

**The limits of linguistic community:  
Speech styles and variable constraint effects**  
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The linguistic unity of speech communities lies in shared linguistic practices and evaluations: community members share common linguistic variables and exhibit common directions of style shifting (Labov 1966). In studies of variable processes, this linguistic unity is found to include shared constraint effects; for example, Guy 1980 demonstrates that Philadelphians share a common effect of the following pause constraint on -t,d deletion, so that it is a conservative environment (disfavoring deletion), while New Yorkers share an opposite effect of the same constraint, such that it favors deletion. Since these effects are different, they cannot be attributed to universal factors; since they are consistent within each community, they reflect shared linguistic practices, which can be characterized as shared grammars.

The question posed in this paper is how the shared linguistic constraints in the community relate to the common directions of style shifting. If constraint effects are constant across the community, and community members show constant directions of style shifting, are constraint effects constant across styles? In the variable rule framework, style is ordinarily treated as an additional factor group, implying that the effect of a given style is simply a quantitative shift in the rate of use defined by the other contextual constraints. This practice assumes that the linguistic constraints on a variable should be independent of speech style, and stable across different styles. However, given that different speech communities can show different constraint effects, the possibility arises that some speakers may alternate stylistically across what are in effect different dialects (or registers), with different constraint effects. This would appear to be a plausible characterization of multilectal speakers in a creole continuum, of speakers who alternate between AAVE and standard English, and perhaps more generally of speakers in 'dialect contact' situations. In such cases, stylistic variation might involve different constraint effects, and by implication, different grammars.

We present data from speakers in a dialect contact situation -- Singapore English speakers in New York City -- who appear to adopt different constraint rankings in different styles. The constraint effects in question include the same context for English -t,d deletion that Guy 1980 found to differentiate New York and Philadelphia: the following pause effect. These speakers have pause as the most conservative following context in reading styles (CD), significantly more conservative even than vowels -- pause = .30, vowel = .53, consonant = .71, but in conversational styles (AB), pause becomes much less conservative: pause = .48, vowel = .37, consonant = .61 (all figures Varbrul factor weights, Ns= 126, 48, 108, and 133, 291, 378, respectively; total N = 1084). This raises the possibility that, in conversational interaction, these speakers have adapted their variable constraints in the direction of NYC vernacular usage, becoming, at least with respect to this variable, bidialectal.

Guy, Gregory R. 1980. Variation in the group and the individual: the case of final stop deletion. In: W. Labov, ed. *Locating language in time, space, and society*. New York: Academic Press.

Labov, William. 1966. *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics.