

The Production - Perception - Attitude Triangle

Researchers working on linguistic variation – may they be sociolinguists, phoneticians or experts from more traditional philologies – use various methods and experimental paradigms to gather their data. While many of us have internalized that it is wise to validate alternations found in production also in perception, only little work so far integrates aspects of social psychology to estimate the effect of speaker specific characteristics on the interpretation of linguistic variation. The Jakobsonian (1978:24-25) speaker-centric "*We speak in order to be heard and need to be heard in order to be understood*" does not seem to capture the observation that speakers not only want to be understood but also interpreted in a certain way (to express neighborhood or group belonging, identity, etc.) and thus often (consciously or unconsciously) deploy speech styles and linguistic means carrying indexical information. Interpretation can also go the other way: hearers may have attitudes towards speakers with whom they associate specific forms ranging from subphonemic to morpho-syntactic alternations.

In this talk, I will try to show the link between production and perception and how attitude mediates these two. I will argue for integrating approaches to social psychology in linguistic work to get at the causes and consequences of linguistic variation and language change through estimating attitudes towards linguistic forms.