken. A final strategy to help in the quest for varied input sources, and one that has the added practical benefit of saving precious time on the part of the instructor, is to look for textbooks that list web links to new sources of input. Many new textbooks include useful links to additional readings or recordings in the target language, and these can be used to their fullest (e.g., García-Serrano, Grant Cash, & De la Torre [2011] for Spanish, and Kay & le Fleming [2008] for Russian). What is especially nice about this last option is that it is quite likely that these links are already directly tied to course goals. This means that an instructor should still assess the degree to which various speakers are being represented, but the course activities and curricular goals are already intact.

KEEPING CURRENT PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN MIND

The suggestions above should serve to help language instructors and curriculum developers to integrate authentic materials representing a broader range of speech communities and contexts into their language classrooms. In order to maximize the positive impact of this endeavor, however, it is important to keep current best practices and the most recent research findings in mind. As was stated earlier, introducing extensive explanations of how variation works into the language classroom is unlikely to foster the development of communicative competence. For this reason, it is important to bear in mind the following tips when moving forward with the development of new course activities. As a mentor once told me, there is no need to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The implication is that we know quite a bit about how second languages are learned; thus, seeking to assist learners to develop all types of competence, including sociolinguistic competence, entails adding new dimensions to the classroom, rather than replacing existing effective practices. The following suggestions help to contextualize the integration of new materials into the second language classroom.

Remember the Basics

When trying something new, it is always a good idea to build upon what we already know. We need to remember all of the facts about language teaching
that we have studied, learned from experience, or just implicitly know from our own language learning history. For example, we know that more is not always better. The gradual integration of new input sources can be a very positive endeavor, but flooding learners with multiple examples before developing appropriate support materials—or, worse still, taking one example and pairing it with excessively detailed explanations of language variation—is not likely to bring about the desired outcomes. We know that good examples can provide foundations upon which to build, that metalinguistic knowledge may not directly impact the developing system (and may actually do harm in the event that it replaces meaningful input), and that learners do well when we teach one thing at a time. Thinking back to the suggestions for lower level learners, we noted that starting with geographic variation (one-to-one connections) and focusing on constant curricular goals was a good practice. In sum, what we know about language learning should also apply to linguistic variation in the classroom.

**Keep Learner Goals in Mind**

In general our goal for all language learners is to support the development of communicative abilities in both written and oral modes of communication. This includes grammatical competence as well as the abilities to use language in socially appropriate ways and to build discourse according to language-specific norms. When individual factors, such as proficiency level or individual or professional goals, are taken into account, this general goal may be further specified to suit the learner population. Nevertheless, the purpose of this volume has been to demonstrate that linguistic variation is a natural, inherent feature of language, and varying language appropriately is essential to effective communication. The direct implication of this fact is that knowledge of sociolinguistic variation should make us better able to help students meet their goals more than it entails a change in those overarching goals.

**Focus on Communication**

It is worthwhile to connect the goal of developing communicative competence with our knowledge of the importance of input and interaction in the development of second language abilities. The focus in the language classroom should be on communication; we know that communication fosters language learning and our job as instructors is to provide opportunities to communicate or, more specifically, to interact with input in a variety of ways. It is essential not to replace opportunities for communication with metalinguistic information about how language works. To many of us, this is most certainly important and interesting information, but few would
argue that knowing how a language works is the same as being able to use that language in a real-world context.

Provide Opportunities to Develop All Aspects of Competence

Just as we have spent time exploring the idea of increasing input sources in the second language classroom, thereby ensuring that several speech communities were represented and that linguistic diversity was present in the classroom, it is equally important to represent a range of language skills in the classroom. In other words, our view of competence should be multifaceted, and our classroom activities should provide opportunities to develop all aspects of competence. For example, learners must comprehend and produce, they must do so in written and oral modes, and they must develop the abilities to use grammatical rules accurately, to vary structures appropriately, to organize discourse differently based on communicative goals, and so on. In sum, introducing new sources of input does not mean a drastic shift toward listening comprehension activities at the exclusion of all else. Instead, we must continue to balance our focus on development of all of the skills involved in language use.

Pay Attention to Individual Learning Styles

Language instructors are well aware that not all learners respond in the same way to all pedagogical materials and activities. This is true regardless of the curricular goals in focus in a particular activity. In order to continue to teach effectively, it is important to pay attention to the types of instructions and materials that work best for a diverse learner population. It is highly unlikely that all students in a given classroom share the same learning styles and preferences. Thus, we must respond to learner differences by offering a variety of opportunities for development and balancing the demands of a range of learning styles.

Apply Existing Practices to New Goals

We have spent a great deal of time cautioning against major changes in current practices as one integrates additional sources of input into the language classroom. Thus, we end with a note of encouragement that one also ought to try using existing practices to find new ways to teach communicative competence. This means that although it has not yet been tested, we might explore the degree to which effective methods for teaching grammatical competence might be applicable to sociolinguistic competence. If we take, for example, the method of using input processing to foster the development of form-meaning connections (VanPatten, 2004), we have a method of instruction that has proven effective
with multiple second languages and across a range of grammatical structures. The basic function of this method is to allow learners to make form-meaning connections by bringing a particular form into focus and, in the instructional activities, making that form essential for completion of the required tasks. In this sense, it may also be possible to create an activity that brings a fact about language variation into focus. Example 10.4 is an input processing activity designed to help learners make the connection between gender and direct object pronouns in Spanish. These forms are difficult for English-speaking learners because no such gender distinction is made in the first language, and these forms are processed later than content words, given their lesser impact on global meaning overall.

Taking this model of instruction and applying it to sociolinguistic variation, we might imagine an activity where learners are to listen for clues as to whether a situation is formal or informal, to whom a request is directed, or the age of a given speaker. Example 10.5 shows how this might be applied at very early levels of proficiency, simply to help learners identify the interdental fricative (theta) with Peninsular Spanish. It will be recalled that at the outset of this chapter

**EXAMPLE 10.4.** Sample processing instruction activity

Instructions: Indicate what these people are doing in each of the following pictures.

_____ Emilia lo come. _____ José y Silvia lo comieron.
Emilia eats it\textsubscript{MASC} Jose and Silvia ate it\textsubscript{MASC}

_____ Emilia la come. _____ José y Silvia la comieron.
Emilia eats it\textsubscript{FEM} Jose and Silvia ate it\textsubscript{FEM}

Sources: http://www.illustrationsof.com/439337-royalty-free-cake-clipart-illustration (for illustration, left)
EXAMPLE 10.5. Processing instruction activity for sociolinguistic competence

Instructions: Listen to the following sentences and decide whether the speaker is from Spain or Mexico.

César estudia la química. _____ Spain _____ Mexico
‘César studies chemistry’.

Cecilia quiere ir al cine. _____ Spain _____ Mexico
‘Cecilia wants to go to the movies’.

Vamos a hacer un viaje a Valencia. _____ Spain _____ Mexico
‘We’re going on a trip to Valencia’.

Mis zapatos nuevos son muy bonitos. _____ Spain _____ Mexico
‘My new shoes are very pretty’.

Me gusta comer cerezas. _____ Spain _____ Mexico
‘I like eating cherries’.

Francisco trabaja en una tienda de música. _____ Spain _____ Mexico
‘Francisco works in a music store’.

Carla cena con sus amigos. _____ Spain _____ Mexico
‘Carla’s eating dinner with her friends’.

we suggested that a student question about the “lisp” in this variety of Spanish created a pedagogical opportunity to teach learners about language variation. Thus, the activity that follows is merely an application of existing classroom practices to that same curricular goal. The proposed activity requires students to listen to a speech sample while reading along and decide whether the speaker is from Mexico or Spain. This activity could be easily repeated with the phenomenon of aspiration of syllable final /s/, and learners could be asked to decide whether a speaker was from Mexico or the Dominican Republic, for example.

As stated earlier, there is no research evidence to suggest that this task is an effective way to help students develop sociolinguistic competence. Nevertheless, we know that input fosters second language development and we know that input processing is one effective means of fostering the development of grammatical competence. These two facts taken together suggest that this is at least one reasonable avenue for development. Certainly within other approaches, both theoretical and pedagogical, there are other well-established and effective practices. The idea is that if we build on what we know, it is likely that we will find continued success while at the same time helping language
learners develop an essential component of communicative competence that is generally neglected in the language classroom.

CONCLUSION

It is not controversial to state that our language varies according to the context in which we find ourselves. Additionally, sociolinguists have established that this is a natural and systematic part of language use. In light of these facts, language instructors generally see that part of developing communicative abilities in a second language must also include sociolinguistic competence. Nevertheless, the incorporation of practices that would help to foster these abilities in the language classroom can be more controversial. In workshops on this topic, voices of concern range from those who worry that studying a variety that is not in the textbook is a distraction to those who simply believe students are unable to handle linguistic diversity. Nevertheless, the reality of the requirements for use of language professionally or interpersonally beyond the classroom demonstrates that these abilities are indeed quite necessary. We hope to have struck a balance in this concluding chapter between expanding the sources of input in the language classroom (and secondarily the curricular goals) while at the same time maintaining current effective practices and meeting existing curricular goals. More importantly, we hope that by using the suggestions and models contained here, individual language instructors will feel comfortable beginning the journey of this expansion and can, at the same time, use the multiple skills and knowledge they already possess to do so.

READING BEYOND THE TEXT

COMPREHENSION AND APPLICATION

A. Comprehension

1. Rather than saying that a Spaniard “lisps,” how could a sociolinguistically informed instructor describe the sound produced in north-central Spain?
2. What would be a detailed response to explain which contexts demonstrate increasing use of *on* ‘we’ in French?
3. With respect to combatting language prejudice, what does knowledge of sociolinguistics permit?
4. Why is it inaccurate to say that “good” speakers always use “correct” forms?
5. What does it mean to say that variation is systematic?
6. On what levels of grammar does language vary?
7. In a general sense, how do Heritage and second language learners often differ in terms of the speech contexts to which they are exposed?
8. How does “being polite” serve as evidence of linguistic variation?
9. What role do curriculum developers play with respect to the evaluation of linguistic varieties?
10. In addition to metalinguistic rules, what do good learning activities include?
11. What should the primary focus be in the language classroom?

B. Application

1. Why is it problematic for people to refer to a particular dialect as the “real” version of that language? Are there traits of your own dialect that some might classify as being outside the mainstream variety?
2. As an instructor, what difficulties come to mind when you think about integrating variation in your classroom? What benefits justify the use of some amount of class time on variationist concepts? Do some aspects of variation seem more amenable to the classroom than others? (If you are not an instructor, apply this to a class that you are taking or have taken.)
3. Think of a context (or contexts) in which you don’t act like a “good” speaker of your language. When do you avoid “correct” forms? Describe the situation, your interlocutors, and as much about the context as possible.
4. Think of a context (or contexts) in which you do act like a “good” speaker of your language. When do you purposefully try to use “correct” forms? Describe the situation, your interlocutors, and as much about the context as possible.
5. Is linguistic variation always consciously performed? Think of examples when you have produced linguistic forms that surprised someone in your vicinity? What did you say? How did you say it? What do you think caused you to produce language in that way? Who else was present?

6. Think of a song that you could use in class (as a learner or instructor) that would expose the class to a particular language variety. Provide information about the song and singer and specific linguistic traits that can be noted in the song. Try to find as many examples as you can of geographic variation according to lexical items, phonology, and morphosyntax within the song.

7. When you need to learn a new skill, how do you best learn? When you learn language, do you also best learn via the same method? Do your friends or family members learn differently from you? Think of four specific people in your life and how you would best convey to them how to shoot a basketball. Now think about how you would teach them a grammatical structure of your choice in a second language. Write down your observations and how they might inform your future teaching or presentations.

**NOTE**

1. We note that for those teaching in the secondary context, as well as instructors at the post-secondary level whose programs are designed to reflect official standards for language learning, such as those published by ACTFL, will find that modifications of this type are very much in line with the overarching goals for instruction (see Potowski, Berne, Clark, & Hammerand [2008] for discussion).
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