Stylistic variations in the social network of a 10-year-old child: pragmatic adjustments or automatic alignment?

Martin Nathael, Jean-Pierre Chevrot, Stéphanie Barbu

Stylistic Variations in the Social Network of a 10-year-old Child: Pragmatic Adjustments or Automatic Alignment?[1]

Nathaël Martin and Jean-Pierre Chevrot
University of Grenoble
LIDILEM
Stéphanie Barbu
University of Rennes 1 - CNRS
UMR 6552 – Ethologie animale et humaine

Martin, N., Chevrot, J.-P. & Barbu, S. (2010). Stylistic variations in the social network of a 10-year-old child: pragmatic adjustments or automatic alignment? *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 14(5), 678–692.

Stylistic Variations in the Social Network of a 10-year-old Child: Pragmatic Adjustments or Automatic Alignment?

Abstract
Although stylistic variation within social networks has been described in adults, this topic remains under-researched in children. One question that remains unanswered is the extent to which stylistic variation is the result of automatic alignment or of intentional, pragmatically motivated adjustment. We present an in-depth sociolinguistic case study of a 10-year-old boy, his family and four friends selected according to their place of birth and the duration of their relationship with the boy. Statistical analyses of sociolinguistic variables of French suggest that the child's use of these variants is influenced by pragmatic motivations but not by automatic alignment.

KEYWORDS: stylistic variation, social network, child language, peers, family, frequency.
Running head: STYLISTIC VARIATION AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

French abstract
La variation stylistique est bien décrite chez l'adulte. Toutefois, sa forme, ses mécanismes et ses fonctions ontogénétiques doivent être davantage étudiés chez l'enfant. Une question concerne notamment le degré auquel cette variation résulte d'un alignement automatique sur les usages de l'interlocuteur ou d'un ajustement intentionnel, fondé sur des motivations pragmatiques. Nous présentons une étude de cas approfondie d'un garçon de dix ans enregistré avec sa famille et quatre amis sélectionnés selon leur lieu de naissance et la durée de la relation amicale qui les lie à l'enfant cible. L'analyse statistique de variables sociolinguistiques du français suggère que cet enfant est capable d'ajustements subtils en fonction de l'identité des interlocuteurs. Plutôt que d'être sous-tendus par un alignement mimétique sur les usages d'autrui, ces ajustements semblent fondés sur des motivations pragmatiques et identitaires.

[1] Acknowledgements: This work was supported by the French Ministry of Research's "Systèmes complexes en SHS" program and by an "Apprentissages, connaissances et société" grant from the National Research Agency. It also received research funding from the Rhône-Alpes Region as part of the Cluster 12 program.

INTRODUCTION

Sociolinguistic variation, stylistic adjustments and child language

Since the pioneering work of Labov (1966, 1972), studies of sociolinguistic variables have highlighted numerous points of phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic variation that illustrate the internal heterogeneity of languages and their organization. These points of variation are subject to social judgment. Certain variants are said to be standard and are typically associated with social prestige, high education level, professional ambition and efficiency. Other variants are said to be non-standard and are typically linked to social skills, solidarity and loyalty towards the native group. Variationist research on adults has repeatedly shown that the frequency of variants of the same variable depends on linguistic factors, such as the frequency of the word and the grammatical or phonological context (Armstrong 2001; Labov 1994; Wolfram 1969), as well as on sociodemographic factors, such as the gender or socioeconomic status of the speakers (Labov 1972, 2001; Trudgill 1995). Studies have also shown that the selection of variants depends on the links the speaker has within the local social network (Labov 1972; Milroy 1987, 2002).

In addition, research has established that the frequency with which a single speaker uses standard and non-standard variants depends on the context of the exchange. So-called stylistic variation can be observed on the macro-context level in situations that range from formal to casual, as well as on a micro-context level, that is, in successive periods within the same situation, according to changes in local parameters, such as topic of conversation (Coupland 1980) and the social characteristics of the addressee (Coupland 1980, 2007; Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994).

A review of the variationist literature relating to child language (Nardy 2008) shows the earliest age at which adult-like patterns have been observed for specific phonological variables, with stylistic adaptations being observed in children as young as 3 years. Roberts (1994) reported that children aged 3;2 to 4;11 produced the standard variant /ɪŋ / of the variable (ing) more frequently when addressing adults than when addressing other children, with whom they tended to use the non-standard form /ɪn/. In interactions involving eleven mother-child dyads, Smith, Durham and Fortune (2007) observed that from the age of 3;2, children show a structured use of the so-called '*hoose*' variable as a function of stylistic constraints. They produced the local form /uː/ more frequently in 'Routine and Play' situations than they did in 'Teaching and Discipline' situations. Both these findings lead to the conclusion that the first manifestations of adult-like stylistic patterns of variation occur at a very young age. Moreover, other studies have established that this ability continues throughout childhood (Reid 1978; Romaine, 1984).

Although several studies of stylistic variation in children's speech have been carried out, this rapid review of the literature highlights the absence of work on the stylistic adjustments used by children as a function of the exact place of the addressee in their family and friend network. Furthermore, none of these studies directly addressed the issue of the mechanism behind a child's ability to select variants according to the type of interaction.

Two main theoretical approaches to style

Several mechanisms have been proposed to explain stylistic adjustments through language use in adults. For Labov (1972), the trigger of changes in style is the attention a speaker gives to speech. Although this explanation of the stylistic mechanism is cognitive, its goal is social and pragmatic – to choose variants suited to the situation's degree of formality. According to

Coupland (2007: 54), the theory of Audience Design (Bell 1984, 2001) and Accommodation Theory (Giles 1973) have 'supplanted the attention to speech explanation as the mainstream variationist approach to style'. Accommodation Theory explains stylistic variations in terms of social signification and motivation (Giles, Coupland and Coupland 1991; Shepard, Giles and Le Poire 2001). It maintains that changes in style are the result of strategies for manipulating interpersonal distances. Accommodation Theory recognizes four general strategies. Convergence is the strategy by which interacting individuals adapt or modify linguistic, prosodic and non-verbal features in order to become more alike and reduce interpersonal differences, whereas divergence is used to accentuate differences between communicators. Speech maintenance refers to steady verbal behavior and speech complementarity refers to a consensus between two interactants that one of the participants has a subordinate role. Subtle adjustments are therefore made by interactants according to their perceptions of each other, the degree of awareness of their differences, their assumptions, their expectations, their intentions or the motives they attribute to an action.

Garrod and Pickering's (2004) interactive alignment model proposes a very different explanation for stylistic adjustments, based on the idea that the participants in a conversation automatically converge the cognitive representations involved in several aspects of language: situation model, semantic contents, lexical choices, and syntactical and phonological features. For example, the form of a question influences the form of the response: 'as interactive alignment predicts, speakers reuse the structures that they have just interpreted as listeners when formulating their response' (Garrod and Pickering 2004: 10). This automatic alignment allows the participants in a dialogue to establish implicit common ground and to reduce the cognitive load, thereby facilitating mutual understanding and rapid interaction. This is a very different explanation to the one provided by Accommodation Theory because the interactive alignment model advances the idea of an unconscious and non-negotiated process of mutual adjustment that concerns all linguistic forms and whose cognitive ramification is that the linguistic forms used by the listener are primed by the forms used by the speaker.

Examination of the above-cited work shows that two issues remain largely unexplored. First, no previous study of style has described a child's social network in detail, although detailed knowledge about the members of a network is needed in order to select co-speakers whose identities are most likely to trigger stylistic adjustments. Second, few attempts have been made to differentiate between the two main explanations for variations in style, that is, pragmatic social motivations and interactive alignment mechanisms based on cognitive priming. The present research represents a first attempt to fill these gaps.

THE STUDY

Our work was based on a case study, which is the most commonly used method of observation in studies of style (Coupland 2007). We first drew up detailed empirical descriptions of the members of the family and friend network of a 10-year-old boy, who we refer to under the pseudonym Justin. After an exhaustive sociometric assessment of his friend network, we selected four friends who differed only in terms of two criteria: nativeness and length of the relationship. Justin was then recorded at home with his parents, his sister and his two brothers and with each of these four friends. This observational design was chosen in order to control the choice of co-speakers and to ensure the interactions recorded took place in natural situations.

All the subjects lived in a village in the French Alps, where the regional version of French contains traits derived from the Franco-Provençal dialect. Consequently, as well as differing in terms of standard and non-standard values, the sociolinguistic variants we chose to analyze

introduced more precise sociolinguistic nuances between local French and more general French. Quantitative analysis of the use of these sociolinguistic variables allowed us to answer two questions: did the subject adjust the frequency with which he used the different variants as a function of the addressee? If so, did this adjustment depend on the addressee's frequency of use (cognitive alignment) or on his/her social position in the family and friend network (pragmatic accommodation)?

Study location and definition of the social network

Justin was aged between 10;1 and 10;6 during the observation period. He lives in the French 'département' of Haute-Savoie, in a mountain village whose economy is based on a mixture of tourism and traditional agriculture. The village's inhabitants use general French linguistic forms as well as remnant forms from the Franco-Provençal dialect. Justin's family has, in the words of his parents, lived in the village 'forever'. The parents run a small farm and their four children go to the village's only school. The nuclear family consists of the father (53 years old), the mother (45 years), one sister (8 years), and two younger brothers (6 and 5 years).

To identify and characterize Justin's network of friends, we used peer nominations and ratings, as these two classic sociometric tools have proven their worth in the study of children's social relations (Barbu 2003). The empirical investigation used to choose the four friends to study was carried out in three stages. First, Justin was asked to list all his acquaintances and to rate the level of friendship and the frequency of interactions with each person on the list. In order to avoid oversights, this stage was repeated in a more playful way by asking Justin to place labels bearing the names of his acquaintances on a target with five zones: best friends, good friends, peripheral friends, simple acquaintances, and friends he rarely saw and people he did not like. Second, Justin was asked to evaluate each of his acquaintances (n = 24; 17 males, 7 females) by replying to an eight-part questionnaire covering four topics: length of the relationship (number of years, on a scale of 0-7), level of acquaintance, level of friendship, and interaction frequency at school and outside school (each on a scale of 0-4). All this information was confirmed during independent interviews with Justin's parents. Finally, each of Justin's acquaintances was contacted, either by telephone or face-to-face, in order to find out their place of birth (n = 16 natives, 6 non-native, 2 unknown) and their three best friends, so we could determine the whole network of friends.

The four friends to record were chosen according to specific criteria: same age and sex as Justin, be in the same class and be liked by Justin (level of friendship ≥ 3). Keeping these characteristics constant, we selected friends who showed the maximum contrast on two dimensions: length of the friendship (i.e., number of years of knowing) and nativeness. Native children were defined as those who were born and who had always lived in or near Justin's village; non-native children were defined as those who were not born locally and who had spent part of their life elsewhere. Hence, we were able to choose four interlocutors whose place in the network was accurately defined. They are designated by pseudonyms in the following list:

1/ David, native, known for a long time (7 years): Justin said that he knew David well and that he frequently talked with him at school and outside school;

2/ Leo, native, known for a short time (2 years); Justin said that he did not know Leo well and that he frequently talked with him at school but not outside school;

3/ Kevin, non-native, known for a long time (5 years); Justin said that he knew Kevin well and that he frequently talked with him at school and out of school;

4/ Max, non-native, known for a short time (2-3 years); Justin said that he did not know Max well and that he talked with him a moderate amount at school and never outside school (except when they meet by chance in the village).

Collection and transcription of verbal interactions

All the audio recordings were made at Justin's home. Recordings with the family were made at lunch or at dinner with all the members of the family together, during snacks with his mother and siblings, or while engaged in childhood activities, such as games, reading or drawing. Recordings with friends were made during one-to-one interactions between Justin and one of his friends during free-time activities, such as painting, snacks, games, drawing, or visits to the farm. No fieldworker was present during the recordings. For the recordings, Justin carried a small backpack containing a transmitter connected to an omni-directional microphone attached to his sweater. A receiver connected to a mini-disc recorder was placed in a corner of the house[2]. This cordless microphone system facilitated the mobility of the participants and promoted natural interactions without the presence of an investigator. Recordings were made over a period of 6 months, from October 2005 to March 2006.

The exchanges were transcribed in full, using orthographic transcription for all the utterances except for the sociolinguistic variants, which were transcribed phonetically. Only the productions specifically addressed by Justin to an interlocutor or by an interlocutor to Justin were included in the analyses. In addition, we only analyzed conversations, and not reading, story-telling, singing or sentence repetition situations. This explains why word counts were low for the duration of the recording compared to other studies. Our analyses were based on 9 hours of recordings (1929 utterances, 10250 words) for interactions within the family and on 6 hours of recordings (1576 utterances, 9876 words) for interactions with friends.

Sociolinguistic variables

We studied four sociolinguistic variables. The first is a local variable: the production of the French clitic pronoun as a *y* /i/, rather than as a *le* 'him/it', *la* 'her/it' or *les* 'them'. For example, 'comment tu y sais?' rather than 'comment tu le sais?''How do you know?'*;* 'elle y appelle des aimants' instead of 'elle les appelle des aimants' 'She calls them magnets'. We called this variable (Y). The variant *y* is a remnant of Franco-Provençal (Tuaillon 1983), a dialect in which the singular pronoun placed in front of a verb as a direct object has three forms: masculine, feminine and neuter. The first generation of Franco-Provençal speakers to speak French conserved a three-gender pronoun structure, rather than adopting the two-gender system of French (masculine and feminine). Because French does not have a neutral gender, they used the variant *y* of regional French to refer to inanimate objects. Châtellain (2004) studied the sociolinguistic evaluation of this variant in a small town 30 kilometers south of our study area. Most speakers are aware that the variant *y* is not used throughout the French language area and that it is non-standard. Moreover, speakers with high socioeconomic status who live outside the area in which the variant is used regard it as a stereotype.

The other three variables consist of variants that are found throughout the French language area. The first of these general variables is variable liaison. In general, a liaison consonant – in the majority of cases, a /z/, /n/ or /t/ - appears between two words when the first word is a liaison trigger and the second word begins with a vowel. In some situations, such as after an adjective, after a plural noun, after a verb or after an invariable word (preposition, adverb, conjunction), the production of this phonological alternation is variable. For example, the sequence 'c'est un chien' 'it is a dog' may be pronounced with or without the /t/ between *c'est* and *un:* [setœ̃ʃjɛ̃] or [seœ̃ʃjɛ̃] We named this variable (VL). The second general variable is the optional suppression of the post-consonantal final /R/. For example, 'je vais mettre ça

[2] Note 2

ici' 'I will put that here' can be pronounced [ʒvɛmɛtRsaisi] or [ʒvɛmɛtsaisi], with or without the /R/ at the end of the word *mettre*. We named this variable (R). The third general variable is the optional suppression of the /l/ in the masculine subject pronouns *il(s)* 'he (they)' and the feminine subject pronouns *elle(s)* 'she (they)'. Thus, 'il parle' 'he is talking' may be pronounced [ilpaRl] or [ipaRl] without the /l/. We named this variable (L).

Nardy (2008) produced a comprehensive review of 30 years work on these variables in adults and children. Numerous studies of the variable (VL) show that the standard variant – the realization of the liaison – is produced more frequently by adults with high socioeconomic status and in formal situations. In children, differences as a function of the socioeconomic status of the parents have been reported for children as young as 5-6 years. The variable (R) is the subject of a large body of research that shows that the standard variant – the realization of the post-consonantal final /R/ – is produced more frequently by adults and adolescents of high socioeconomic status and in formal situations. An effect of the parent's socioeconomic status and of the situational context of speech has been demonstrated for children aged 10-12 years. Less work has been carried out on the variable (L). Adults produce the standard variant – pronouncing the /l/ – more frequently in formal situations, but the influence of socioeconomic status is unclear. Results for children show a clear effect of context.

Statistical analyses of use scores for non-standard variants

We calculated scores for the production by Justin and his nine interlocutors of non-standard variants for the local variable (Y) and for the general variables (VL), (R) and (L). Hence, the individual scores shown in the table are the percentages of non-standard realizations. They were based on the 3275 occurrences of sociolinguistic variables transcribed from the 15 hours of recordings. Justin produced 1737 of these occurrences (944 with his family and 793 with his friends) and 1538 occurrences were produced by Justin's interlocutors (975 by the five family members and 563 by the four friends).

The quantitative analyses were used to answer two questions. First, did the social position of the interlocutor with whom he was interacting lead to differences in Justin's scores? We used Fisher's exact probability tests to compare two scores of non-standard variants used by Justin when addressing two of his interlocutors[3]. Second, was there any statistically significant adjustment between Justin's non-standard variant scores and the non-standard variant scores of his interlocutors? This question was examined using Spearman rank correlations between Justin's scores and his interlocutors' scores.

Statistical analyses were carried out on the local morphological variable (Y) and on the three phonological variables with no local value (VL), (R), (L), which were grouped together (designated VL/R/L) in order to provide a large enough number of occurrences to ensure the reliability of the score calculations. By grouping together the variables we had at least 33 occurrences for each of the scores calculated for (VL/R/L). Without grouping these occurrences together, we would have had to calculate certain scores on the basis of 3 occurrences, which is unacceptable.

Table 1 presents the 36 scores for non standard variants and the 36 corresponding occurrences for the variable (Y) and the group of variables (VL/R/L), when Justin was addressing the five members of his family and his four friends, and when each of these nine people were addressing Justin. All the following analyses refer to sub-sections of table 1.

[3] Note 3

**********INSERT TABLE I ABOUT THERE**********

Justin's productions in interactions with members of his family

The analysis of the local variable (Y) showed that Justin tends to have different uses with different members of his family. Two-by-two comparisons showed that Justin's use of non-standard variants was significantly or tendentially higher when he addressed his mother (47.1%) than when he addressed his 6-year-old brother (22.7%) (Fisher's exact test, p = .010) or his 5-year-old brother (28.6%) (p = .091). Justin's use of non-standard variants was also higher when addressing his father than when addressing his siblings but the differences were not statistically significant because of the low number of occurrences of the variable for the father. None of the other comparisons, whether between the parents or between the siblings, was significant or tendential.

In terms of the group of general variables (VL/R/L), Justin also showed different uses with different members of his family. First, Justin's use of non-standard variants was significantly lower with his father (51.1%) than with his mother (63.7%) or siblings (75.8%, 73.1%, and 77.5%) (Fisher's exact test: .001 < all p < .033). Second, his score was significantly or tendentially lower with his mother (63.7%) than with his 6-year-old brother (73.1%) (p = .057) and his 5-year-old brother (77.5%) (p = .020). The other two-by-two comparisons were neither significant nor tendential.

In conclusion, Justin's use of non-standard variants generally differed depending on whether he was talking to his parents or to his siblings. He tended to use the non-standard variant of the local variable (Y) more frequently when addressing his parents than when talking to his brothers and sister. The opposite was observed with respect to the group of variables (VL/R/L), for which he used the non-standard variants more frequently with his siblings than he did with his parents. Hence, he showed a specialization in his production of the variables: the non-standard variants of the local variable were favored in interactions with his parents, whereas the non-standard variants of the variables without local value were favored when addressing his siblings. The variants with local value are therefore associated with individuals who personify a generational connection with the rural world, whereas the variants without local value are linked to members of the family who do not directly personify that connection (the brothers and sisters).

Justin's productions in interactions with his friends

The two-by-two comparisons for the variable (Y) show that Justin's use differed depending on the friend he was addressing. First, Justin used more non-standard variants when he was speaking to his long-standing friends. Thus, when addressing his two native friends, Justin used significantly more non-standard variants when speaking to David, who he had known for 7 years (66.7%), than when speaking to Leo, who he had known for only 2 years (44.4%) (Fisher's exact test, $p = .049$). A similar difference occurred when Justin addressed his non-native friends, as he used more non-standard variants when speaking to Kevin, who he had known for 5 years (54.3%) than when speaking to Max, who he had known for only 2-3 years (22.2%) ($p = .007$).

Place of birth had a tendential effect on Justin's uses when addressing his more-recent friends (Fisher's exact test, $p = .079$), as he used non-standard variants twice as frequently when speaking to Leo, native (44.4%) than when speaking to Max, non-native (22.2%). In contrast, for his long-standing friends, there was no significant difference in the scores when he was speaking to his native friend David (66.7%) or to his non-native friend Kevin (54.3%). Two-by-two comparisons combining length of relationship and place of birth also showed

significant differences, as Justin used non-standard variants three times as frequently when speaking to David, native known for 7 years (66.7%), than when speaking to Max, non-native known for 2-3 years (22.2%) ($p < .001$). The other comparisons for the variable (Y) were neither significant nor tendential.

The analysis of the group of general variables (VL/R/L) gave non-significant results, irrespective of the two-by-two comparison being considered. Thus, Justin's use of the general variables did not appear to differ according to the length of relationship and/or place of birth of his friends, as is shown by the narrow range of scores (between 61.3% and 69.6%).

In conclusion, only Justin's use of the local variable (Y) differed as a function of the social characteristics of his friends. For this variable, the impact of the length of the relationship was very clear, as the difference in Justin's use of non-standard variants according to friendship duration is significant, irrespective of the friend's place of birth. The influence of place of birth was less systematic, as Justin's scores only show a tendential difference between native and non-native friends for his more-recent friends. Therefore, it would seem that a long friendship cancels the tendency to speak differently to friends born in the same village or elsewhere. Hence, when used within a network of peers, the non-standard variants of the variable (Y) seem to carry analogous social meanings to those they express when used within the family. Because they represent an attachment to the local area, they are used with long-term friends living in the area.

Justin's alignment with the productions of his interlocutors

The next stage in our analysis was to examine whether Justin adjusted his scores of non-standard variants to the frequency of these variants in the utterances of his interlocutors, rather than to the interlocutors' social characteristics. As other authors have done (Coupland 1980, 2007), we calculated Spearman rank correlations between Justin's non-standard variant scores when talking to his interlocutors and his interlocutors' scores when talking to Justin.

Including the nine interlocutors in the calculation of the correlation between the non-standard variant scores for Justin and for his interlocutors gave non-significant correlations for both the variable (Y) ($r_s = -.033$, $p = .932$) and the group of variables (VL/R/L) ($r_s = -.301$, $p = .431$). When the correlation was calculated separately for the whole of Justin's family and for his group of friends, the correlation was not significant for (Y) (for the family: $r_s = .600$, $p = .285$; for the group of friends: $r_s = .000$, $p = 1{,}000$) or for (VL/R/L) (for the family: $r_s = -.200$, $p = .747$; for the group of friends: $r_s = -.316$, $p = .684$). We then calculated a third series of correlations between Justin's scores and the scores of the seven interlocutors he had known for a long time, whether they were members of his family or long-standing friends (Kevin and David). Again, the correlations were not significant, either for Y ($r_s = -.393$, $p = .383$) or for (VL/R/L) ($r_s = -.324$, $p = .478$).

Hence, no matter how the correlations were calculated, we did not find any significant correspondence between Justin's scores when talking to his interlocutors and his interlocutors' scores when talking to Justin. Consequently, we did not find any evidence of alignment between the frequencies with which Justin and his interlocutors used these variants.

DISCUSSION

Our study's first objective was to determine whether or not children adjust the style of their language as a function of the position of the addressee within their family and friend networks. In order to do this, we noted the use of two sociolinguistic variables in the verbal interactions of Justin, a 10-year-old boy. These points of variation were the regional variable (Y) and a group of general French variables (VL/R/L). We recorded Justin during interactions with his parents, his siblings and four carefully chosen friends, who were selected from his network of 24 peers according to their place of birth and the duration of their relationship with Justin. These friends were same-age and same-sex as Justin, were in the same class at school and were considered by Justin to be close friends.

With respect to our first objective, the analyses showed that a 10-year-old child is capable of modifying his use of sociolinguistic variants as a function of the exact social position of his addressee in the network of acquaintances. The use of the variants depends on the position of the addressee within the family (parents or siblings) or within the network of friends (recent *vs.* long-standing, native *vs.* non-native). We observed a specialization in Justin's use of the variables, as he used the non-standard variants of the group of general variables (VL/R/L) most frequently when addressing his siblings, but he used the non-standard variants of the local variable (Y) most frequently when addressing his parents and long-standing friends.

Hence, the non-standard variants of (Y), which are known to denote regional identity, seem to be associated with addressees who are perceived as representing the local culture through their generational status or their long-time friendship in the local network of peers. It also appears that the distinction Justin made when addressing a native or a non-native was erased for long-standing friends. The reason for this pattern may be that Justin does not know, or does not remember, where his long-term friends were born, but presumably he is aware he has known them for a long time. The non-standard variants of the local general variable (VL/R/L) seem to be more strongly associated with members of the family of the same generation as Justin.

Although the influence of the addressee's social position on the use of non-standard features clearly supports the concept of style based on pragmatic strategies and identity factors, two issues deserve further exploration. Firstly, why does Justin not use the local variants with his brothers and sisters, who are also natives and known for a long time? One possible explanation is that, during childhood, the distinctive logic behind the social use of variants is built in different ways in different social spaces. In the family space, parents are perceived as representatives of local values, but brothers and sisters are not. In the group of peers, long-term friends play an analogous role in contrast to more recent friends. Secondly, despite a substantial recording time, the number of occurrences collected did not allow us to calculate separate scores for the three phonological variables that were grouped together (VL), (R) et (L), or to take into account the numerous internal linguistic constraints known to influence these variables (phonological and grammatical context, lexical frequency, length of the carrier word, etc.). Studies of these constraints and separate analyses of each variable are therefore likely to modulate our results. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that the results are clear for the individual variable (Y), without internal linguistic constraints.

Our second objective was to test an alternative explanatory hypothesis for style, which focuses on mechanisms of interactive alignment based on the phenomenon of cognitive priming (Garrod and Pickering 2004), rather than on pragmatically based social motivations (Coupland 1980, 2007; Giles, Coupland and Coupland 1991; Shepard, Giles and Le Poire 2001). In order to do this, we calculated correlations between Justin's non-standard variant scores when he was speaking to his interlocutors and the interlocutors' non-standard variant scores when they were speaking to Justin. The interactive alignment theory predicts a positive

correlation. However, we did not find any significant correlation between Justin's scores and the scores of his nine interlocutors, either for (Y) or for (VL, R, L). This lack of correlation persisted even when the calculations were restricted to the five members of Justin's family, to his four friends or to the seven interlocutors he had known for a long time (two friends and the five members of his family).

Thus, it seems that Justin modified his use of the non-standard variants as a function of the social position of his addressees. However, he did not adjust the frequency with which he selected variants to match the frequency with which his addressees used these variants. This dissociation suggests that the processes underlying stylistic adjustment are not those of a mutual, automatic and non-negotiated adaptability, as claimed by the theory of interactive alignment.

This dissociation is contrary to studies on adults, in which such correlations have been found (Coupland 1980, 2007). Several explanations can be envisaged to explain this difference. The first explanation is simply statistical – the limited number of pairs of values on which the correlation calculations were based. A larger sample size would, perhaps, enable the correlations to reach the significance threshold[4]. A second possible explanation for the difference between our results and the results for adults is developmental. It may be that the interactive alignment faculty emerges after the age of 10 years. However, this eventuality would run contrary to the numerous studies that have shown the very early development of the ability to recognize regularities in the environment and to use these regularities to adjust one's behavior (Aslin, Saffran and Newport 1999).

In conclusion, our case study shows that a 10-year-old speaker is capable of robust and subtle stylistic adjustments as a function of the social position of the addressees in his network of acquaintances and as a function of the identity value of the sociolinguistic variants (local vs. general). However, we did not find any statistical evidence of adjustments in use as a function of the use of the interlocutor. Further work is needed to generalize and confirm this prevalence of pragmatic effects over alignment effects in the functioning of style in children.

[4] Note 4

NOTES

2. Cordless microphone: NADY, wireless system “Encore 1”. Mini-disc recorder: SONY, MZ-N710.

3. In line with common usage, two percentages are said to be significantly different when the probability *p* associated with their comparison is less than or equal to 0.05. In accordance with the general practice of scientists using inferential statistics, we use the terms *tendency* or *tendential* to describe marginally significant probabilities of between 0.05 and 0.10.

4. We are currently carrying out a study on a large sample of target subjects and interlocutors in order to check this point. Although this larger study may give generalizable results, it should be regarded as complementary to the present study because large-scale studies cannot give the same precision as a case study, particularly in terms of the description of each target subject’s social network, the selection of friends, the length of recordings and the richness of the corpus.

REFERENCES

Armstrong, Nigel. 2001. *Social and Stylistic Variation in Spoken French: A Comparative Approach*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: John Benjamins.

Aslin, Richard N., Jenny. R. Saffran and Elissa. L. Newport. 1999. Statistical learning in linguistic and non linguistic domains. In Brian MacWhinney (ed.) *The Emergence of Language*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 359-380.

Barbu, Stéphanie. 2003. Stability and flexibility in preschoolers' social networks: a dynamic analysis of socially directed behavior allocation. *Journal of Comparative Psychology* 117: 429-439.

Bell, Allan. 1984. Language style as audience design. *Language in Society* 2: 145-204.

Bell, Allan. 2001. Back in style: reworking audience design. In Penelope Eckert and John R. Rickford (eds.) *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation.* Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. 139-169.

Châtellain, Luciane. 2004. 'J'y dis et j'y étudie': les Représentations et les Stéréotypes d'une Variation Diatopique: la Variante *y*. Unpublished DEA dissertation. Grenoble, France: Université Stendhal.

Coupland, Nikolas. 1980. Style-shifting in a Cardiff work-setting. *Language in Society*, 9: 1-12.

Coupland, Nikolas. 2007. *Style. Language Variation and Identity*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Garrod, Simon and Martin J. Pickering. 2004. Why is conversation so easy? *Trends in Cognitive Science* 8: 8-11.

Giles, Howard. 1973. Accent mobility: a model and some data. *Anthropological Linguistics* 15: 87-109.

Giles, Howard, Justine Coupland and Nikolas Coupland. 1991. Accommodation theory: communication, context, and consequence. In Howard Giles, Justine Coupland and Nikolas Coupland (eds.) *Contexts of Accommodation: Developments in Applied Sociolinguistics.* Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. 1-68.

Labov, William. 1966. *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*. Washington, District of Columbia: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Labov, William. 1972. *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov, William. 1994. *Principles of Linguistic Change, vol. 1: Internal factors*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.

Labov, William. 2001. *Principles of Linguistic Change, vol. 2: Social Factors*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.

Milroy, Lesley. 1987. *Language and Social Networks*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.

Milroy, Lesley. 2002. Social Networks. In Jack Chambers and Natalie Schilling-Estes (eds.) *Handbook of Language Variation and Change.* Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing. 549-573.

Nardy, Aurélie. 2008. Acquisition des variables sociolinguistiques entre 2 et 6 ans: facteurs sociologiques et influence des interactions au sein du réseau social. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Grenoble, France: Université Stendhal. Retrieved from http://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00466276/fr/.

Reid, Euan. 1978. Social and stylistic variation in the speech of children: some evidence from Edinburgh. In Peter Trudgill (ed.) *Sociolinguistic Patterns in British English*. London: Edward Arnold. 158-171.

Rickford, John R. and Faye McNair-Knox. 1994. Addressee- and topic-influenced style-shift: A quantitative sociolinguistic study. In Douglas Biber and Edward Finegan (eds.) *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Register*. New York and Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. 235-276.

Roberts, Julia. 1994. Acquisition of variable rules: (-t,d) deletion and (ing) production in preschool children. Unpublished PhD. dissertation. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania.

Romaine, Suzanne. 1984. *The Language of Children and Adolescents: the Acquisition of Communicative Competence*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.

Shepard, Carolyn A., Howard Giles and Beth A. Le Poire. 2001. Communication Accommodation Theory. In W. Peter Robinson and Howard Giles (eds.) *The New Handbook of Language and Social Psychology*. New York: John Wiley and Sons. 33-56.

Smith, Jennifer, Mercedes Durham and Liane Fortune. 2007. 'Mam, my trousers is fa'in doon!': community, caregiver and child in the acquisition of variation in a Scottish dialect. *Language Variation and Change* 19: 63-99.

Trudgill, Peter. 1995. *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*. London: Penguin Books.

Tuaillon, Gaston. 1983. Régionalismes grammaticaux. *Recherches sur le Français Parlé* 5: 227-237.

Wolfram, Walt. 1969. *A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro speech*. Washington, District of Columbia: Center for Applied Linguistics.

TABLE 1
Non-standard variant scores for Justin and his interlocutors for the local variable (Y) and for the group of three general French variables (VL/R/L). Scores are expressed as percentages, with the number of occurrences shown in brackets

		FAMILY					**FRIENDS**			
		MOTHER 45 years old	**FATHER 53 years old**	**SISTER 8 years old**	**BROTHER 6 years old**	**BROTHER 5 years old**	**David Native Known for 7 years**	**Leo Native Known for 2 years**	**Kevin Non native Known for 5 years**	**Max Non native Known for 2-3 years**
Variable (Y)	JUSTIN	47.1 (68)	42.9 (14)	31.3 (16)	22.7 (44)	28.6 (35)	66.7 (51)	44.4 (36)	54.3 (35)	22.2 (36)
	INTERLOCUTOR	53.6 (112)	62.5 (8)	33.3 (30)	41.7 (48)	45.0 (20)	19.0 (21)	55.6 (36)	14.3 (7)	14.7 (34)
Variable (VL/R/L)	JUSTIN	63.7 (432)	51.1 (92)	75.8 (33)	73.1 (130)	77.5 (80)	69.3 (264)	69.6 (115)	62.4 (101)	61.3 (155)
	INTERLOCUTOR	68.6 (353)	80.9 (68)	81.6 (38)	65.4 (191)	67.3 (107)	68.7 (115)	63.6 (140)	68.7 (67)	67.8 (143)

Address correspondence to:
Jean-Pierre Chevrot, Lidilem, University of Grenoble 3, BP 25, 38040 GRENOBLE cedex 9, France.
E-Mail: jean-pierre.chevrot@u-grenoble3.fr; jpchevrot@wanadoo.fr