

The University of Pittsburgh ~ Department of Linguistics

Colloquium Series *Presents:*

“Tracking Stance and Linguistic Variation in Interaction”

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In this paper, we take up the relationship of stance to identity, and the meaning processes that connect the two, thus producing patterns of variation. How do speakers resolve the tension between the varying nature of identities as they are performed in particular speech events, and the perduring nature of identities associated with a single speaker across events? We argue that identities are repertoires of stance. Stances are defined as alignments taken up to other speakers and to talk, and operationalized through linguistic devices that have been identified as used by speakers to indicate epistemicity and power of solidarity. Individuals tend to use the same stances in particular speech activity roles, but over several roles tend to use the same kinds of stance.

Linguistic variants take their meaning from the experience of interaction, and become indexed with various stances (Ochs 1992). We discuss the use of three different variables (ING, /I/ - vocalization, and /aw/-monophthongization) in a single conversation, first presenting the patterns of variation, and then showing how speakers who diverge from the general patterns do so because within a particular speech activity they are taking a different stance than is normative. The three variables differ in their overall patterning, which we suggest is because of their different indexicalities and contrasting enregisterment (Agha 2003; Johnstone and Kiesling 2008). We conclude by arguing that while stance is the primary motivation for speakers' choices in interaction, not all linguistic sources are available in the same way to do stance (and identity) work.

Friday, November 14, 2008 at 3:00p.m.

Room 332 ~ Cathedral of Learning