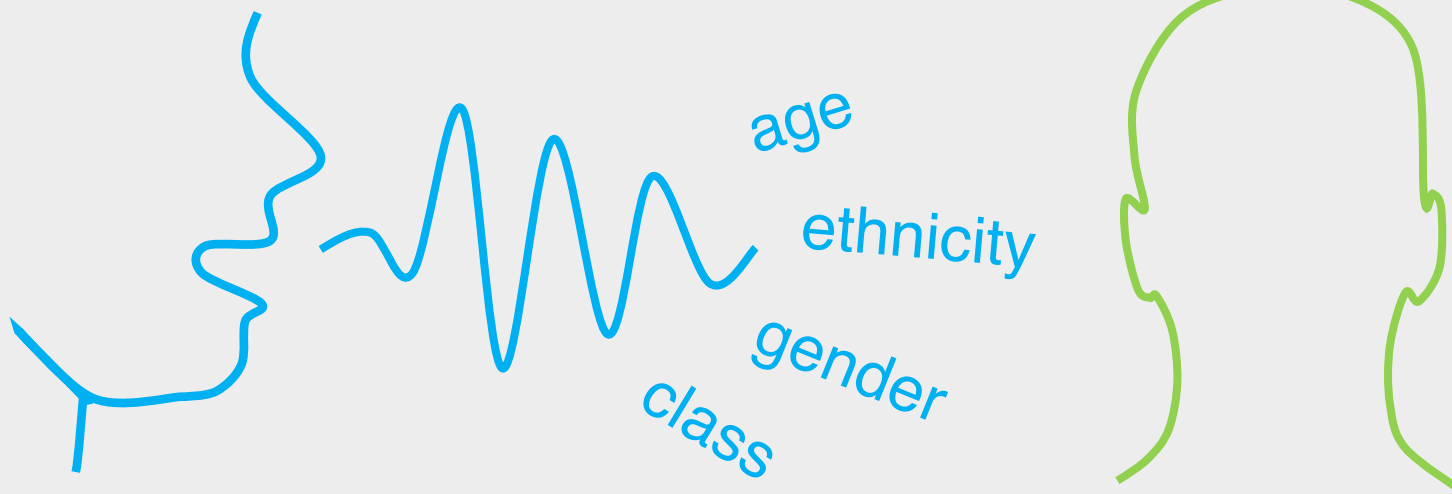
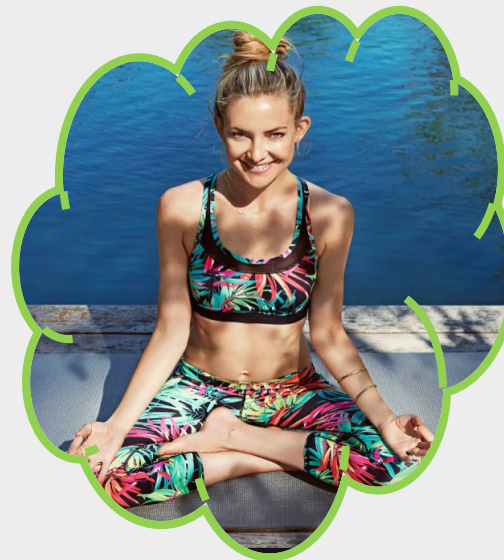


Expecting a Performance: Listener expectations of social meaning in social media

NWAV 47
20th October 2018

Daisy Leigh
Stanford Linguistics
ddleigh@stanford.edu

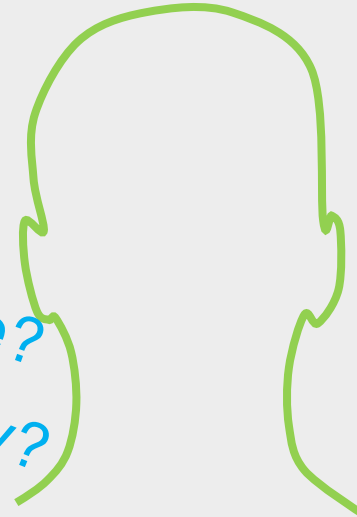




 **User18934085**
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Walking around the mall and just saw
two kids shoplift

age?
ethnicity?
gender?
class?



Two related observations

- **Social meanings aren't fixed**
 - “a constellation of ideologically related meanings” (Eckert 2008)
 - **Social meanings are listener-dependent**
 - linguistic performance ≠ ‘transmitting an encoded message’ (Campbell-Kibler 2008, Burnett 2017)
- **Social meanings: ‘listener-situated’**
- meanings depend on listeners’ situated uptake



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I'm drivin' my car across Texas... send me suggestions for BBQ places



Social media posts:

- a spot-lit 'front-stage' (Goffman 1959; Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013)
- 'high performance' (Coupland 2007)

How do expectations of speaker **performance** mediate listeners' interpretations of speakers – in the absence of rich, socioindexical cues?

Experiment 1

um / *uh*

- “Women use *um*; men use *uh*”
Acton (2011), Tottie (2011)
- Overall preference for *um*: a female-led change in progress
Fruehwald (2016)

'Women use *um*'



Hazel Hayes  @TheHazelHayes · 23h 

I just, **um**, I really, just,
runs fingers through hair
I sort of, **um**
sighs
Like, just, **um**
weird grin
Y'know, I
eye roll
I'm. Like. Batgirl?

Or whatever.



SuperBroMovies @SuperBroMovies

WB Reportedly Eyeing "Kristen Stewart Prototype" For
'BATGIRL' bit.ly/2A51leG

 34

 161

 2.0K



'Men use *uh*'



Tina Belcher @GirlsNoteBook · 1h

guys are over here like "yeah **uh** in my opinion the perfect female body is like a victoria's secret model but with 3x bigger boobs" and girls are over here like "mmm dad bods are literally just fine just please respect us" and guys are over here like "no"



Sorority Probs 🗣️ @SORORITYPROBS · 2h

I've never seen a more fragile male than a frat boy getting called out for his mistakes

"**uh** believe what you want but you are crazy Jessica"



um



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Walking around the mall and **um** just saw two kids shoplift



uh



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Walking around the mall and **uh** just saw two kids shoplift



How _____ is the user?

educated/uneducated

formal/casual

smart/stupid

pretentious/unpretentious

friendly/unfriendly

masculine/not masculine

feminine/not feminine

funny/unfunny

young/old

(7-point Likert scale)

Design

condition 1: um



condition 2: uh



Mixed-effects ordinal regression models for each social dimension

Predictions

- *um*: more feminine/less masculine, younger
- *uh*: less feminine/more masculine, older

um



'Cher' (*Clueless*)

uh



'The Dude' (*The Big Lebowski*)

Results


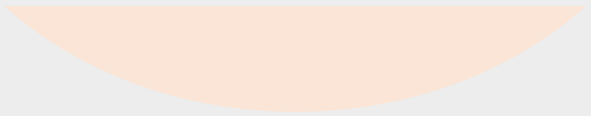


um



uh

‘listeners’ use contextual expectations and existing ideologies to reason about a ‘speaker’



all results $p < 0.05$

Experiment 2

ing



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I'm **drivin'** my car across Texas... send me suggestions for BBQ places



User18934085
@handle18934085



+ Follow

I'm **drivin** my car across Texas... send me suggestions for BBQ places



in'
'marked IN'

in
'bare IN'

How _____ is the user?

educated/uneducated

formal/casual

smart/stupid

pretentious/unpretentious

friendly/unfriendly

masculine/not masculine

feminine/not feminine

funny/unfunny

young/old

(7-point Likert scale)

Bold = dimensions used in Campbell-Kibler (2007, 2008, 2009), Tamminga (2017)

Design

8 unique tweets
(*driving, cooking, looking, walking...*)

condition 1: ing



condition 2: in



condition 3: in'



Mixed-effects ordinal regression models for each social dimension

Predictions

- Similar results for IN vs ING and IN' vs. ING
 - e.g., less educated, more casual...
- IN' = IN?
 - Or is IN' a 'performative move'...?

Results

compared to ING

IN

less educated
more casual
stupider

IN'

less educated
more casual
stupider
more masculine
funnier

Qualitatively, same results for IN' vs. IN

all results $p < 0.05$

Why IN' ≠ IN?

- 'Listeners' sensitive to IN' and IN - but only IN' associated with additional socioindexical meanings (**masculine, funny**)
 - IN' – a performative move
 - 'Listeners' reason that IN'-users are *performing* 'funny, down-to-earth guy'
 - thus ascribe distinct meanings to IN'
 - Meanings of IN' emerge from listeners' reasoning about speakers' language use, given the performative context

IN' and high performance

In high performance...

“The poetic and metalinguistic functions of language comes to the fore and considerations of ‘style’ (...) become particularly salient”

(form focusing)

“There is an intensity, a density and a depth of utterances or actions, **or at least this is assumed to be the case by audiences**”

(meaning focusing)

To summarize

In the absence of rich socioindexical cues...

um/uh results show:

- ‘listeners’ use contextual expectations and existing linguistic ideologies to reason about a ‘speaker’

ing/in’/in results show:

- the emergence of a particular set of social meanings may be partly contingent on contextual expectations

Listeners expect a performance?

→ Listeners interpret a performance!

Conclusions / implications

Theoretical

- Listeners' expectations of an *interaction* may shape the meanings that emerge therein – not just listeners' expectations about *speakers*

Methodological

- Contextual expectations, and expectations of 'performance' may shape listener interpretations more generally
 - E.g., in lab experiments

Thanks!

ddleigh@stanford.edu

 @daisydleigh

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(etc.) on this project

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Models

um/uh

```
clmm(attribute ~ variant + (1|phrase_pos))
```

ING

```
clmm(attribute ~ variant + (1|word))
```