

Factors motivating variation



The section “ Factors motivating variation” of Chapter 2 of *Introducing Sociolinguistics* (Meyerhoff 2006) introduces four social factors that motivated people how to use language. Meyerhoff provides a rough introduction on these factors that would be discussed deeply in latter chapters. The first factor is speakers desire to show how to join in a group and separate from others. That means people use language to identify which group they belong to. Meyerhoff uses the Martha’s vineyard study to explain that vineyarder used different pronunciation to distinguish themselves from summer visitor. The specific linguistic variant is an identification to separate local group and visitor group.

The second factor is speakers desire to be valuable in their group. Meyerhoff explains speaker use specific variant to raise their self image in the community, then to establish a positive image in their community. On the other hand, speakers desire to eliminate the negative by avoiding using a variant which their image would be downgraded. These three factors motivate speakers determine how to use language to achieve a “ good” identity in the society. Compare to the other three factors, the final one is focused on the interaction between the speaker and group members. Meyerhoff states the speakers desire to test how in-group members are orienting themselves to those three factors. Communicationaccommodation theory is introduced to explain this factor in generally.

It presents that the speakers depend on audience behaviors to choose the variant. Besides that the speakers will use language to test their hypotheses are workable or not. Therefore, variation is a result after these testing.