



University of Kentucky Linguistics Colloquium

Researcher choice and overlooked variables: A "bottom-up" reanalysis of Villarreal (2018)

An immense body of sociolinguistic research has demonstrated how social processes (from macrosocial structures to momentary identity performance) are reflected and reproduced in speakers' production and perception of individual linguistic variables. The approach of isolating individual variables for investigation, despite being clearly fruitful, misses two critical facts about language variation in actual use. First is variable co-occurrence: variables do not exist in isolation. In between tokens of the individual variable under investigation are numerous socially meaningful variables (some in structurally related changes) that may mediate or change the social meanings of the studied variable. Second is researcher choice: the process by which we choose what to investigate may lead us to miss meaningful variation. The present study attempts to address these shortcomings using "bottom-up" methods to investigate Californian listeners' attitudes toward a multiplicity of co-occurring vowel variables, comparing these variables' influence on social meanings to previous research on California vowels.

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