ACCOMMODATION AND PERFORMATIVITY

How to find a convergence between post-structuralist social theories and sociophonetics?

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Plan

- Post-structuralist approach: Performance & agency
- Binary vs. multiple
- Intersectionnality
“Speech convergence phenomena are motivated by an individual’s motivation to be socially accepted or identify with a particular social group.”

Giles and Coupland (1991: 71–72)
Introduction

1. what are identity and social category?
2. what kind of motivation may lead an individual to wish being socially accepted?
3. what definition of the social space?
Introduction

- Reading accommodation theory and convergence/divergence phenomena through the lens of post-structuralist social theories.
Power matters!

- Social categories and power relationships
  - ... Allo Karim
  - Colette Guillaumin!
Power matters!

- Gender and racial categories are not natural
- They are social relationships constitutive of social groups
- Saying “These categories are natural” proceeds from an ideology of naturalization
- Ideology of naturalization is a practice of domination
Power matters!

“It is not because one is black that one is reduced to slavery, but it is because one is reduced to slavery that one is black”

(Guillaumin, 1992. Sexe, Race et Pratique du pouvoir)

[Ce n’est pas parce qu’on est noir qu’on est réduit en esclavage, mais parce qu’on est réduit en esclavage qu’on est noir]
“Reality almost always appears as a continuum” (Martin 2002).

There is a material and ideological making of the categories
Power matters

- We don’t categorize randomly

- The social realm is bound to power and domination relationships

- Social groups exist in contrast to each other
Power matters!

Structuralism in linguistics:
- contrasts linguistic units (phonemes)

--> Structuralism

Structuralism in sociology:
- contrast human groups

--> Materialism
Power matters!

“When structuralist principles are expended to social notions, it becomes far more massive. Instead of a and é, it is about men and women, kings and servants.”

(Benveniste, 1974. Problèmes de linguistique générale 2, p. 18)

[Quand on étend [les principes structuralistes] à des notions sociales, ça prend un aspect beaucoup plus massif. Au lieu de a et é, on parle d’hommes et de femmes, ou de rois et de valets]
Power matters

- **SPEECH:** Applying a theoretical modelization on a continuous phonetic reality (cf. emic/etic relation)

- **SOCIAL:** Also applying a social modelization on a continuous human reality. Not « just » a theoretical proposition
Power matters!

- The will to align with a given social category has to do with a social strategy to situating, or positioning oneself within a social space framed with domination relationships.
Performativity & Agency

- Power and domination...

- ... but also changes, new dynamics, and individual moves

- Post-structuralism: less deterministic
Performativity & Agency

Judith Butler, 1990. Gender Trouble

- The example of the drag queen
- --> no original
We are all performing our gender roles.

Rather than being a fixed attribute in a person, gender is a fluid variable which shifts and changes in different contexts and at different times.

--> AGENCY
Agency:
- We are subject to power
- We are agent, «subject»

- Social categories precede us but we are active in our positioning towards social categories
Performativity & Agency

Agency... how does it work?

- Repetition, reiteration (Derrida) of certain social practices
- Repetitive performance of social roles
Performativity & Agency

“Gender identity is “a stylized repetition of acts . . . which are internally discontinuous . . . [so that] the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief”

(Butler, 1990. Gender Trouble)
Performativity & Agency

- Social categories and identities are activities

Performativity & Agency

“I think for a woman to identify as a woman is a culturally enforced effect. I don’t think that it’s a given that on the basis of a given anatomy, an identification will follow. I think that ‘coherent identification’ has to be cultivated, policed, and enforced; and that the violation of that has to be punished, usually through shame.”

(The Body You Want: Liz Kotz interviews Judith Butler, 1992)
Performativity & Agency

- Social meaning emerges from **coherent social practices**

- Coherence is ensured by repetition
Performativity & Agency

- Domination, resistance, subversion but also...

- Inhabiting the norms
  
  Saba Mahmood, 2011. *Politics of Piety*
“Wow, in this district, the prostitutes are very very old.
- How old?
- Well, something between 35 and 50”.
Performativity & Agency

- There is no pre-discursive identity (Dorlin 2008)

“If gender is constructed, it is not necessarily constructed by an ‘I’ or a ‘we’ who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of ‘before.’ Indeed, it is unclear that there can be an ‘I’ or a “we” who had not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being . . . the ‘I’ neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within the matrix of gender relations themselves”

(Butler, 1993. Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of Sex)
“Speech convergence phenomena are motivated by an individual’s motivation to be socially accepted or identify with a particular social group.”

Giles and Coupland (1991: 71–72)

- Not motivation
- Doing identity!
Identity and social categories as activities

Identity and social categories are not a cause of accommodation

Accommodation is the very practice of identity and social category
Identity and social categories as (discursive) activities

- Representations:

The signification of our performance, of our activities may only arise in the process of our interaction.

“A gender identity is always the result of an interactive work between the one who emits gender cues and the one who perceives it.”

(Kessler & McKenna 1978: 136)
Identity and social categories as (discursive) activities

Rhetoric:

- Notion of *audience* (projection of who we are talking to)

(Perleman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2008)
Identity and social categories as (discursive) activities

- Social activity at the crossroad of:
  1) our identity strategies,
  2) the representation we have of the others and of other’s representation,
  3) the social categories existing in a society, or a given social group.
Identity and social categories as (discursive) activities

Tabouret-Keller & Le Page (1985):

- Identity as the gap an individual maintains with a group, and the consequent dynamics of distancing or merging.
- --> Acts of Identity
“Linguistic elements are not only attribute of groups or communities, they are in themselves the means individuals simultaneously say their own identity and identify to others.”

(Tabouret-Keller & Le Page, 1985)
From binarity to multiplicity

- Gender
- Class
- Race
- Age
- Sexuality
- Validity
- North /South
- Western /Postcolonial
- Cultural capital
- etc.
From binarity to multiplicity

**CLASS:**
- Lower vs. Upper Classes
- Middle class
- Upper-middle class
- *new bourgeoisie*
- etc.
From binarity to multiplicity

**CLASS:**

- A continuum
- A contrast
From binarity to multiplicity

- No difference *in itself*

- No natural categories

- Individuals do not fit the core of their categories
From binarity to multiplicity

**GENDER & SEX:**

Why some physiological features are convoked to socially distinguish between humans (like genitals, or skin color) while others are not?
From binarity to multiplicity

**GENDER & SEX:**

- No rational link between the social organization and the physiology of individuals
- Some physiological or behavioral features are symbolically fulfilled with meaning
From binarity to multiplicity
From binarity to multiplicity

**SEX:**
- Hormonal criteria?
- Genital criteria?
- Chromosomic criteria?
- Anatomic criteria?
- Reproductive criteria?

--> They don’t match! (C. Vignal 2014)
From binarity to multiplicity

**SEX:**


- Two sexes are not enough!
From binarity to multiplicity

RACE
From binarity to multiplicity

*RACE*

Race is not linked to our skin color, but to our social experience of reality
From binarity to multiplicity

**RACE**

The example of Rachel Dolezal:
From binarity to multiplicity

RACE

Race is also performed!

White passing, black passing, …
From binarity to multiplicity

Social categories:
--> simultaneously real and abstract

Concrete consequences

Enforce the reality
From binarity to multiplicity

Social categorization:

- A necessary abstraction of an irregular reality
- Power lies in binarity
From binarity to multiplicity

Social categorization:

- To focus on binary social categorization is to focus on power
- To focus on multiple social categorization is to focus on more factual categories
- The choice of the categories defines our scope
From binarity to multiplicity

1) Sometimes, neither converging nor diverging, sometimes both

2) Converging towards a certain point on a continuum, which is not necessarily the extremity of the continuum
Norms & Stances

- A norm is the horizon of a practice of power
- Uses are the targets of the norms
- Norms seek to implement a conduct of practice.
Norms & Stances

Norms do not concern reality but representations of reality.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>collectif</th>
<th>individuel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La norme comme lien du groupe social (famille, bande, équipe)</td>
<td>La norme comme Bien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Être comme les autres (esprit de corps) pour être accepté</td>
<td>D’un ordre abstrait universel internalisé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedans/dehors : intégration/exclusion</td>
<td>Agir comme on doit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source de la norme : le chef</td>
<td>Par estime de soi, de l'Homme en soi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmission orale, d’homme à homme pour être accepté, se rendre acceptable</td>
<td>«La loi morale au-dedans de mon coeur» (Kant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dépendance, émotion : amour</td>
<td>Autonomie, compatible avec un Livre</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Juge et prévenu au tribunal de la conscience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>S'accepter, s'acquitter, se punir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Déchirement, angoisse</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| La norme comme repoussoir, Scandale, injustice | La norme comme faire-valoir de l'écart |
| Appel à la subversion collective | Écrin dont on est la perle |
| Faire la révolution, changer le monde | Originalité, exception, transgression |
| «Cette norme est inacceptable, il nous en faut une autre» | Se réaliser soi, se faire un nom, self-made-man |
| Puissance de la norme à venir, qui soude et galvanise | Individualisme, anticonformisme |
| Amitié, force, énergie, sacrifice | «La norme, c'est pour les autres» assignés à faire masse |
| | Les poser, les séduire, s'échapper |
| | Être l'accepté inacceptable |

| Puissance de la norme à venir, qui soude et galvanise | La norme comme gain et moyen de parvenir |
| Les poser, les séduire, s'échapper | Être conforme aux attentes pour éviter les sanctions et capter les bénéfices |
| Être l'accepté inacceptable | La norme est arbitraire, fluctuante, factice |
| Indignité, mépris, duplicité, silence | Objectivité, cynisme, ruse |
| Inventer des normes et les vendre pour sécuriser les anxieux | Inventer des normes variées, multiples |
| Lesposer, les séduire, s'échapper | Peu commensurables, inéchangeables |
| Être l'accepté inacceptable | Cohabiter ? se métisser ? mondialiser ? |
| | Respect-indifférence, liberté-solitude |
| | «Car rien n’a d'importance» |
| | Bulle, humour, théâtre, rire |
| | Et pourtant l’aimant des préférences |
| | Des micro-climats vivables ? |
| | Où ? quand ? à combien ? |

F. Douay-Soublin
Intersectionality

Intersectionality

- Social categories do not superpose, addition to each others, but are rather like the coordinates of a social map.

- Multiple oppressive systems (Dorlin 2007).
Intersectionality

“The attraction for this term [intersectionality] alluding to a geometrical figure, or to a [literal] crossroad could be explained by its more aseptic character, therefore perceived as less threatening than notions such as racism, sexism or multiple oppressions.”

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is not a cumulative process...

Gender, Class, Race
Intersectionality

Intersectionality is not a cumulative process...

Gender, Class, Race, Age, Religion, Sexuality, Validity, etc.
Intersectionality

Consubstantiality & Coextensivity
D. Kergoat, 2012. *Se battre, disent-elles...*

- Consubstantiality

“Social relationships form a nub which cannot be sequenced at the level of social practices, except in the perspective of analytic sociology”.
Intersectionality

Consubstantiality & Coextensivity
D. Kergoat, 2012. Se battre, disent-elles...

- Coextensivity
  “When deploying themselves, social relationships of class, gender and race reproduce themselves and mutually co-produce each others ”.
Conclusion

- Social categories are defined in terms of power
- Social categories are simultaneously subjecting people and an act of their identity,
- Acts of identity are always performed through repetition, while dependent of an individual’s agency
Conclusion

- Power lies in the binarity of social categories
- Studying binarity or multiplicity?
Conclusion

- Norms are the regime of conducts for a given social category
- Different norm at stake
- Different stances towards these norms
Conclusion

- Intersectionnality:
  - The intertwining of different social relationships
  - Not an enumerative logic
  - Coproduction of multiple systems of oppression
Conclusion

Accomodation as a social performance:

- Speakers converge or diverge with other people, not with sounds
Conclusion

Accommodation as a social performance:

- By accommodating, speakers perform their identity
  - on a multiple social scale,
  - with particular stance towards the norms they, consciously or unconsciously, identify with.
Conclusion

Accommodation as a social performance:

- Accommodation is one of the social practices constituting social agency.
- Accommodation is involved in the making of a situated identity rather than being motivated by this identity.
Conclusion

Accommodation as a social performance:

- Accommodation enacts multiple, unsegmentable (?) social dimensions of an identity
Thank you