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Perspectives on Linguistic Documentation from Sociolinguistic Research on Dialects

Sali A. Tagliamonte
University of Toronto

The goal of the paper is to demonstrate how sociolinguistic research can be applied to endangered language documentation field linguistics. It first provides an overview of the techniques and practices of sociolinguistic fieldwork and the ensuring corpus compilation methods. The discussion is framed with examples from research projects focused on European-heritage English-speaking communities in the UK and Canada that have documented and analyzed English dialects from the far reaches of Scotland to the wilds of Northern Ontario, Canada. The main focus lies on morpho-syntactic and discourse-pragmatic variation; however, the same techniques could be applied to other types of variation. The discussion includes examples from a broad range of research studies in order to illustrate how sociolinguistic analyses are conducted and what they offer for understanding language variation and change.

1. INTRODUCTION. In this paper I provide an account for integrating sociolinguistic methods used for the investigation and documentation of English dialects to endangered language documentation and field linguistics.[1] To do so, I highlight the nature and character of investigations based on community fieldwork, corpus compilation, data compilation and linguistic analysis in the Variationist Sociolinguistic tradition. I draw on research programs studying dialects of predominately European-heritage English in locations from the far reaches of Scotland (United Kingdom) to the wilds of Northern Ontario (Canada) (e.g. Tagliamonte 2013, 2014), as indicated on the map in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: Map of communities

The communities I have been working in comprise a range of different types. Some are enclaves, some are rural and others are cities. They also represent source and off shoot situations with varying degrees of language contact. Each community offers a different set of social, cultural and economic characteristics, what Trudgill (2011) refers to as 'sociolinguistic typology'. Variegated combinations of community size, types of social networks and language contact offer a nuanced range of phenomena for understanding linguistic phenomena.

Variationist Sociolinguistics (VSLX), an area of language science that combines linguistics, anthropology and statistics (Labov, Yaeger et al. 1972, Sankoff 1974, 1988) is founded in several main concepts. First, sociolinguistic data is often spoken. It is intended to tap vernacular speech or everyday talk (Milroy 1987) and so the data of VSLX typically comprises sets of interviews comprised of one to two hours of running conversation with a researcher and a single individual. However, sociolinguistic data may also comprise data from different speech styles, including word lists and reading passages, questionnaires, surveys, and other materials. Sociolinguistic fieldwork is collected using modified ethnographic techniques whereby researchers enter the community as participant observers. The goal is to interview locals in order to tap into their vernacular. This type of language arises out of reminiscences and life stories in the course of informal conversations. The intrinsic nature of storytelling ensures that the data is spontaneous and highly vernacular, and very often surprising of character. In fact, in a sociolinguistic interview, the repartee is often so familiar that the fieldworker never knows what may come tumbling out of the individual's mouth next. In many cases, the data is not only linguistically compelling but also emotionally gripping, as in (1), in which a woman, 90 years old, tells the story about a night when her husband with Alzheimer's went missing.

> (1) This is the worst thing that happened to me in all my life. I came upstairs, I went out the front door, grabbed a coat and I kept calling. The thing is, I didn't know if he went left or right, you know? *Interviewer:* And no tracks in the snow? *Interviewee:* Oh it was tracks in the snow but I- then I see this figure coming and he hasn't any clothes on hardly, just pyjamas.[2]

This extreme level of personal experience evident in this excerpt (and typical of sociolinguistic interviews) is the reason why sociolinguistic data is not freely available. Instead, the conditions under which the materials were collected — which promise anonymity and ethical treatment of the materials — dictates that the data are protected under specific usage conditions that are particular to the corpus in question.

The second main concept that underlies VSLX is the curious phenomena of 'categorical perception'. This refers to the omnipresent fact that speakers tend to perceive language use in categorical terms. When individuals rely on their own intuitions, they will tell you that standard features are categorical in their grammar while other non-standard features are not part of their vernacular, yet both conceptions are unlikely to be true in practice (Labov 1972:7, Sankoff 1982:680), as in (2).

> (2) *Interviewer:* Do you think that I or my generation speaks differently from yours and what are your opinions on how it's changing? *Bailey*: I'll have a strong reaction when I hear young- it's usually young females um when every other word is 'like' and it drives me insane. I just *like* I hate it. (Bailey Adams, Toronto, F, 55, 2003)

This interchange demonstrates how oblivious human beings are of their own language usage. This fact is well known in sociolinguistic fieldwork where speakers inevitably complain about non-standard features in other people and then in the next sentence, use those same features themselves. As documented in the historiography of VSLX:

> "The layers of linguistic repertories in a single individual can never be under estimated. What you hear in one situation may not be what you will hear in another. Words and expressions from far down within a person's psyche may come to the surface unexpectedly under conditions of natural repartee." (Tagliamonte 2016:91)

The third main concept underlying VSLX is the 'Principle of Accountability' (Labov 1966:49, 1969:737-8, fn 20, 1972:72). This principle is the foundation of variation analysis. It dictates that in addition to examining the feature of interest, the analyst takes into account all the other potential variants within the same system. In other words, a variation analysis is not only interested in the form that stands out, but the linguistic systems of which it is a part – as it emerges in the data -- whatever variants

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[2] All names are pseudonyms that have been specifically selected to reflect the essential nature of the original names.

may be used (standard, non-standard, formal, informal and colloquial). For example, in (3a), there are two variants. In the first clause an overt complementizer is present, i.e. *that*; however, in the second sentence, (3b), there is no overt complementizer, represented as Ø. A variation analysis examines both the case where the complementizer occurred as well as the places where it could have occurred but did not.

(3) a.   I wish *that* forty or fifty years ago I'd as much confidence.
(3) b.   I wish Ø I'd had it then. (MPT, Lucy Fisher, F, 73)

Naturally, it is sometimes difficult to determine the system underlying the use of forms, e.g. *like* in (2), or in (4). This is when variation analysis relies critically on syntactic structure. In the case of *like* the syntactic position is critical (see D'Arcy 2005, D'Arcy forthcoming). When *like* occurs in pre-Complement Phrase (CP) position, it is possible to circumscribe the variable context to every CP in the data in which *like* may occur, as in the excerpt in (a-f). Pre-CP *like* occurs in 3/6 clauses.

(4) a.   *like* when I was planning my trip to Fiji
(4) b.   he was totally involved
(4) c.   and *like* he did so much for me
(4) d.   I think
(4) e.   that's
(4) f.   'cause *like* he had a lot of free time   (TOR/ Betty Mak, 21)

This procedure delimits the 'structured set' of variation, i.e. both positive and negative evidence is accounted for (Tagliamonte 2012:4, 16). In this way, all the possible variants in the relevant system are included in the analysis. When both the presence and absence of forms are included it is possible to model what circumstances and conditions lead to one form over the other, and by inference their function.

Notice too that single speakers, either Lucy Fisher or Betty Mak, exhibit variation from one sentence to another in the same stretch of discourse. This is what is meant by the VSLX concept of 'inherent variation'. The inherent variation in language and its patterns frame the variationist approach. This strand of linguistics holds that probabilistic choice is endemic to language. It might also be called 'layering' (Hopper and Traugott 1993) or 'competition' (Kroch 2003) or even 'optionality' (Adger and Smith 1999) depending on the orientation of the researcher.

Another notable characteristic of language that the VSLX paradigm is able to capture is the fact of unexpected grammaticality distributions. Entirely grammatical constructions can be very rare or extremely common in language use. For example, there is little to distinguish (5a-b) on grounds of grammaticality.

(5) a.   A *small* house.
(5) b.   A *little* house.

However, in usage, one construction is far preferred. Out of 4802 attributive constructions with an adjective meaning "small or little" across numerous communities in Ontario, Canada, *small* occurs 78% of the time while *little* only occurs 22% of the time. Moreover this pattern is the same across communities and across major social categories, e.g. age, sex, education. This is an unexpected finding and one that could

only have been discovered by probing usage data using VSLX methods of accountability and quantitative analysis.

VSLX has documented inherent variability at all levels of language — idiolects, generations, communities, regions, etc. Within these different categories, not only do forms vary in frequency, but underlying frequency reflects critical patterns. In the case of linguistic change, these environmental constraints are the relevant mechanisms of ongoing evolution of the systems comprising the variant forms (Labov 1982:75). The VSLX approach is fundamentally focused on these intricate linguistic and social patterns.

Given these foundations, analysis in the VSLX tradition necessarily arises from considerable data. Table 1 shows one of the largest samples I have collected, the Toronto English Archive (Tagliamonte 2003-2006). The corpus comprises 1-2 hour interviews with 275 people born and raised in Toronto, Canada one of the largest cities in the country. The sample was designed to be balanced for male and female and across in range of ages in the speech community.

Date of Birth	Speaker Age	M	F	TOTAL
1991-1993	**10-12**	8	7	15
1990-1989	**13-14**	7	6	13
1987-1988	**15-16**	8	7	15
1984-1986	**17-19**	20	31	51
1979-1983	**20-24**	14	21	35
1974-1978	**25-29**	10	8	18
1964-1973	**30-39**	10	17	27
1954-1963	**40-49**	17	14	31
1944-1953	**50-59**	8	21	29
1934-1943	**60-69**	9	5	14
1924-1933	**70-79**	4	10	14
1914-1923	**80-89**	7	5	12
pre-1913	**90+**	1	0	1
	TOTAL	**123**	**152**	**275**

TABLE 1: The Toronto English Archive c. 2010[3]

With this much data keyed strategically to a single speech community and a specific place and time it is possible to tap into how linguistic change is progressing using the construct of 'apparent time'. Apparent time is a key analytic tool for the analysis of variation (Bailey, Wikle et al. 1991). Innumerable studies in VSLX have employed the apparent time construct and real time comparisons have affirmed its utility (Sankoff 2006). In an apparent time study, generational differences at a single point in time are used to make inferences about how a change may have taken place in the (recent) past. Age differences are assumed to be temporal analogues, reflecting historical stages in the progress of the change. In the case of the Toronto English archive, which comprises individuals born as early as 1912 and as recently as 1994 we can gain insights into language variation and change across the 20th century.

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[3] http://individual.utoronto.ca/tagliamonte/index.html (Accessed 9-20-16 16:30)

Standard practice in VSLX is to transcribe the audio-recorded conversations so as to make the materials machine-readable. Orthographic transcription provides legacy materials that can be used as the foundation for linguistic analysis as well by the community for other purposes. Once a corpus is transcribed, it offers an incredible window on the community's language as well as a reservoir of historical and cultural information. For example, a simple word list of the top 50 words in Toronto English, as in Table 2a, can provide preliminary insights into linguistic features of interest.

Top 50 words in the Toronto English Archive, age 60+, c. 2002-2006

1	12477	the	18	3220	there	35	1453	is
2	11101	I	19	2511	ah	36	1422	or
3	10938	and	20	2465	he	37	1395	up
4	7799	a	21	2408	were	38	1366	then
5	7468	you	22	2341	had	39	1359	um
6	7355	was	23	2185	Yeah	40	1348	Oh
7	6895	to	24	2092	on	41	1289	*So*
8	6249	it	25	2048	*so*	42	1279	*just*
9	6239	*that*	26	1809	at	43	1271	go
10	5366	of	27	1806	for	44	1264	think
11	5301	s	28	1762	but	45	1263	with
12	5198	in	29	1754	have	46	1252	what
13	4022	they	30	1685	my	47	1216	would
14	3660	t	31	1637	yeah	48	1195	one
15	3566	And	32	1563	*like*	49	1177	But
16	3343	we	33	1539	all	50	1173	this
17	3258	know	34	1460	when			

TABLE 2A: Partial word list from the Toronto English Archive, c. 2003-2006

Consider the word *like*. Even though this list comes from people over the age of 60, notice that *like* occurs more than either *is* or *go*. Note too that this sector of the population is undoubtedly the group who are complaining about young people using *like* too much. Other words that are surprisingly frequent include *yeah, so,* and *just* among others. However, wordlists are only the 'tip of the iceberg'. The study of variable linguistic systems offers added fodder for sociolinguistic interpretation.

Less frequent words can offer clues to dialect differences, cultural practices, and historical events. For example, a small section of words occurring 24 times in Toronto English, as in Table 2b, can for example, lead a playwright to first-hand accounts of 'Hurricane Hazel', the most famous hurricane in Canadian history in 1954. Words such as 'Germans', 'Guelph' (a nearby city), or 'home', 'gift' or 'holy' might lead novelists, teachers, or professional storytellers to important and poignant details of the community's traditions. In essence, words are the 'tip of the iceberg' for finding relevant information in the discourse on one topic or another.

Number	Word
24	germans
24	gift
24	great-

24	guelph
24	holy
24	home-
24	hurricane-hazel
24	immigrated
24	impression
24	initially
24	islands

TABLE 2B: Partial word list from the Toronto English Archive, c. 2003-2006

Studies of linguistic systems are ideal for exposing processes of change from one generation to the next, which in turn can lead to many insights not only about variation, but also about the nature of linguistic change, as in Figure 2.
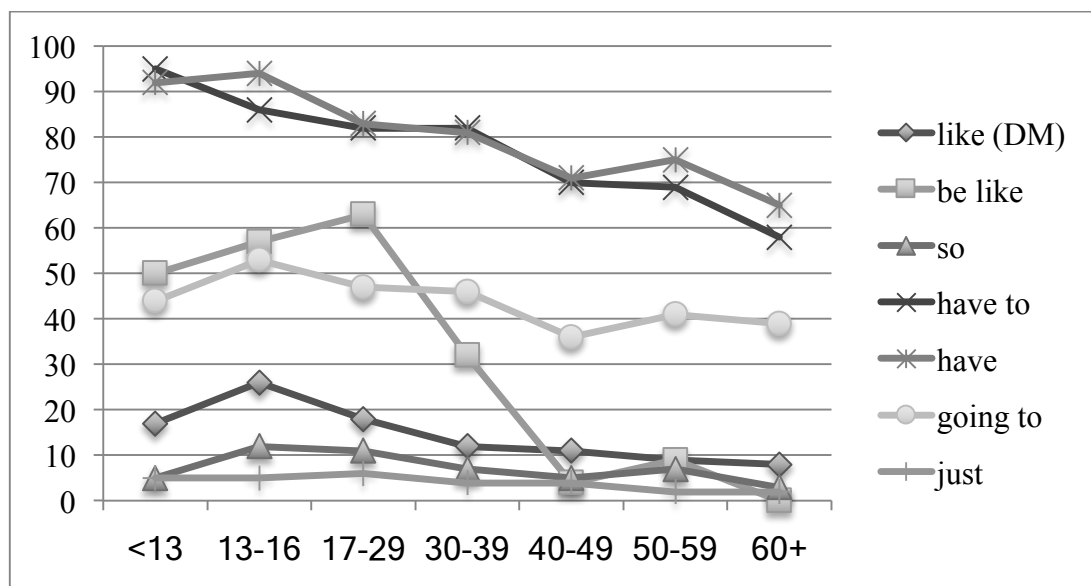

FIGURE 2: Changes in progress in the Toronto English Archive c. 2003-2006

Figure 2 displays a suite of different changes underway in Toronto (Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2009). The incoming forms from seven changes are represented in the legend. The y-axis records the frequency of each incoming form out of the total number of contexts where all possible variants with the same function can occur. Significant shifts towards these forms are visible from the oldest to the youngest speakers. The changes include, discourse *like,* as in (6a), quotative *be like,* as in (6b), intensifier *so,* as in (6c), deontic *have* as in (6d), possessive *has,* as in (6e), future *going to,* as in (6f) and *just* as in (6g).

 (6)a. My other cat always sleeps and *like* we almost never see him.
 (6)b. I *'m like*, "Okay, I'll put some ice on there." I *'m like*, "Okay, go home." And he *'s like*, "you're working wonders."
 (6)c. It is *so* prominent in my mind.
 (6)d. Just 'cause you go somewhere, doesn't mean you *have to* change yourself
 (6)e. Every generation *has* their slang.

(6) f.   You never know who you *'re going to* meet and you never know what

they *'re going to* be like until you get to know them.

(6) g.   Like I do it quick, *just* walk. I like, I zoom in *just* walk in. Like *just* look. And then go.

These patterns attest to language change in progress as viewed from the vantage point of synchrony using the apparent time construct. Such an over-arching view can offer insight into whether a change is embedded in longitudinal trends in the language or is driven by cultural shifts, whether a change has come from inside the community or has been imposed on it from outside.

While the Toronto English Archive is relatively large, it is important to point out that even small case studies are valuable, especially when used in comparative perspective. Consider the insights that can be gained from collecting data from a single speaker over a long period of time. Table 3 shows the design and composition of the "Clara Corpus" (Tagliamonte 2012).

Age	Year	Number of Words (Clara only)	Number of Words (Clara + Interviewer)
16	2002	13,365	14,055
17	2003	7,876	9,706
18	2004	12,871	15,115
19	2005	8,932	9,882
20	2006	8,126	10,325
21	2007	7,239	9,188
22	2008	10,058	11,367
24	2010	13,933	16,012
25	2011	12,124	14,484
27	2013	10,282	11,466
28	2014	10,019	12,663
30	2016	10,717	13,147
TOTAL		**125,542**	**147,410**

TABLE 3: The Clara Corpus, ca. 2002-2016 (Tagliamonte 2012: 274-276)

The Clara Corpus comprises a single individual, Clara Felipe, who was born and raised in Toronto. Every year since 2002, her sister has sat down to have a conversation with her and they exchange stories and information about current events. Over the course of data collection Clara has transformed from a teenager to a highly educated married professional. The corpus comprises at the time of writing 147,410 words. With this amount of data type from a single individual in a consistent, informal situation over a long period of time we can probe how grammar changes across the lifespan. Labov's theory of incrementation (Labov 2001:446-465) predicts that speakers will increase their use of innovations until late adolescence. Thereafter, the linguistic system is thought to remain relatively stable for the rest of the adult lifespan. But does it? Most claims about change across the lifespan are based on apparent time data, but the definitive test of the incrementation model is to track change in real time. The Clara Corpus offers the possibility to do this. An ideal test is

to examine a linguistic feature that is undergoing significant change over the same period — quotative *be like* as in (7):

(7)a.   And I *'m like*, "No, they sell coffee too." And she *'s like*, "Oh yeah?"

And then he *'s like*, "Oh yeah?" And I *was like*, "Yeah." (Clara, age 16)

(7)b.   I *'m like*, "Oh my gosh". Like Pete understands and I feel bad because

I'm putting him in a tough spot too. But … at the same time I *'m like*,

"Hell no" (Clara, age 28)

When we first interviewed Clara at age 16 she already had a high rate of *be like*. Since then she has graduated from high school, gone to university, become a registered nurse (RN), worked at the cardiac unit of a Toronto hospital, returned to graduate school, gained a Masters degree, and is now employed as a Patient Navigator at another Toronto hospital. Figure 3 shows the frequency of Clara's use of quotative *be like* across the time frame of the corpus, 2002-2015.

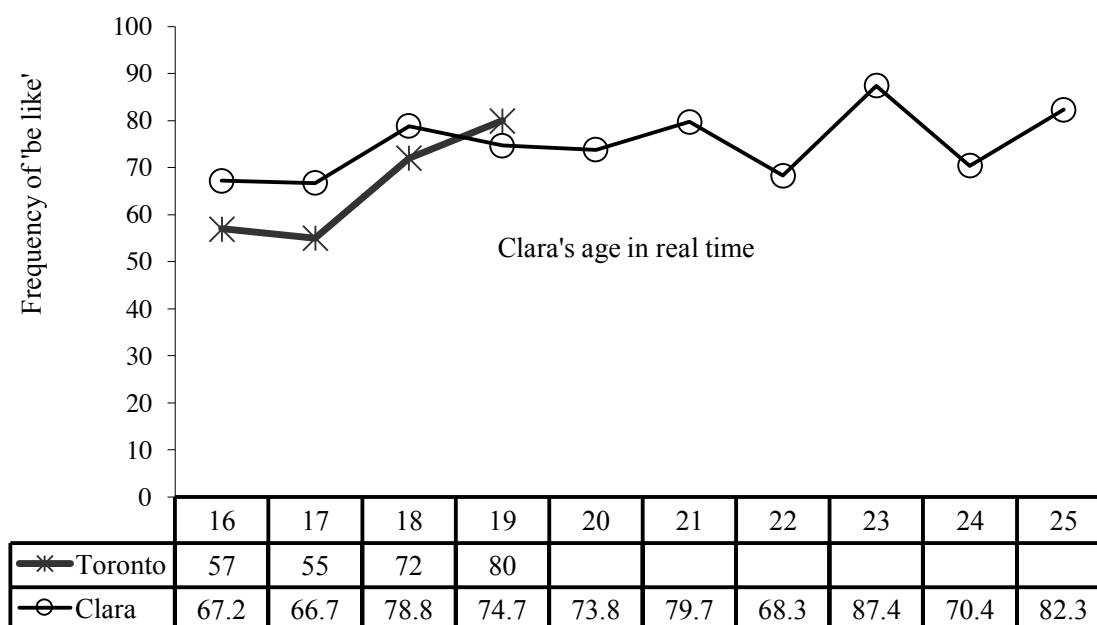|	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Toronto	57	55	72	80						
Clara	67.2	66.7	78.8	74.7	73.8	79.7	68.3	87.4	70.4	82.3

FIGURE 3: Frequency of quotative *be like* in real time — Clara Corpus

Figure 3 shows the frequency of the incoming form *be like* out of the total number of quotatives in each interview from age 16-25. Clara's use of *be like* remains relatively stable, sometimes falling; sometimes rising; however these differences are not statistically significant. This finding provides real time support for Labov's model. This perspective also shows us something else that is quite important. Clara's grammar reflects the grammar of the ambient community — Toronto. The frequency of quotative *be like* in the much larger Toronto English Archive (for speakers between 16-19) is plotted with the starred line. Notice the parallelism with Clara. This demonstrates

that large corpora and small corpora converge to support each other. Moreover, individuals reflect the larger community of which they are a part. This might be used to support findings in endangered language documentation that often arise from small samples of speakers.

2. DOCUMENTATION FOR DIALECTS. Much of the work that has been done in large VSLX projects has been based on language varieties that are not in need of documentation or in danger of obsolescence, e.g. English, Spanish, French. However, many dialects of these languages, particularly those in rural locales and peripheral areas, are in dire need of being recorded and collected before they are gone (e.g. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995). As Henry (1995: vii-v i) notes:

> "Because of the low status generally accorded to non-standard dialects, even descriptive accounts have not been compiled … because they have simply been regarded as degenerate versions of the standard."

From Historical Linguistics, we know that languages diversify as their speakers move from place to place. Change can spread in various ways, sometimes outwards like the ripples left by a stone dropped in the water, sometimes hopping from the largest to the next largest city, in a predictable order leaving peripheral places lagging behind (Trudgill 1983, 1986). Change can also spread counter-hierarchically such as the diffusion of northern features from Scotland and Northern England into London in Early Modern English (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003) or the diffusion of southern features into northern cities in contemporary United States (Tillery, Bailey et al. 2004). Whether the direction of diffusion is related to the nature of communities, societies, geography, history or any other factors is an empirical question that requires the researcher to rely on ethnographic information and sociolinguistic analysis.

In the broader context of linguistic documentation it is important to highlight that linguistic phenomena that have since died out in Standard varieties are often preserved in dialects, offering unique insights into a broad range forms and structures of human language (Tagliamonte 2003, 2004, 2013). Among the many questions of relevance to the study of dialects are the insights dialect data provides for understanding how linguistic change has evolved from an earlier state and how it has progressed from place to place. Also of key interest is the impact of founding populations and the influence of industry and social networks, as in (8).

> (8) Does linguistic change happen the same way from place to place?
> City vs. town vs. hamlet
> Remote vs. mainstream
> What were the founding populations?
> Scots vs. Irish; British vs. European
> What is the industrial base?
> Farming vs. mining vs. manufacturing
> What type of social networks are present?
> loose vs. dense; simple vs. multiplex

Indeed, peripheral areas preserve earlier stages in the history of a language and in the evolution of changing linguistic systems (e.g. Tagliamonte 1996, 1998, Tagliamonte and Smith 2000, Tagliamonte, Durham et al. 2014). This is one of the motivations for

the Ontario Dialects Project, a research program focusing on the social determinants of linguistic systems in Ontario, Canada (Tagliamonte 2013-2018).
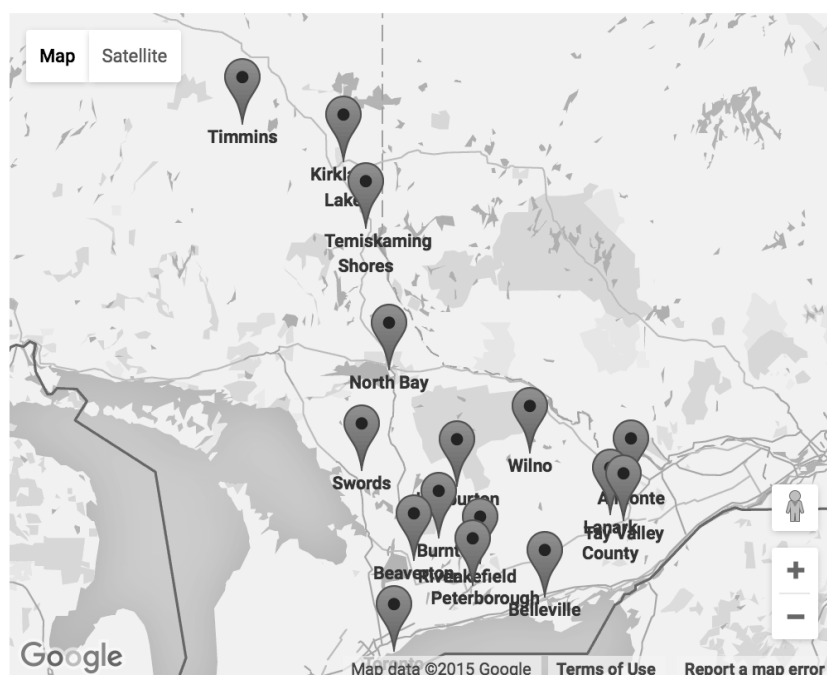

FIGURE 4: Communities documented in the Ontario Dialects Project, c. 2015

Currently, the Ontario Dialects Project[4] comprises corpora from 16 small towns in Ontario, Canada. The geographic distance from the urban center of the province, Toronto, in the south (bottom of the map in Figure 4), to the most northerly community (Timmins) is 850 kilometers. This immense hinterland presents a sociolinguistic goldmine of untapped regional variation. From the beginning of the 19th century, immigrants from all over Europe were recruited into the mines and lumber camps making the population multi-ethnic from its founders rather than developing from Loyalist (English) migrants as in the South (Abel 2006). Due to the rich natural resources (mining, lumber, pulp, and paper) the economic base has had a strikingly different trajectory. The early resource boom economy has developed serious challenges of sustainability in the 20th century (Woodrow 2002). In many places, the communities evolved with class-based social structures that remain entrenched (Abel 2006). The geographical distribution of the population is scattered. Most towns and small cities were built around rich mineral deposits or lumber mills and so the populations have remained self-contained to the present day. Importantly, there are strong and distinct identities, perhaps instigated by the urban-centric industrial and affluent south (Zaslow 1973). Given the well-known sociolinguistic tenet that "language encodes social relations" (Chambers 2003:21) social differences in language use may be more extreme in these contexts. Moreover, the fact that language change tends to start in urban centers and spread out to rural locales (e.g. Chambers and Trudgill 1980) changes underway in Toronto may not have yet reached outlying areas. For all these reasons rural Ontario can be expected to be linguistically distinct from the urban

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[4] http://ontariodialects.chass.utoronto.ca/ (Accessed 6-14-17 11:50)

south, particularly the Greater Toronto Area. Comparing across Ontario communities that have evolved in distinct circumstances offer a kaleidoscope of possibilities for analyzing and understanding language variation and change. The fact that dialects of a major variety of English may differ substantially within this type of broad region suggests that studies of endangered language documentation might profitably include attention to dialects.

3. SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROJECTS IN PRACTICE. The procedures for sociolinguistic fieldwork have been documented in two recent studies (Tagliamonte 2006, Schilling 2013). For my own part, every year in early summer, I endeavor to take students on a fieldwork expedition to a community in Ontario. I am often asked, "How do you choose which community to go to?" I will typically take the advice of community members, many of which are enthusiastic to take part in data collection. Preparatory work is critical. For example, in planning for a long trek northward in the spring of 2016, I spent a year or more upgrading my French language skills so that I would be able to speak French with adequate competence to interact with the mostly Francophone population. Once in the field, the sociolinguist basically transforms into an anthropologist, observing, listening and engaging with social activities. The overarching linguistic goal is to tap the vernacular of the community — not simply the language of Non-Mobile Rural Males (NORMS), as in the tradition of dialectology. In sociolinguistic fieldwork it is critical to talk to people from a cross-section of the existing population, men, women, old and young, using the basic strategy outlined in (9).

(9) Fieldwork Strategy:
  • Observe; read; experience; partake; discuss; find out what's important
  • Talk to people from a cross-section of the population
  • Record stories about:
  – local culture; memorable events
  – fishing/hunting stories, animal encounters
  – childhood games; recipes; etc.

Depending on the nature of the social structure of the community, different populations may be relevant. For example in a farming community, people working on the land can be contrasted with people who work in the service industry. In mining towns, miners may represent the majority of the population, but they should be contrasted with teachers, doctors and others.

The foremost goal is to record as many narrative of personal experience as possible. The compelling question is: How do you get someone to tell you a good story? While, there is no technique that works 100% of the time, concerted efforts can lead to an incredible wealth of natural speech data. Tried and true methods from the VSLX tradition are summarized in (10) (e.g. Labov 1970).

(10) Story-telling strategies:
  • Listen and respond. Let the person talk
    – *Really? And then what happened?*
  • Ask short questions:
    – *What did you do then? What was it like?*
  • Take an insider's point of view:

> – *Hey, did you see that accident last night?*
> – *Where were you when the lights went out?*
- Be the learner
  > – *How did you do that?*
  > – *What was it like when ...?*

Fieldwork is only the beginning. Once back in the lab, the gargantuan task of corpus compilation, and making many hours of audio-recordings machine readable come to the fore. A reasonable estimate for rendering natural speech into orthographic transcription is ten hours of transcription time for one hour of audio recording. As this task gets underway, innumerable other corpus-building procedures unfold as well as dissemination strategies, as in (11):

(11) Corpus-building procedures:
- Extract words, expressions, stories
  - Ontario Dialect Words website
- Examine features systematically
  - Code for linguistic and social patterns
- Analyze patterns, conduct statistical modelling and other techniques
- Interpret findings; make discoveries
- Dissemination of linguistic findings in appropriate venues
- Return to tell the community's story; outreach

Among the most important data compilation procedures is to record the metadata as well as field notes and observations in such a way as to provide a user's map for the materials. An ideal repository is a relational database, as illustrated in Figure 5, which shows a snapshot from a section of the Ontario Dialects Project. In situations where there is often little or no information about the dialect, the place where it is spoken or character of its speakers, such information provides important added value to the linguistic records.

Employment History	Spouse Occupation	Education	Place of study	Father's education & oc...	Mother's education & oc...	Other participants	
Miller (grist and saw)				is farmer.		Mrs. Holgate (8)	A
Farmer, Miller, Carpenter				is farmer.		None	I r
Missionary, woker, cleaner		Second book (high school?)	Belleville, Trenton	Horse trader / blacksmith.		None	th
Farmer	Farmers wife	Some.	Near Plainfield	no education. is farmer.	no education, farmers wife	None	TI
Tool maker/die caster/mayor		lesser grades of high school				Olivia Wessman (015)	
						Sigurd Wessman (014)	S
Farmer, Carpenter, Construction: Started work at age 21 in 1929; but wife says that her husband is 60				Farmer, Carpenter, buggy maker	farmer wife	Cindy Wright 065	TI
Income tax agent, radio personailty	Soldier in WWII	University - completed undergrad	Kingston			None	
Musician/teacher					Ontario School for the Deaf	JH (2) (= interviewer?)	A
Kept house	Plant manager of Deloro smelting plant					Eve Barlow 019	
Kept house	worked in chemistry lab.					Mrs. Walsh (020)	A
House keeper	Ran grist mill.					Mysterious fourth speaker who's not transcribed	
Baker/Ice cream server		High school, 3rd form.	Deseronto			CIP Students (9)	
Worked in shirt factory	Assembly line foreman	Elementary	Belleville, England	Railroad worker (boiler washer)		Mrs. McGuire (024)	
	WW1 veteran and buffer/polisher at hardware	Some high school	Belleville			Mrs. Hanna (023)	
High school teacher.		At least high school				Wife (2)	
Teacher		First class certificate	Belleville, Toronto	Ran a sash & door factory.		None	
Carriage maker		Worked as a boy. Presumably no education.		Carriage maker.		None	
Teacher		Completed college.				None	
Archdeacon		Completed university.	Toronto			None	A
Kept boarders				Raised sheep and farmed.	Wove yarn	None	-
Works at EMO (Emergency Management Organization; linked to government). Military, Emergency Measures						None	
Dairy farmer				Dairy farmer		Leonard Reid (035)	
Dairy farmer				Dairy farmer		Fred Reid (034)	
Railway superintendent		High school	Belleville	Breadmaker, shopkeeper, farmer & gardener		Irene Weir (038)	A
Teacher		Teacher's college	Belleville, Peterborough	Farmer	Farmer	Vern Weir (037)	
				Carpenter. Some elementary school		None	
Shoe Store Owner		College complete	Belleville	Ran a shoe store.		None	M
				Firefighter and thrasher.		Ford Stapley (045), Ken Byrd (046)	P
						Mrs Smith (044)	
Weaver, sewer, housekeeper	Farmer.	Church of England school	England			None	
Railroad, cement plant.			Italy			None	C
Judge			Napanee, Colborne	Minister.		None	
	Farmer in Prince edward County	Elementary only		Farmer	Farmer	None	G

FIGURE 5: Snapshot of metadata from the Ontario Dialects Project database[5]

While age and sex are fundamental correlates for VSLX study, there can be many others, including employment history, spouse's occupation, education, place of study, father and mother's occupation and other participants. Ethnic heritage is also important and is recorded for both parents individually. While not all of this information will be available for every person, hence the blank cells in Figure 5, what is available can be used to further understand the language materials. For example, a teacher will not behave linguistically in the same way as a farmer or a railway superintendent. The question of interest for the sociolinguist, is what exactly differs? A fieldworker may notice many details about a person or the situation. For example, notice that one of the informants has a mother who was educated at the Ontario school for the deaf (Figure 5). This background could explain aspects of her language behavior that would otherwise be uninterpretable. As in language documentation projects, the extreme effort invested in fieldworker observations and metadata can be used to interpret linguistic patterns later on. This is especially important when language materials are archived at great distance from their origins and access to the community is difficult.

From this comprehensive enterprise arises extensive material about the life and times of people in context of the community. From an Anthropological perspective, the data reveal facets of cultural, historical events, social information. From a linguistic perspective the data taps into natural, spontaneous language in use, the vernacular linguistic system, as in (12). The question is what can be gleaned, linguistically, from this type of data?

(12) Moira Thicksson, 92, female
Mother always knit mitts. Of course I do it now but mother done it then. And I went to school and this other wee girl come down the road the other direction.

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5 Filemaker data base in the holdings of the University of Toronto Language Variation and Change Research Laboratory, http://individual.utoronto.ca/tagliamonte/lab.html (Accessed 6-14-17 11:55)

And when she got to school in the morning her wee hands were just about froze. And she had no mitts. So I gave her my mitts. When I come home, mother says, "Where's your mitts?" She went to put them to dry. I said, "Well I gave them to this the name of the wee girl." I said, "She had no mitts and her hands were freezin' and I had pockets." Gosh (chimes), mother never said, "Go and get the mitts." She just sat down and knit another pair.

It is immediately obvious that knitting was a fundamental cultural practice of this community. In addition, it is clear that winters were severe, that children walked to school from great distance and that benevolence was valued. Further, certain linguistic features are immediately noticeable, which harken back to the mixed Scottish and Northern Irish founders, as in (13).

(13)a. … her *wee* hands were just about *froze*.
(13)b. … the name of the *wee* girl.

Story telling in this community utilizes a mix of present and past marked verbs, but notice, that unlike Clara, as in (7), this elderly woman uses *say/said,* as in (14a). Note too the conservative preterit forms, as in (14b-c).

(14)a. Mother *says;* I *said*; I *said ...*
(14)b. When I *come*; mother *done* it then …
(14)c. I went to school and this other wee girl *come* down.

Many locally situated expressions can be extracted from the data relatively easily by asking research assistants to record in 'interesting examples' reports, phenomena that they have not heard before, as in (15-18). The 'a' examples are direct quotes from data, while the 'b' examples provide an approximate semantic interpretation.

(15)a. Didn't have a button left on his shirt he was so proud
(15)b. showed considerable pride

(16)a. Dogs was tonguing on the chase
(16)b. barking and howling while chasing an animal

(17)a. Put on a wee smudge in the stove
(17)b. start a small fire

(18)a. Son of a mope
(18)b. a gloomy, sulky person

The same is true of 'dialect' words, as in (19), local pronunciations, as in (20), and hints at non-standard spoken syntax, as in (21).

(19)a. cow byre = cow barn
(19)b. door year = front yard
(19)c. lad = boy (or man)

(19)d.   othern = others

(20)a.   One syllable spoken as two: elm → [εlεm]
(20)b.   Two syllables spoken as one: syrup → sirp [srp]

(21)a.   ...we kept the- what we called the purple-tops ah few of them for the house *for* they were good to boil up for vegetable.
(21)b.   And if you wound a bear, he *doesn't be* very happy.

Conducting a thorough inventory of all these features can be the first step in deciding what linguistic features are worthy of analysis. For example, frequent occurrence of so-called 'preterit *come*', as in (14b-c), a widely reported phenomenon in British (e.g. Tidholm 1979) and American dialects (e.g. Atwood 1953) presents an ideal measure for assessing the relative conservatism of the communities. Figure 6 shows the frequency of preterit *come* by speaker age (binned into old, middle and young) across seven Ontario communities.
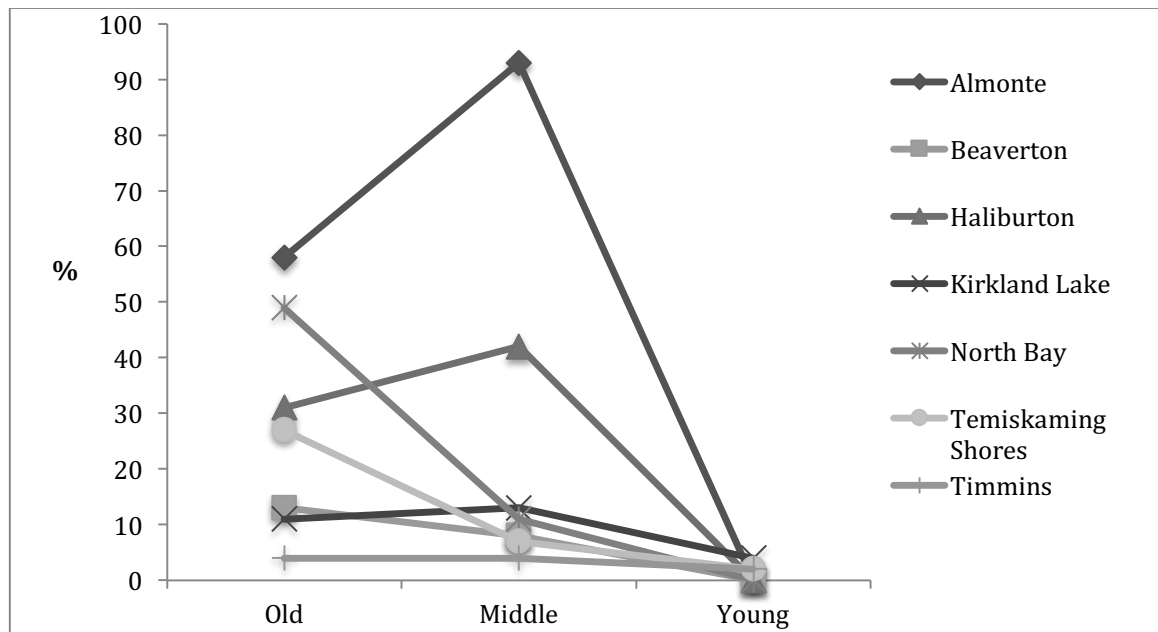

FIGURE 6: Distribution of preterit *come* across Ontario communities (Tagliamonte to appear).

Figure 6 plots the frequency of preterit *come* out of all uses of *come/came* for past temporal reference. While preterit *come* is moribund among the young people in every locale, it is retained — to greater and lesser degrees — among the oldest generations. This demonstrates how the expansive cross-variety perspective helps to catch dialect forms before they are gone for good. Further, because the metadata records social information such as age, sex, education, social networks and other attributes of our speakers, it is possible to code these attributes into the data in order to assess how these influences impact variation and change. With this information we can determine not simply that the feature is being lost, but where, how and by whom.

      Similarly, it is possible to track the development of ongoing change in progress. Another phenomenon of interest is the longitudinal change whereby the indefi-

nite pronouns in *–body,* e.g. *anybody, everybody, nobody, somebody,* are being replaced by *–one,* e.g. *anyone, everyone, no one, someone* (e.g. D'Arcy, Haddican et al. 2013). In contemporary Canadian English, this system is still variable, as in (22), suggesting ongoing change (Tagliamonte and Jankowski 2015).

(22)a.   She needed *someone* to visit […] I always had *somebody* with me. (FV,

           F, b. 1920, TOR)

(22)b.   I'm not blaming *anybody* for it […] You couldn't hurt *anyone*. (LW, M,

           b. 1925, TS)

(22)c.   *Everyone* was real tight. […] *Everybody* was really friendly. (JT, M, b.

           1976, B)

(22)d.   *Nobody* is awake during the night […] *No one* was there. (KS, N, b. 1994, KL)

Figure 7 plots the use of *–body* forms of the indefinite pronouns across the Ontario communities according to date of birth.
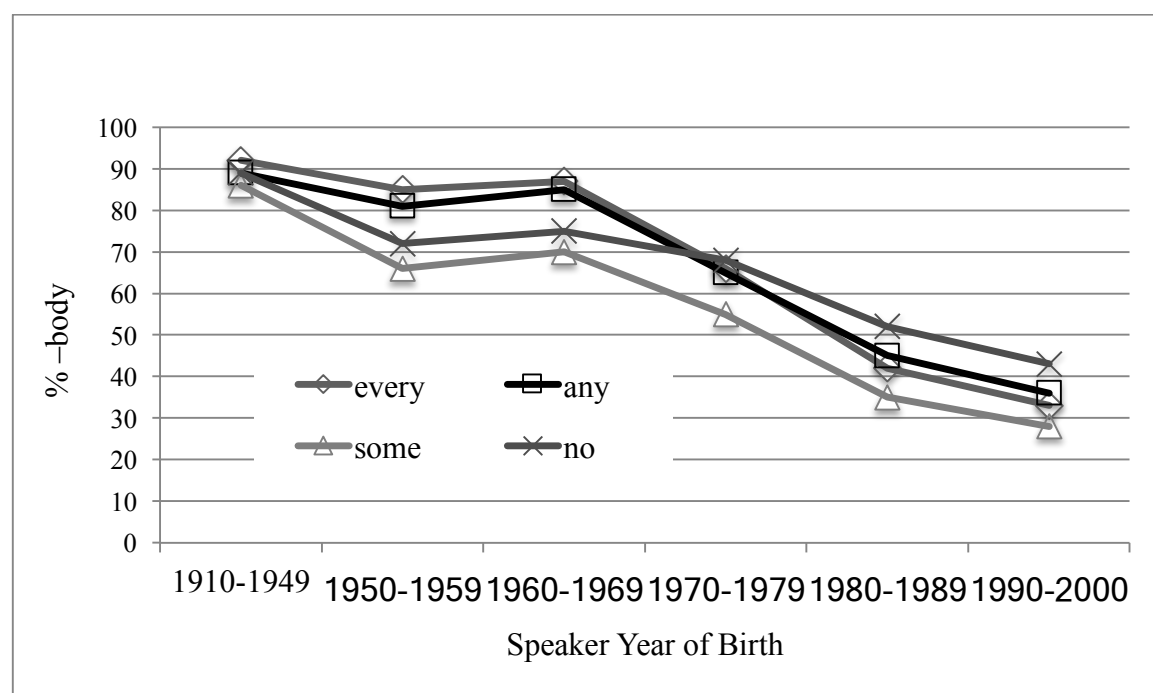

FIGURE 7: Distribution of indefinite pronouns with *-body* across Ontario communities (Tagliamonte and Jankowski 2015).

Figure 7 demonstrates that there is a steady decrease in the *–body* forms as the speakers get younger. Although this change started hundreds of years ago it is still in progress in vernacular usage.

A general finding is that as change progresses, linguistic environments constrain how variation patterns such that "change proceeds at the same rate in all contexts" (Kroch 1989:238), a discovery that has come to be called the "Constant Rate Effect"(Kroch 1999). For example, the expression of stative possession in English varies between main verb *have* and *have got,* as earlier in (6e) and in (23-24). Howev-

er, underlying this variation is a change in progress that is constrained by the nature of the complement: *have got* is more likely to be used with concrete complements, as in (23) and (24b), while *have* is more likely with abstract complements, as in (24b).

(23)a. He *has* a cottage up on Lake Simcoe and he *'s got* a broken leg right now. (CDA)

(23)b. We *have* a Hummer and we *'ve got* like a lease on the Hummer. (CDA)

(24)a. This woman *'s got* a donkey in her backyard. (CDA)

(24)b. I *have* a lot of memories. (CDA)
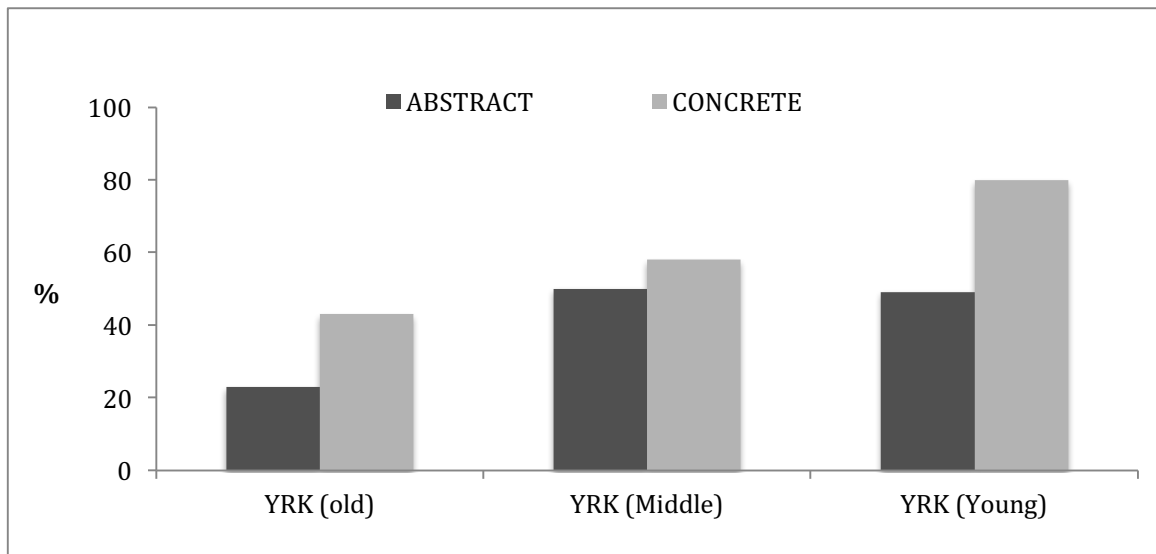
(24)c. I have *an idea*. (CDA)

FIGURE 8: Distribution of *have got* variants in apparent time, York, England (Tagliamonte 2003:542; Tagliamonte 2009).

Figure 8 shows the frequency of *have got* out of all variants used for stative possession. As the change progresses from one form to the other, the frequency of *have got* increases in apparent time. However, the contrast between concrete and abstract complements remains stable as the change advances, displaying a constant progress of change.

Large corpora of vernacular speech thus offer weighty information for documenting and analyzing language. By documenting regionally and locally circumscribed lexical items and expressions and analyzing linguistic variables by frequency of forms, and patterns of linguistic and social constraints in stories, reminiscences and conversation interactions, many questions about linguistic systems can be posed and explained. The data can be used over and over again depending on the nature of the question and the focus of investigation. From an archival point of view dialect materials offer the possibility of using the facts of (synchronic) linguistic variability to establish genetic relationships, reconstruct historical roots and explain contemporary patterns. Once these materials are machine-readable they can be stored for future comparative work and for generations to come. The information contained the Ontario Dialects Project is, in essence, a grassroots record of culture. Speakers are engaged in informal discussions that focus on local history, cultural practices, and many

aspects of lived experiences. As a result of this ethnographic approach, the interviews contain a wealth of community information, stories, folk tales, and actual events from the past and present. In this way they are an archive of life and times in European-heritage Ontario communities from the late 1800's up to the present day.

Dialect data are important for studying the history of English. The impetus for the Origins and Development of Canadian English project comes from my long term research on the history and development of English in the United Kingdom and Canada. My fundamental research question is: Why does language change and how? Depending on the relative isolation of a community, features of 17th and 18th-century English dialects can endure, thus helping to trace the origin and history of cultural practices. Furthermore, sociolinguists have discovered that language change tends to start in urban centers and spread out to rural locales. This means that changes under-way in urban centers such as Toronto may not have yet reached outlying areas, particularly small Ontario towns far away. Going back to the roots of Ontario English in the hinterlands will enable me to uncover the motivations for linguistic change elsewhere in Canada.

Dialect data also has value for historical and comparative linguistics. Yet from a traditional perspective the study of dialects tends to be heavily descriptivist with a focus on word choice and traditional vocabulary items. Recent research shows that spoken dialect data contributes often otherwise undocumented evidence for the full spectrum of language phenomena from words and sounds to grammar and discourse, while simultaneously encoding social and cultural information.

Dialect data are deeply tied to the study of place. When it comes to Canadian English, most material comes from dialect dictionaries and surveys that focus on lexical items, regional differentiation and self-reports, e.g. the Canadian English Dictionary (Barber 2004), the Linguistic Survey of the Ottawa Valley (Pringle and Padolsky 1983) and the dialect topography project of the Greater Toronto Area.[6] More recently, a large corpus on Montreal and Quebec City has been collected (Poplack, Walker et al. 2006), but the rural dialects of Ontario are virtually untapped. Considerable information, including an extensive bibliography on Canadian English can be found in the Strathy Language Unit housed at Queen's University[7] or the Canada Unit at the University of British Columbia.[8] However, there are very few, spoken language materials available in these repositories and little information on grammatical or discourse features. These can only be studied with access to a large sample of spoken language from a representative sample of speakers.

Finally, the burgeoning field of Digital Humanities urges all disciplines of the need to digitize and preserve information on the human experience. Simultaneously, there is a rallying cry from all over the English-speaking world that local dialects are disappearing in the wake of urbanization, mobility, and economic and internet social networking. Indeed, some researchers have argued strenuously for dialects to become part of the language endangerment canon (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995). All indications point to the fact that the oldest generation today may be the last to retain local dialects. The data in my lab contain this type of material. All that is required is the time to fully explore them and to bring the information contained within them to light for posterity. Dialect data offer a singular resource for research and will ensure

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[6] http://dialect.topography.chass.utoronto.ca/dt_about.php (Accessed 6-14-17 12:14)

[7] http://www.queensu.ca/strathy/home (Accessed 6-14-17 12:15)

[8] http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/sdollinger/dchp2.htm#bib (Accessed 6-14-17 12:19)

the preservation of the voices of Canadian pioneers along with their culture and history for future generations. These goals converge with those of endangered language documentation. with respect to the relatively smaller number of speakers, the lack of general awareness of the varieties and their lack of official status/recognition

4. DIALECTS IN THE NEWS. Dialects are of intrinsic interest to people in general. Over the course of my studies of Ontario dialects, there has been considerble media coverage. The major Canadian newspaper, The Toronto Star, ran a story entitled "Looking for true Canadian English, there? Go north" on the front page on 9-27-2011.[9]

In addition, local papers and and radio stations have published stories about my research wherever I have conducted sociolinguistic fieldwork. CBC news did a story entitled "Pickin' burries', the Ottawa Valley dialect, 6-1-2012. A local newspaper in Haliburton reported on my fieldwork in the area in a piece entitled "Linguist collecting Haliburton stories for study" 5-15-2012.

A key component of my fieldwork enterprise is to 'give back' to the communities in which I conduct research in ways that are of use to community members, adhering to what sociolinguists have formulated as the Principle of Linguistics Gratuity, as formulated by Wolfram (1995:23). This practice is also a common practice in endangered language documentation and more emphasis is being given to this as well as engagement with community members themselves, who participate in the research and shape the research agenda (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009, Rice 2011):

> "Investigators who have obtained linguistic data from members of a speech community should actively pursue ways in which they can return linguistic favors to the community".

All sound files and metadata are returned to the community archives for posterity, where permissions for this have been obtained from the individuals in the sample. In endangered language documentation emphasis is given to participatory research and more recently to including community members themselves researchers who shape the research agenda (e.g. Genetti and Siemens 2013). Sociolinguistic fieldwork also makes an effort to provide usable products to the community, e.g. a book of stories from community interviews along with a DVD, as in Figure 9. These 'digests' of the full corpus are returned to the local museums, schools, senior citizen homes and wherever else people have exhibited an interest and engagement with our work. A similar practice is found in endangered language documentation where booklets of collected and transcribed stories are produced for language preservation initiatives and the production of pedagogical materials for language preservation.

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[9] My research has also been reported in the Ottawa Citizen and many newspapers across Canada. Stories about the Ontario Dialects Project have also been reported in the University of Toronto magazine, on CBC Radio's *Fresh Air* (1-15-12 and 11-25-15) and other broadcasts.
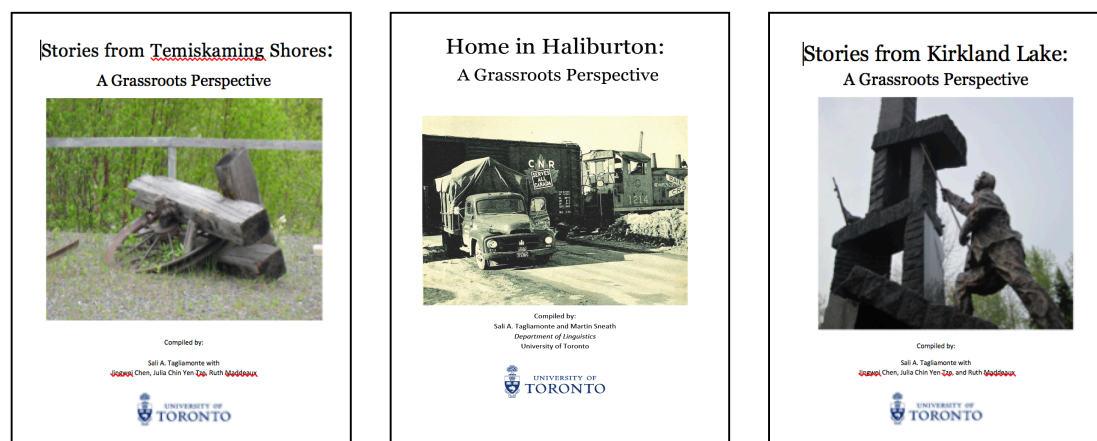
FIGURE 9: Books about the communities

The books produced from sociolinguistic fieldwork projects offer community members an accessible record of their community's stories. Few individuals will read through the lengthy transcripts of the interviews or listen to hundreds of hours of the conversations; however, many are fascinated with listening to stories about old-fashioned experiences, as in (25), or a story about bears, as in (26).

> (25) Hide and seek
> I remember we were playing hide-and-seek one day and I hid in the wood-box. And who come in before they found me but the school inspector. He comes over, warms his hands beside the stove, and stands in front of the wood-box and I couldn't get out! (Ivy Franklin, age 75)

> (26) Backwoods bear
> This tin camp was about a mile in from where we were. Or at least we were a mile in further than they were. Holy God! There's a hole in the side of it. The door's open. And we thought, "Good God!" Obviously, a bear had been in it. So, at hunting time we went down to visit them one rainy day and we said, "How'd you make out?" He said, "The stupid bear" he said, "he broke in the door and then he didn't have enough sense to go out the side of the building! (Ray Watkins, age 86)

Compiled in this way, this information is readily accessible. People everywhere love to read stories that recount lived experiences from the place they live or come from. The information could be put to significant use by playwrights, novelists, historians, sociologists, and many others. The books also provide documentation of the existence of the larger datasets for anyone who may want to pursue further investigation. Whether communities under study are small languages or rural dialects of big languages, language materials collected by linguists can be made useful to the local situation.

　　　　Sociolinguistic fieldwork can also lead to community partnerships. In some cases local organizations have conducted oral histories with individuals and do not have sufficient financial support for the time-consuming task of data transcription. In these cases, their work provides the raw materials and my research funding supports the transcription. Together these collaborations work to produce books such as those

in Figure 10, from the Tay Valley, Ontario and the Claybelt Chronicles, from New Liskeard, of which volume Five is advertised in the picture in Figure 11
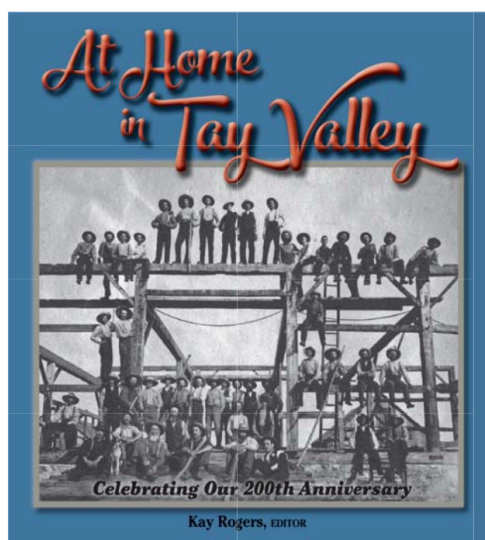
FIGURE 10: Local publications from communities in Ontario – Tay Valley

FIGURE 11: Local publications from communities in Ontario – New Liskeard

In sum, sociolinguistic fieldwork has impact beyond linguistic import, consistent with the Principle of Linguistic Gratuity (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995:23), and potentially of use to field linguists and scholars interested in language documentation, as summarized in (27):

(27)a. Machine-readable, searchable data bases using orthographic transcription
(27)b. Metadata with social and other information
(27)c. Books and materials for communities

(27)d. Community involvement

(27)e. Student training in fieldwork, ethics, ethnography, giving back, experiential learning

To conclude, this chapter has offered an overview of the practises, procedures and products of sociolinguistic fieldwork and demonstrated the insights that can be gained from tapping the vernacular languages in action. Conversational interactions, storytelling and life stories are insightful for tapping linguistic features that may not arise other than in usage. Single speakers can exhibit variation that they, themselves, are entirely unaware of and would not admit to using. Spoken language contains discourse-pragmatic phenomena and other features not found in any other register of language. Finally, vernacular language offers unique insights into history, culture, identity and other social and psychological characteristics (see alsoTagliamonte 2007, Tagliamonte 2014).

Scholars who work on endangered language documentation and scholars who work on dialects and variation are engaged in very similar undertaking. The unifying characteristic is the goal to document the language, variety or dialect as thoroughly as possible, including annotation, meta-data, community-involvement and student training. However, endangered language documentation is often challenged by very difficult access to endangered communities, limited numbers of fluent speakers and the need for native speakers to transcribe natural speech material. Insights from sociolinguistic fieldwork in the variationist tradition include: 1) the fact that variation can be found even within a single speaker as long as range of styles are represented; 2) coverage of speakers of varying age and sex can tap change in progress; 3) storytelling, personal histories and spoken interaction offer rich insights into language variation and change; and 4) social and situational information offer further insight into linguistic behaviour. Greater collaboration across these disciplines could lead to an integrative new approach to endangered language documentation and richer, more accessible linguistic materials that will not only be of use to linguists and communities but also to the broader population where there is an abiding interest in language puzzles, whether ancient codes or modern innovations. More importantly, it will ensure a superior reservoir of knowledge to be preserved for the future.

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sali.tagliamonte@utoronto.ca