

Linguistic practice and stereotypes among Copenhagen adolescents

Marie Maegaard

1 Introduction

In recent years, studies on relations between linguistic variation and social meaning, has had a strong focus on *local* meaning making, rather than on *global* patterns of variation connected to social meaning. This is mainly a reaction to the earlier preoccupation with large-scale quantitative studies of variation (eg. Labov, 2006 [1966]; 2001, Trudgill, 1974), which are often seen to neglect the importance of local usage of linguistic variation in constructing social meaning in interaction (see for instance the critique in Coupland, 2007 or Eckert, 2008). Thus, many researchers today carry out micro analyses of interaction that bring new insights on the construction of social meaning through language, and shed new light on the complex relations between language variation and social meaning (eg. Møller, this volume; Podesva, 2007; Rampton, 2006 [1995]; 2003). This is indeed a very interesting and essential part of sociolinguistics, however when it comes to understanding stereotypes, and their connection to language variation, we need to focus not only on the local dynamics of meaning making, but also on global structures of language and meaning potentials (Linell, 1998; 2001). This is the case because stereotyping (as the concept is understood in this chapter, see later section 4) is a social psychological process that works at an intergroup level. Thus we need to also focus on group patterns and structures at a more global level in our study of stereotypical perceptions of linguistic variation.

In the following, I will focus on stereotypes related to gender and ethnicity, using data from a project on language variation and change in Copenhagen, Denmark (Maegaard, 2007). The project combines methods from variationist sociolinguistics, ethnography, social psychology and attitudes research, and aims to shed light on relations between social categories, social practice and linguistic

variation among 9th graders (around 15 years old) in a Copenhagen urban school, in the following referred to as The City School. I will introduce the study by presenting the results regarding relations between phonetic variation, social categories and social practice. However, in this chapter focus is also on linguistic stereotypes. Therefore, in later sections emphasis will be laid on discussions of the verbal guise studies that were carried out as part of the project. I argue that the linguistic practices of the pupils labelled ‘foreign girls’ is very different from the linguistic practices employed by the pupils labelled ‘foreign boys’, and that this has a major impact on the perceptions of them in the verbal guise study.

2 Social categories and social practice

The City School is a large urban school in Copenhagen with approximately 900 pupils, of different socioeconomic backgrounds, however more pupils have lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Around 30 % of the pupils are multilingual, which is the average in Copenhagen public schools (according to definitions and figures from the Copenhagen City Council, www.kk.dk). Through seven months of participant observation (during 2002-03), I learned a lot about the social world of the pupils in 9th grade at The City School. I participated in classes, breaks, school parties, sports events etc., and carried out ethnographic interviews with most pupils. Mainly due to cancellations and because some pupils did not want to participate in the interviews, not all pupils were interviewed (64 out of the 83 pupils in the year group). For the entire project, the data consist of field notes, a diary written after each day I spent with the pupils, recordings of interviews, self-recordings, and responses to the speech samples in the verbal guise study.

During the ethnographic field work, focus was on social categories and social practice. Instead of deciding which social categories to focus on before entering this particular community of practice (Wenger 1998), I chose the social categories based on the ethnographic fieldwork. This

resulted in analyses which, for instance, do not distinguish between pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds, but instead distinguish between pupils belonging to the categories ‘girls’ or ‘boys’, and ‘foreigners’ or ‘Danes’, since these were the categories and the labels used by the pupils and important to the social order in the school. I will not go into details about the analyses of social categories here (see Maegaard, 2007: 127ff), but there are some important differences between the two categories.

The distinction between ‘girls’ and ‘boys’ is not negotiable in this community of practice – either you are a girl or a boy, and even though the gender identities can be performed in many different ways, the gender distinction is crucial to the social order in school. There are hardly any friendship networks with both girls and boys – unless they are of a romantic character.

The distinction between ‘foreigners’ and ‘Danes’ is of a different kind. Membership of the category ‘foreigners’ could not have been determined on the basis of criteria such as mother tongue or ethnic background. Such criteria all play a part in the categorisation but they interact with other phenomena. It is not simply a question of, for instance, bodily appearance, but also of how individuals *act* in the social field. Thus, there are pupils who under some criteria could be categorised as ‘pupils with other ethnic background than Danish’, ‘bilinguals’, ‘immigrants’ etc., who are not categorised as ‘foreigners’ in school, because they do not participate in the same practices as the ‘foreigners’. The best example of this is Saba. Her parents migrated from Eritrea to Denmark in the 1980s. Saba talks of herself as an ‘Eritrean’ and she is undoubtedly the darkest girl in the cohort. Nevertheless, Saba is not categorised as a ‘foreigner’. One of her class mates, Samira, even states: ‘I am the only foreign girl in my class’. Saba is not a ‘foreigner’, because she does not engage in the activities that ‘foreign girls’ engage in, and she does not hang out with them. Instead, she hangs out with her best friend Mira, a popular Danish girl, she straightens her curly hair, dresses just like Mira, and is not in any way taking part in any ‘foreign girl’-activities. However, Saba is not

categorised as being a ‘Dane’ either and this shows that the two categories are not complementary, one is not the negation of the other. It is possible to be neither ‘Danish’ nor ‘foreign’. As seen from this example, the practices that the pupils engage in are extremely important for the way they are categorised.

The analyses of social practice resulted in a focus on the following practices (cf. Maegaard, 2007: 165ff): smoking, the use of alcohol, whereabouts in the city, clothing, ways of walking, plans for the future, leisure activities, jobs, lunch habits, and whereabouts during breaks in school. These practices group together in different *style clusters* (Quist, 2005: 78; 2008: 51), that is clusters of stylistic practices that contribute to a certain social meaning. The style clusters, and the labels signalling which types of personae were associated with them in school, are listed below in table 1. Most of the labels were used by the pupils themselves. However, some of the clusters did not have a label attached to them, and thus the clusters were given a name that would associate a persona corresponding to the persona constructions that took place every day in school. This applies to the ‘alternative girls’ and the ‘tough ethnically mixed boys’, since these labels were not used in school. The boys were referred to as the ‘foreign boys and boys hanging out with foreigners’, ‘foreign boys and wannabes’ etc., and the ‘alternative girls’ did not have a name attached to them. Sometimes they were referred to as ‘strange’ or ‘weird’, sometimes as ‘outsiders’ or ‘hippies’ but it was not common at all to refer to the girls engaged in these specific practices (since the rest of the pupils hardly ever talked about them), and thus the name I use in this text is my own, not the pupils’ invention.

Table 1.

Style cluster	Practices
(1) Foreign girls	Plan to go to high school (<i>gymnasium</i>), take Arabic lessons in leisure time, do not do sports in leisure time, do not have jobs, do not smoke, do not drink alcohol. Clothing: Dark clothes, leather shoes or boots often with high heels, possibly scarf, long shirts or blouses that reach the thigh, golden jewellery, thin bracelets and necklaces.

(2) Nice Danish girls	Plan to go to high school (<i>gymnasium</i>) or “business” high school (<i>handelsgymnasium</i>), do fitness training in leisure time, job in shops (not in supermarkets, though), do not smoke, drink alcohol, local use of the city, stay in the central lobby during school breaks, buy lunch in the supermarket or bring rolls/fruit from home. Clothing: Sneakers, low waist jeans in light blue, tight t-shirts or tops, often short enough to make the belly button visible, the bra is often visible too, due to low-necked tops. Colours usually white, pink or other pastels. In the winter time over the t-shirt/top they wear a relatively short hooded sweatshirt in the same type of colours. Often jewellery and belts of different kinds.
(3) Tough Danish girls	Plan to attend technical school (<i>teknisk skole</i>), do not do sports in leisure time, do not have a job, smoke, drink alcohol, local use of the city, stay in the central lobby or outside during breaks, buy lunch in the supermarket. Clothing: Very similar to the clothes described above, but colours are usually dark, black or grey. Sometimes also track suit trousers which are not part of style cluster 2 above. Over the t-shirt sometimes a sweatshirt like the ones mentioned above, or a larger fleece jumper.
(4) Alternative girls	Plan to attend high school, creative leisure activities like painting, drama or music lessons, do not have jobs, do not smoke, drink alcohol, local use of the city, stay in the central lobby during breaks, bring rolls/fruit from home for lunch. Clothing: Dark clothes, but not similar to style clusters 1 or 3 above. Often black clothes, but also other colours, however never pastels. Often velvet jackets, or velour blouses, never visible belly button or bra, never tracksuit or tight clothes. Sometimes heavy necklaces or bracelets.
(5) Tough ethnically mixed boys	Plan to attend high school or technical/business school, football or fitness in leisure time, job in fashion shops or no job, do not smoke, drink alcohol, global non-institutional use of the city, stay in the central lobby or outside during breaks, buy lunch in supermarket or kebab shop, ‘fidgeting’ walk. Clothing: Black/grey/white pop-clothes. Jeans (blue) and pants in other fabric, usually black. Loose but not baggy. T-shirt. Jewellery, necklaces. Sometimes a cap. Labelled clothes, e.g. Iceman, Jack & Jones
(6) Nice Danish boys	Plan to attend high school, football, tennis, piano lessons in leisure time, local use of the city, do not smoke, drink alcohol, stay in own or friends’ classroom during breaks, job in supermarket or similar, buy lunch in supermarket. Clothing: Light coloured pop-clothes Poloshirts, pastels. Jeans are loose but not baggy. Labelled clothes: e.g. Fred Perry, Lacoste, Levis.
(7) Tough Danish boys	Plan to attend technical school, football in leisure time, local use of the city, drink alcohol, smoke, stay in the central lobby or outside during breaks, job in supermarket or similar, buy lunch in supermarket or at the burger shop, classical masculine walk. Clothing: Dark pop-clothes, baggy jeans or track suit trousers, often white. Sweatshirt, hooded sweatshirt, cap. Sneakers. Labelled clothes: Adidas, Nike or other sport labels.
(8) Nerdy boys	Plan to attend high school, do not do sports or creative leisure activities, but attend scout clubs, play computer and go to internet cafés, local use of the city, do not smoke, drink alcohol, stay in own class during breaks, do not have jobs, bring lunch packs from home. Clothing: Compared to mainstream norms, the clothes are untrendy. Sneakers and jeans but the sneakers are, like the jeans, often from unknown, cheap labels. Pants are neither tight nor baggy. T-shirts and sweatshirts are loose and in bright colours. No labelled clothes.

The style clusters could be supplemented by numerous other practices, but the ones presented in table 1 are the ones that, based on the ethnographic fieldwork, stood out as highly salient and important in the community. These practices are the ones used in the systematic analysis characterising and delimiting the different clusters. The daily practices of all pupils were analysed according to these different clusters and on the basis of that, every pupil was ascribed to a certain style cluster if possible (if they were engaged in 8 out of 10 practices). The actual group of

individuals ascribed to a certain style cluster is later referred to as *style group*. Most of the pupils fitted one of the clusters in table 1, but of course some pupils were impossible to place in any of them. The following linguistic analyses are based on the language use of the pupils whom it was possible to categorise by one of the eight style clusters.

3 Phonetic variation

The phonetic variation is analysed with regard to ten variables. The non-standard variants are shown in table 2, with a few examples of words where the variant could occur. I focus on three different kinds of variables: 1) variables that have traditionally been seen to distinguish high from low Copenhagen speech, 2) variables that have traditionally been seen to distinguish younger from older speech, and 3) variables that have not traditionally been analysed in Danish variation studies (see Maegaard, 2007: 81 ff for a detailed description of the variables).

Table 2

Traditional high/low-variables	Traditional young/old-variables	Non-traditional variables
'Lengthening of short vowels' (Low) 'snakke', 'gruppe', 'klasse'	Raising of (e) in the æng-variable: [eŋ] (Young) 'tænke', 'engelsk', 'penge'	Devoicing of initial r: [r̥] 'rimelig', 'rød', 'ryge'
Affrication of initial t: [tʃ] (Low) 'ti', 'tusind', 'teori'	Fusion of [ð] and the preceding vowel V into [Vð] (Young) 'tid', 'hvad', 'sidde'	Dentalization of s: [s̺] 'sidste', 'cykel', 'sejt'
Backing of the nucleus of the aj-diphthong: [aj̠] (Low) 'haj', 'lege', 'hejse'		Palatalization of initial t: [tʲ] 'ti', 'tusind', 'teori'
Fronting of the nucleus of the aj-diphthong: [aj̟] (High) 'haj', 'lege', 'hejse'		
Postalveolar [ʃ] for standard [ç]		

(High)		
‘sjov’, ‘speciel’, ‘charme’		

The linguistic analysis was an auditive analysis of the interviews with regard to the ten variables. The interviews are semi-structured, and analyses are made of the same phases in the interviews. If possible, at least 20 occurrences of each variable are analysed, but for the æng-variable and the aj-variables this was not always possible, due to the lower frequency of these variables.

The distribution of variants in categories based on gender and ethnicity are seen in table 3. As can be seen from the table, ‘lengthening of short vowel’ is the only variable where the ‘Danes’ are in the lead, and the ‘foreign’ girls or boys are not. With regard to all the other variables, either the ‘foreign’ boys or ‘foreign’ girls are the most extreme.

Table 3

	Foreign girls %	Dan. girls %	Dan. boys %	For. boys %
[s̥]	23,3	6,0	0	15,8
[ts̥]	57,5	15,2	1,0	15,8
[tj]	0	0,8	7,3	15,0
[k̥]	16,3	4,8	4,4	23,3
Length. of short V	0	21,7	21,1	11,9
[^v ð]	41,5	60,2	59,1	75,5
[ʃ]	11,8	20,7	53,6	98,1
[eŋ]	0	29,5	56,3	55,6
[aj]	73,3	15,3	8,4	0

The ‘foreign’ girls have the highest use of [s̥], [ts̥] and [aj], while the ‘foreign’ boys have the highest use of [t̪], [ʃ], [ɣ], fusion of [ð] and the preceding vowel, and [eŋ]. This means that they make use of the opposite variants: When the ‘foreign’ boys have high use of a given variant, the ‘foreign’ girls have a low use – and the other way around. It is worth noting that the ‘foreigners’ extreme use of variants is not restricted to the non-traditional variables, but also applies to the traditional variables. Thus, it seems that this is not merely a question of the ‘foreigners’ inventing new variants, but of them using existing variation in constructing social meaning through opposition. This becomes clearer when we look at the variation in relation to the style clusters.

If we see linguistic variation as social practice, we would expect the language use of pupils belonging to different style groups to be different. In table 4, the pupils are categorised according to which style cluster they could be said to draw upon in their persona construction. This pattern is more fine-grained and detailed in many ways, and the pattern from table 3 concerning gender and ethnicity is also found in this analysis: The ‘foreign’ girls in style group 1 use the opposite variants of style group 5, the ‘tough ethnically mixed boys’ (except regarding the use of [ɣ] where girls and boys have similar degree of use). Again it is seen that together these two groups are the most extreme language users with regard to all the variables, except for the lengthening of short vowels.

Another interesting thing to note here is how social category and practice seem to play together. In style group 5 (‘the tough ethnically mixed boys’) it is actually the case that the ‘Danish’ boys in this group use the [t̪] and the [ʃ] variants approximately as much as the foreign boys, and far more than the other groups of boys. Thus, there is a connection between language use and other social practices, in that the boys in style group 5 are categorised in the same group precisely because they participate in the same practices.

Table 4

	Gr 1 Foreign girls	Gr 2 Nice Danish girls	Gr 3 Tough Danish girls	Gr 4 Alternative girls	Gr 5 Tough ethnically mixed boys	Gr 6 Nice Danish boys	Gr 7 Tough Danish boys	Gr 8 Nerdy boys
[ɕ]	22,5	10,7	0	0	7,9	0	0	0
[ts]	57,5	27,5	6,7	8,3	8,3	1,3	0	2,5
[tʃ]	0	1,1	1,7	0	12,5	6,3	4,4	0
[ɣ]	16,3	5,0	15,0	8,3	12,1	6,3	4,4	0
Leng. of short V	0	22,5	26,1	2,3	11,8	3,0	38,0	40,0
[Vð]	41,5	53,8	56,7	77,8	69,0	61,6	52,0	53,3
[ʃ]	11,8	15,3	40,0	33,3	95,4	48,1	34,1	60,0
[ɛŋ]	0	25,8	0	0	64,7	50,0	66,7	33,3
[aj]	73,3	21,2	0	0	0	27,3	3,8	0

On the other hand, we could consider a feature like devoiced r, [ɣ̥]. As can be seen from table 4, this feature is especially used by ‘the foreign girls’, ‘the tough ethnically mixed boys’ and ‘the tough Danish girls’. But in fact the Danish boys in style group 5, who participate in the same practices as the ‘foreign’ boys, do not use [ɣ̥] very much. Actually, they use it even less than the ‘Danish’ boys who are not part of style group 5. It is possible that the ‘Danish’ boys in style group 5 by doing this signal that after all they are not foreigners. The consequence of this interpretation is that even though it is possible to distinguish between different groups based on the practices they engage in (as in table 4 above), the abstract category membership (such as boy, girl, ‘Dane’, ‘foreigner’) still has some importance. Thus, it seems that the style groups should not function as the only description, but that this analysis supplements the analysis based on social categories.

The linguistic analysis shows that the variation is connected both to social categories and to practices. In principle, the relations that have been found among the pupils from The City School could turn out to be entirely locally bound, which means that we could not expect to find the same relations other places in Copenhagen. To establish whether or not this seemed to be the case,

a verbal guise study was carried out.

4 Perceptions of speakers

In this chapter linguistic variation is regarded as social practice, and several aspects of this concept are important. Social practice is to be seen as actions, but not actions in isolation. The notion of *practice* implies that the actions are recurring, which means that they must be seen across a timespan, that is in a historical context. At the same time, by using the term *social* practice, the social context is highlighted. It is the historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to the actions. Clapping ones hands as a signal of applause can only be understood as applausal if it is known in advance to have this meaning. Smoking a cigarette or wearing a cap back to front can be interpreted as oppositional acts only in so far as they have been experienced before to have relations to stances, attitudes etc. of an oppositional character, and in social contexts where this becomes relevant. Social meaning is in this understanding constructed here-and-now in situated discourse, but it is to a large extent constructed by drawing on meaning potentials that have emerged through series of interactions. This means that the specific communicative event and the structure of meaning potentials like social representations (Farr & Moscovici, 1984) or stereotypes (eg. Tajfel, 1981) constitute a dialogical relationship, and it implies a need to study not only the dynamics of meaning making, but also the structure.

In the previous paragraphs I have reported from a study of a particular community of practice, namely a year group of pupils at The City School. However, when using the community of practice perspective, there is a risk that the researcher overemphasises the local meaning making in the specific community of practice, over the more global relations between clusters of resources (style clusters) and social meaning in the larger speech community. One way of introducing analyses of global meaning potentials, is by means of the verbal guise method.

The verbal guise method is a method that is meant to elicit people's *private* language attitudes (Garrett, Coupland & Williams, 2003; Kristiansen, Garrett & Coupland, 2005) or their *subconscious* attitudes (Kristiansen, 1991; 1999; Maegaard, 2001). It is claimed that this indirect technique (contrary to direct measures like interviews about attitudes) can elicit expressions of attitudes that the respondents are not aware of.

In a verbal guise experiment, the respondents listen to speech samples representing the language use that the researcher wishes to elicit attitudes towards. Then the respondents evaluate the speakers, usually by filling out a questionnaire, and usually using scales. In the original studies by Lambert and his colleagues (Lambert et al., 1960), the focus was on attitudes towards speakers of Canadian-English and Canadian-French, but the method has been modified and developed in many ways and directions since then, and has mainly been used in connection with dialect variation, not variation concerning different languages as in the original study. The verbal guise technique has been criticized and discussed continuously since the first experiment, but I will not go into these discussions here (see Garrett et al., 2003: 57ff for a thorough presentation of problems related to the verbal guise technique). However, in section 6 I will touch upon some of the methodological problems.

The method rests upon the ability of the respondents to tie social meaning to the speech that they listen to, and on the actual practices that the speakers of certain ways of speaking engage in. The method is designed to examine stereotypes related to language use. The stereotypes are developed through repeated acts, practices that are carried out and experienced by individuals. Thus stereotypes are based both on practice and on psychology (and cognition, but this is a discussion that I am not engaging in in this chapter, see Fiske & Taylor, 1984 for a Social Cognition view on stereotypes). They are psychological phenomena, but an important aspect of the social identity

approach to stereotypes is that they are also *social*, in the sense that they are shared perceptions in the community. This is what explains the consistent outcomes of most verbal guise experiments.

On the basis of language use, the respondents in a verbal guise study are assigning specific characteristics to the speaker, e.g. 'interesting', 'nice', 'ambitious' etc. This is only possible because social meaning is associated with clusters of practices, as the above analyses aimed to show. This means that by isolating one part of the stereotype, such as language, the respondent will possibly associate to the rest. In line with social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981, Hogg & Abrams, 1988), *stereotypes* are here understood as generalizations about people based on category membership (Hogg & Abrams 1988: 65). They are shared beliefs about people belonging to different social categories. An example of a stereotype is the perception of a typical 'doctor' as male, middle-aged, grey-haired, rational, serious, orderly, wearing a white coat and so on. Stereotyping is a fundamental process in human psychology, but it is at the same time potentially dangerous, because it simplifies the world and has the potential of producing social conflicts. In stereotypical perceptions each category is treated as being homogenous and thus every member possesses the same qualities.

By use of the verbal guise technique the researcher elicits stereotypical descriptions of what is perceived to be a distinctive group associated with a particular language use. The groups need not be larger labelled categories, (like 'doctor' or 'woman'), but they might very well instead be categories of people of a certain 'type' (examples from Maegaard 2005):

- (1) lidt oprørsk, 'rebel', egen mening, ikke påvirket af andre, selvstændig, måske flippet
a little rebellious, 'rebel', own opinion, is not influenced by others, independent, perhaps alternative way of clothing (response to a Copenhagen girl, modern accent)

- (2) han er rolig, nede på jorden, lidt gammeldags, principfast og stolt
he is calm, down to earth, a bit old-fashioned, high-principled and proud (response to a Copenhagen boy, conservative accent)

In these examples, different characteristics are put together in clusters to construct the stereotypes. These stereotypes do not necessarily have names attached to them, but they are recognizable profiles of different types of people.

6 The verbal guise study

6.1 Overall results

The purpose of the verbal guise study was to investigate whether other young people than the ones from the ethnographic study, tied stereotypical perceptions to the variation that corresponded to the personae constructed and reconstructed day after day by the speakers. To examine if the connections between language use, categories and style clusters in the local community of practice could be said to exist in the broader Copenhagen speech community, the verbal guise study was carried out in two different schools. It was carried out in The City School, but in order to be certain that the respondents did not recognise the voices they heard as belonging to specific people they knew, a new year group of 9th graders had to be used. Thus the respondents in the City School attended 9th grade three years after the group of pupils studied in the ethnographic study. The verbal guise experiment was furthermore carried out in another school in Copenhagen, here referred to as The North School. The North School is situated in another part of the city, and has pupils from higher socio-economic background and a smaller amount of multilingual pupils. Representatives of seven of the eight style clusters were chosen (there was no obvious representative of the ‘alternative girls’), and each appears in two guises in the experiment, that is with two different speech samples.

The samples are extremely short, since part of the aim is also to examine if stereotypes can be invoked by only 10 seconds of speech. In most attitudes research using the verbal guise paradigm, the speech samples are longer, because it allows more variants to occur and it gives the respondent more time to evaluate the speakers. Judging from earlier Danish studies, however, it seems that respondents have no problems responding to extracts 20 to 30 seconds long, which suggests that it might be possible to shorten the extracts even more. This is tested in the experiment. The shortness of the samples also minimises the effect of semantic content, because it is more or less impossible to understand what the speaker is actually talking about based on these short extracts. (3) is an example of a speech sample from a boy, Victor, from style group 8, 'the nerdy boys':

- (3) det er ret svært vil jeg mene \ når de ting så er opfyldt så d- det sådan nogenlunde den måde det er \ og det er også det der gør at det nærmest er umuligt at få til at \ at få arrangeret

it is very hard I would think \ when these things are fulfilled then i- it is more or less the way it is \ and that is also what makes it almost impossible to \ to have it arranged

Here, it is not possible to interpret exactly what the content of Victor's speech is. Nevertheless, the respondents are capable of reacting to the speech sample, as the analysis will show. This means that they must be reacting, not to *what* Victor says, but *how* it is said. To further ensure this, each speaker appears in two different guises. If the guises are evaluated similarly, it is a strong indication that it is the way of speaking, not the semantic content, the listeners are reacting to (for detailed transcriptions and analyses of the speech samples, see Maegaard, 2007).

The stereotypes that the respondents associate with the different ways of speaking were elicited using open-ended questionnaires. The use of evaluation scales in questionnaires brings along several problems, which is why they were avoided in this study. An important problem is that it presupposes the relevance of some traits over others, and it makes unexpected characterizations

impossible (see Maegaard, 2005: 63ff; Maegaard, in press). Thus, there were no scales in the questionnaire, and it only contained one question regarding each speech sample: ‘What is your immediate impression of this person? How do you think she/he is?’. The responses were grouped according to semantic meaning, and table 5 shows the resulting speaker profiles. 101 listeners took part in the study, which amounted to 1110 responses in total, since some were blank or for other reasons were rejected from the analysis. The categorisations that appear in table 5 all have a frequency of at least 6 at The City School and 5 at The North School for the specific speech sample. On average, this amounts to approximately 14 % out of the total number of responses for each speech sample, which means that if a profile contains five categorisations, it will cover at least 70 % of all responses given to the specific speech sample.

Table 5

	The City School	The North School
Lykke1	Tough, dominating, confused, problem child, indifferent	Immigrant, indifferent, strange way of speaking, pop girl, suburban
Lykke5	Tough, dominating, problem child, positive	Immigrant, tough, indifferent, strange way of speaking, pop girl
Louise2	Snob, popular, self-centred, confident	Nice, snob, popular, blond, upper class, pop girl, Østerbro
Louise4	Snob, popular, self-centred, confident	Snob, popular, blond, bimbo/bitch, dislikable, pop girl
Samira3	Confident, ordinary, cautious, bright, insecure, serious	Nice, ordinary, calm
Samira6	Confident, ordinary, cautious, bright	Nice, ordinary, snob, serious
Robert7	Nice, dominating, problem child	Insecure, mature, nerd, cautious
Robert12	Insecure, ordinary, dominating, problem child	Nice, nerd, boring
Victor8	Bright, indifferent, nerd	Nice, bright, confident, popular, calm, mature
Victor11	Bright, indifferent, nerd, insecure	Nice, confident, popular, calm, nerd
Rashid9	Gay, immigrant, feminine, nice, a girls friend	Gay, immigrant, feminine, confident

Rashid14	Gay, immigrant, feminine, nice, smartass	Gay, immigrant, feminine, indifferent
Gustav10	Nice, ordinary, calm, cautious, sensible	Nice, ordinary, calm, cautious, sensitive
Gustav13	Nice, ordinary, calm, sensible	Nice, ordinary, calm

As can be seen from the table, the same speaker gets quite similar evaluations in the different guises. However, there is – for some of the speakers – a difference between the evaluations at the two schools. There are many interesting aspects of these evaluative profiles (see Maegaard, 2007; in press), but in this chapter I focus on the two representatives of the 'foreigner' categories: The 'foreign' girl, Samira, and the 'foreign' boy, Rashid, and I briefly mention the results concerning the 'tough Danish girl', Lykke, who is by some respondents categorised as being 'immigrant'.

6.2 Rashid

Rashid is in both schools evaluated as being 'gay', 'immigrant' and 'feminine'. Very interestingly, he is recognised in both schools as being an 'immigrant'.

There might be different reasons for this recognition. Regarding syntax, Rashid9 has what appears to be non-standard word order in the utterance:

- (4) 'måske man kan godt svinge lidt med vennerne'
 maybe-you-can-well-swing-a little-with-the friends
maybe you can swing a little with the friends

instead of

- (5) 'måske kan man godt svinge lidt med vennerne'
 maybe-can-you-well-swing-a little-with-the friends

maybe you can swing a little with the friends

Danish is a V2 language, which means that the verb is commonly placed second (as in (5) above). The ‘direct’ word order (subject-verb) as in (4) is a very salient feature in Danish learner-language, which could indicate that this is why Rashid is recognised. On the other hand, it does not explain why he is categorised as an ‘immigrant’ just as often in the other guise, Rashid14. This suggests that there must be other reasons for the categorisation of Rashid as ‘immigrant’.

Regarding segmental features, Rashid has none of the typical ‘foreigner’ pronunciations in the speech samples – [tʃ], [ʃ] or [ʁ] – yet he is recognised very clearly as ‘immigrant’.

The explanation might be prosody. According to Hansen and Phrao (see Phrao & Hansen, 2005; Hansen & Phrao, this volume) there are certain prosodic features that are specific to Copenhagen multiethnolectal speech. Long vowels tend to be shorter than in ‘standard young Copenhagen’, which means that there are no differences between standard short and long vowels. This might connect to the results from this study showing that the lengthening of short vowels is a ‘Dane’ variant (cf. table 3).

Furthermore, the intonation pattern in the multiethnolect shows almost levelled pitch until the end of the utterance where it falls rapidly (in contrast to the standard Copenhagen pattern where the pitch falls steadily throughout the utterance). Rashid’s intonation pattern shows a similar progress; however the exact pattern is difficult to obtain, due to his creaky voice, which obscures the intonation curves in Praat. Rashid also has a very abrupt delivery in both samples, which might in part be due to his vowels being short. Thus, Rashid uses some prosodic features that have been characterised as typical of Copenhagen multiethnolect, and this is probably why he is recognised as being an ‘immigrant’.

Rashid is also ascribed the label ‘gay’. This is probably a consequence of his use of [ʂ]. This variant has been referred to among Danish linguists as *young girls lesp* (‘ungpigelæsp’ Hutter & Bay, 2006), and in folk terminology as *gay s* (‘bøsse-s’). Some of the respondents even comment directly on Rashid’s *s*-pronunciation:

(6) ‘Bøsse – det kan man høre på hans s’er’

‘Gay – you can tell from his s’es’ (response to Rashid 9)

Rashid is not in any way categorised as being gay by any of his classmates, quite on the contrary. He is frequently referred to in the interviews with labels like ‘tough’, ‘popular’, ‘leader of the boys’, and he is dating the most popular girl in school, Louise. But when taken out of its context, his use of [ʂ] is not perceived the same way as it is when he uses it in context.

6.3 Samira

Samira is also evaluated quite similar in the two schools – for instance as ‘ordinary’ and ‘serious’, but it is noteworthy that in neither school she is evaluated as being ‘immigrant’ or the like. This seems odd, considering the important part the ‘foreign girl’ part of her persona plays in her daily life (cf. style group 1 in table 1). She is undoubtedly the most stereotypical ‘foreign’ girl in the year group, but this is not detected in the verbal guise study. She is recognised, however, as being for instance ‘ordinary’, ‘cautious’, ‘serious’ and ‘bright’ which are all characteristics that could be said to be characteristic of the persona she constructs day after day in school. At least these are all attributes that many of her class mates ascribe to her in the interviews.

Samira’s ‘foreigner’ position is not linguistically salient, apart from her use of devoiced *r*, [ʁ̥]. Apart from her use of this variant, she talks very much like a ‘nice Danish girl’, and shows no

prosodic features characteristic of Copenhagen multiethnolect. This is actually true for the entire ‘foreign’ girls group. They use more or less the same variants as the ‘nice Danish girls’, but they use them to a higher extent (i.e. their speech has a higher frequency of the same variants typical of the ‘nice Danish girls’). The other social practices employed by the ‘foreign’ girls are not very different from the ‘nice Danish girls’ either. One might say that the ‘foreign’ girls are ‘super-nice’ girls. The fact that Samira is not recognised emphasises that the stylistic picture of her is not full until we look at her linguistic style in context.

6.4 Lykke

The results concerning Lykke are interesting in relation to the discussions in this chapter. At The City School Lykke is in both samples evaluated as being ‘tough’, ‘dominating’ and a ‘problem child’. On The North School however, she is among other things ascribed the categorisations ‘immigrant’ and someone who has a ‘strange way of speaking’. This might be interpreted as an indication that Lykke’s way of speaking is recognized at The City School to have social meaning potentials similar to the persona that Lykke constructs in school. At the North School, on the other hand, Lykke’s way of speaking is not recognized as typical of a ‘tough Danish girl’, but as a ‘pop girl’ who has a ‘strange way of speaking’, and perhaps because of this she is perceived to be ‘immigrant’.

Lykke’s way of speaking is not recognized at The North School to have the same meaning potentials as it is at The City School, and this shows that social meaning potentials are not all global, in the sense that there are ways of speaking that respondents react differently to in the two schools. The social meaning of Lykke’s speech is interpreted in different ways in the two schools, and in the framework used in this chapter it is obvious to make the interpretation that this is because they are two different communities of practice, where linguistic variation is used

differently, and where ways of speaking used in one community of practice is not necessarily used in the other, which makes it difficult for listeners to attach social meaning to it (as seems to be the case with the speech samples from Lykke).

7 Conclusions

In this chapter I have presented and discussed different approaches to the study of linguistic variation and social meaning. I have analysed data from the same community of practice by use of a social category perspective, a practice perspective, and a social psychological perspective focussing on stereotypical perceptions of speakers.

It became clear that the linguistic analyses based on category membership (gender and ethnicity) and on practice (the style cluster analysis) supplement each other. They both gave interesting results showing the connections between language and gender, language and ethnicity, and between language and style clusters. Some of the variation patterns are better explained by the category perspective (eg. the use of *devoiced r*) whereas other patterns are better explained by the practice perspective (eg. the use of *palatalized t*).

The third approach is the social psychological approach using the verbal guise technique to elicit stereotypical perceptions of speakers. This analysis showed that the connections between category membership, practice and linguistic variation are not locally tied but can be found in the larger speech community as well. Nevertheless, not all speakers are evaluated similarly in the two schools and this suggests that there are some ways of speaking that are not recognized as having the same social meaning potentials in both communities. This shows furthermore that local and global meaning making are interrelated and that even though social meaning is experienced in the local context, it can very well draw on meaning potentials of a more global character.

The perceptions of Rashid and Samira show several things. First of all it is seen that the local meaning making to a large extent draws on more global patterns of language variation and social meaning. Rashid is recognized as ‘immigrant’ quite overwhelmingly in both schools, and this seems mainly to be due to prosodic features. However, Samira is not recognised and I argued that this is because her language use is quite close to that of the ‘nice Danish girls’. Her way of speaking does not index ‘foreigner’ but rather ‘super-niceness’. That this is, in fact, in this particular community of practice, a specific ‘foreign girl’ characteristic does not mean that it is indexed in the next step. Thus, the results also show that it is important to see linguistic style as embedded in a broader set of stylistic practices.

Finally, the evaluations of Lykke show that there are differences between the two schools in the respondents’ categorisations. This is seen as an indication that Lykke’s way of speaking is locally tied to certain meaning potentials, whereas in other communities of practice listeners are unfamiliar with it, and find it strange (and non-native).

The pupils at The City School use existing variation in Copenhagen to construct social meanings that are not necessarily similar to perceptions of the same variation in older generations. At the same time, they use variants that have not been noticed before in Copenhagen. However, among individuals from the same age group, it seems that their ways of speaking are to a large extent perceived as tied to meaning potentials relevant in other communities of practice too. Put differently, it seems that the linguistic variation among pupils in 9th grade at The City School, to a large degree resembles that of other same-age communities in Copenhagen, and that the pupils draw on meaning potentials quite similar to the stereotypical perceptions elicited in the verbal guise experiment.

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