

From qualitative to quantitative in the sociolinguistics of multilingualism

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GramAdapt seminar November 19, 2020

Opening the Pandora's box? On integrating language ideologies in sociolinguistic typology

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Sociolinguistic typology today

Sociological features

- Type of contact (amount of adult L2 speakers)
- Degree of stability of speaker community
- Community size
- Degree of density of social networks
- Amount of communally-shared information
- ...



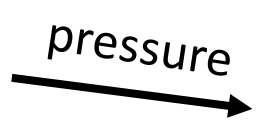
Linguistic features

Semiotic constraints

Economy

Transparency

Isomorphism



+/- "linguistic complexity"

Language ideologies??

Language ideologies: the great absentee

Speakers' interests and creativity are key in processes of language change

My claim: most of the “problems” in today's sociolinguistic typology are due to the fact that there have not been any serious attempts to integrate language ideologies in the general comparative picture

Why are language ideologies seldom recalled in sociolinguistic typology (inter alia)?

- Epistemological limitation: many sociolinguists do not consider speakers' agency
- Practical 1: it is an unclear notion (“too anthropological”, definitions do not help)
- Practical 2: what data do we use to study language ideologies? Do they emerge only from ethnographic data? Discourse data? Interviews?
- Practical 3: descriptions are too particularistic > difficulties for cross-linguistic comparison

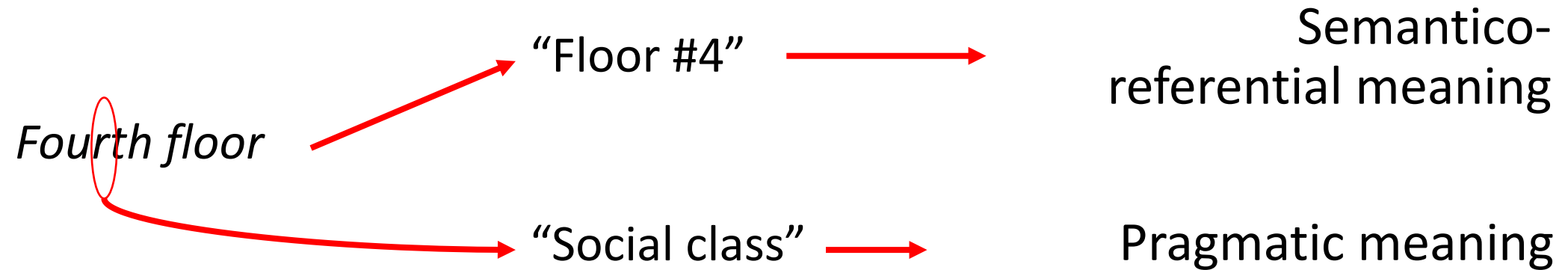
Goals of this paper

- Attempt some basic clarifications > provide common ground to TALK ABOUT language ideologies (and more)
- Propose some possible innovations that may contribute to a sociolinguistic typology and to improve on the “sociolinguistic awareness” in studies of language change
- **Please keep in mind:**
 - This is a conceptual paper: little actual data will be discussed
 - This paper is meant to stimulate discussion (its original title ended in “materials for brainstorming”!), this is why it concludes with some thought-provoking hypotheses.

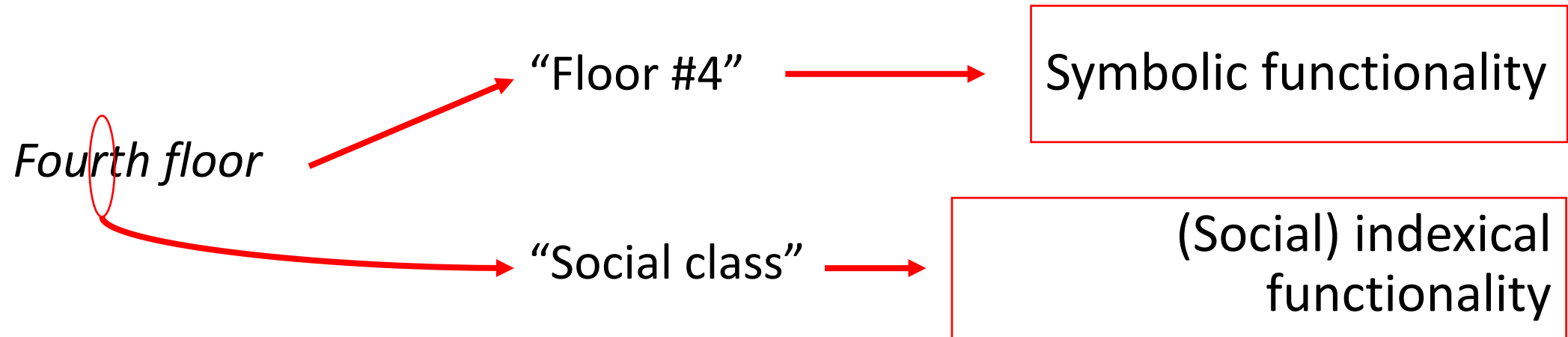
Clarifications

Towards a shared vocabulary
to talk about language ideologies

Linguistic signs have multiple functionalities




Linguistic signs have multiple functionalities



Symbol & index

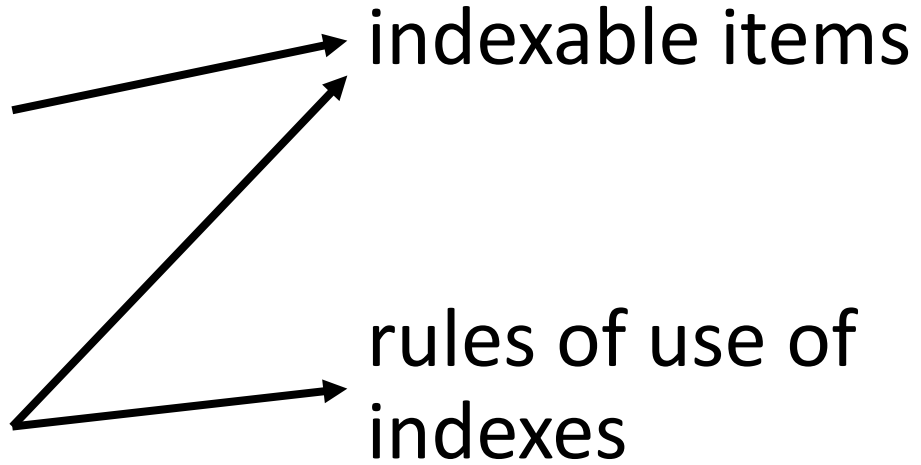
Sign type	Signifier/signified Relationship	Meaning type	Communication succeeds if
Symbol	Arbitrary, <u>mediated through a code</u>	Semantico-referential	Interactants share the code (i.e. grammar and a lexicon)
(Non-referential) index	Existential contiguity, cause-effect, <u>mediated through context</u>	Pragmatic	Interactants share a certain knowledge of <u>contextS</u>



Contexts

situational context, or the context of interaction

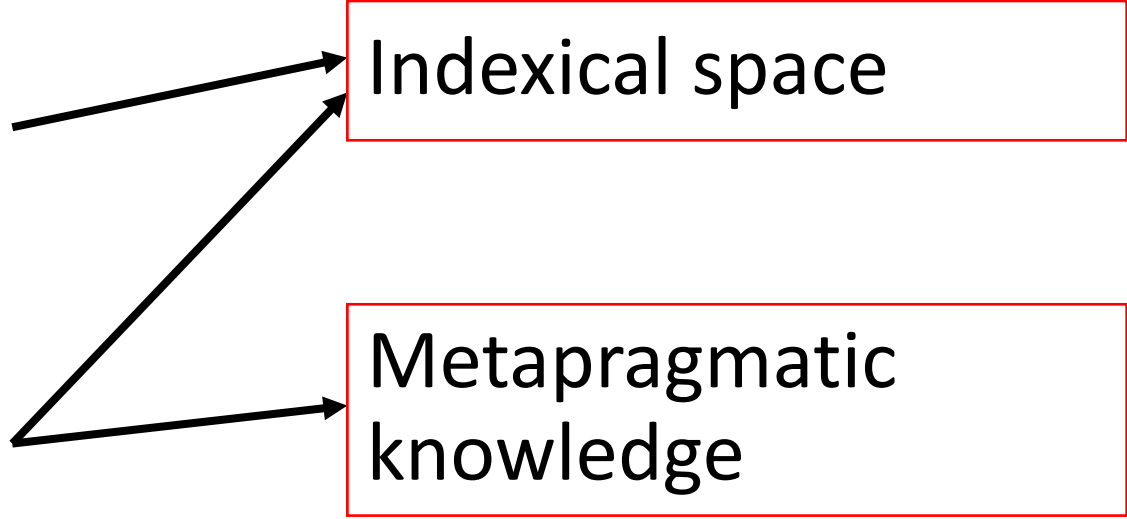
extra-situational context, or background knowledge: culture, social organization, recent news, gossips, language ideologies etc.



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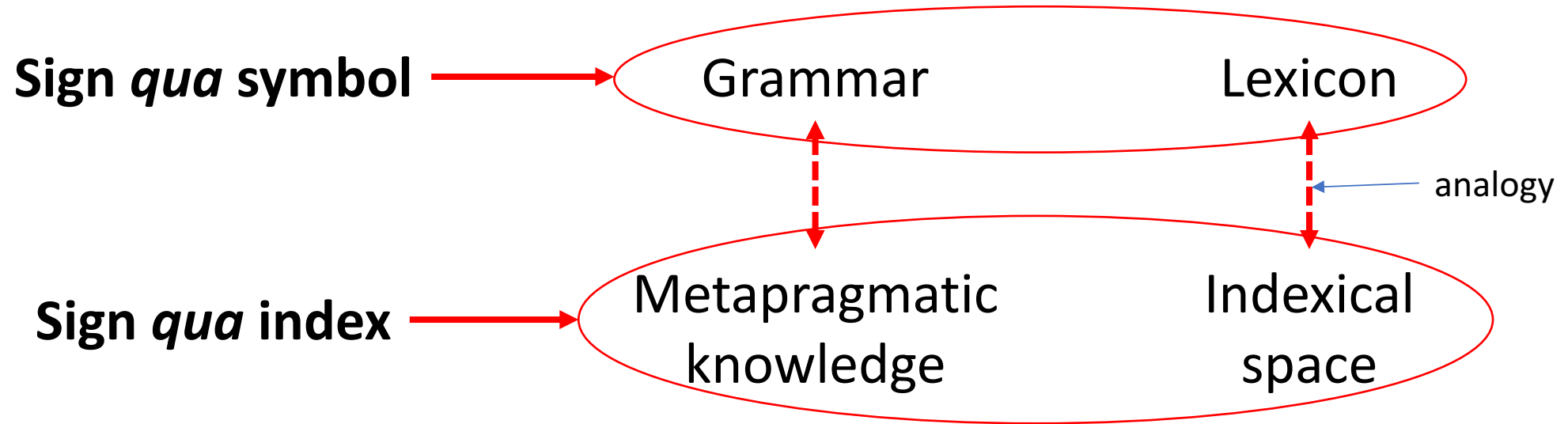
Indexical space

Metapragmatic knowledge

Symbol & index

Sign type	Signifier/signified Relationship	Meaning type	Communication succeeds if
Symbol	Arbitrary, mediated through a code	Semantico-referential	Interactants share the code (i.e. grammar and a lexicon)
(Non-referential) indexes	Existential contiguity, cause-effect, mediated through context	Pragmatic	Interactants share a certain knowledge of <u>contextS (i.e. <u>metapragmatic knowledge and indexical space</u>)</u>

What terms to use for indexes?



Redefining language ideologies

Language ideologies are part of the **extra-situational context**

They crucially inform a community's **metapragmatic knowledge** (or “indexical grammar”)—i.e. rules of use of certain indexes in certain situational contexts for production of certain pragmatic meanings.

They inform also portions of the **indexical space**—e.g. the possible identities that are indexable by speakers



Language ideologies are active devices influencing the indexical functionality of linguistic behaviors → community's **indexical behavior**

Possible innovations

Towards a typology of indexical
targets

Crosslinguistic comparison of phenomena of indexical functionality

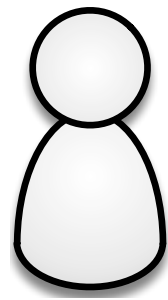
- Context-dependent → Particularism → Discouraging scenario for crosslinguistic comparison
- How to define the phenomena, the units to compare?
- In linguistic (*signs-qua-symbols*) typology, due to structural diversity across languages, units are identified mainly through external, **semantic means**.
- Semantic means = **semantico-referential targets**
- Is the same possible for (social) indexical phenomena?
- Can we identify **pragmatic i.e. indexical targets**?

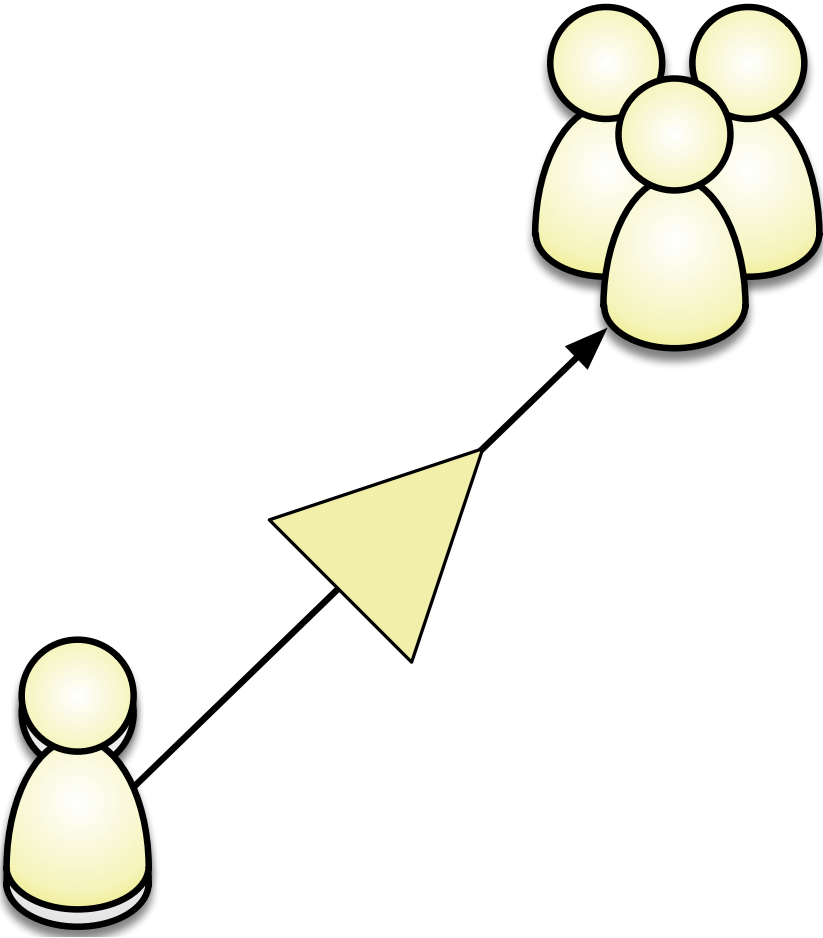
Identity as an indexical target

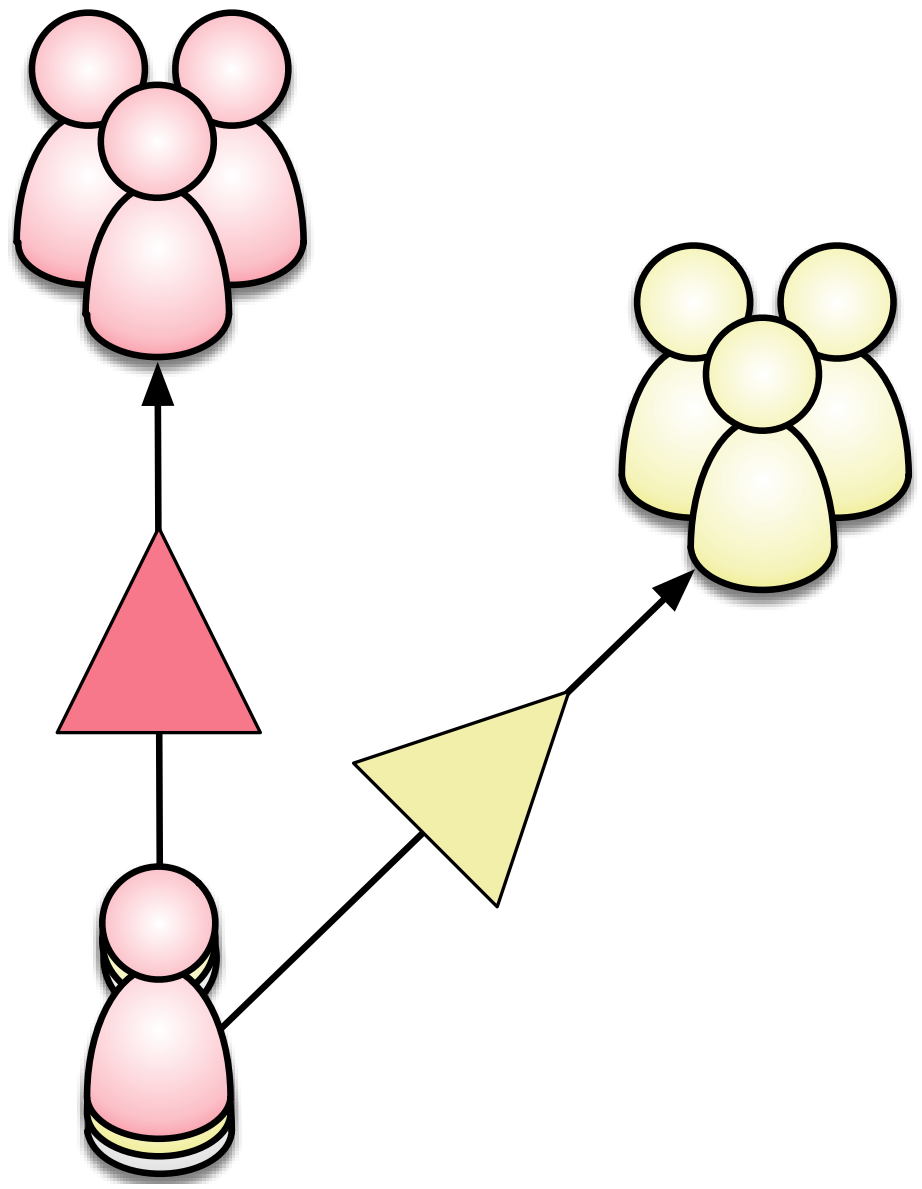
- “Identity” is the main variable communicated in interaction using nonreferential indexes
 - Linguistic variants
 - Multilingual language choice
 - ...
- This is just one way to look at it: “identity” in fact structures situational context, relations among interactants, expectations, etc etc...

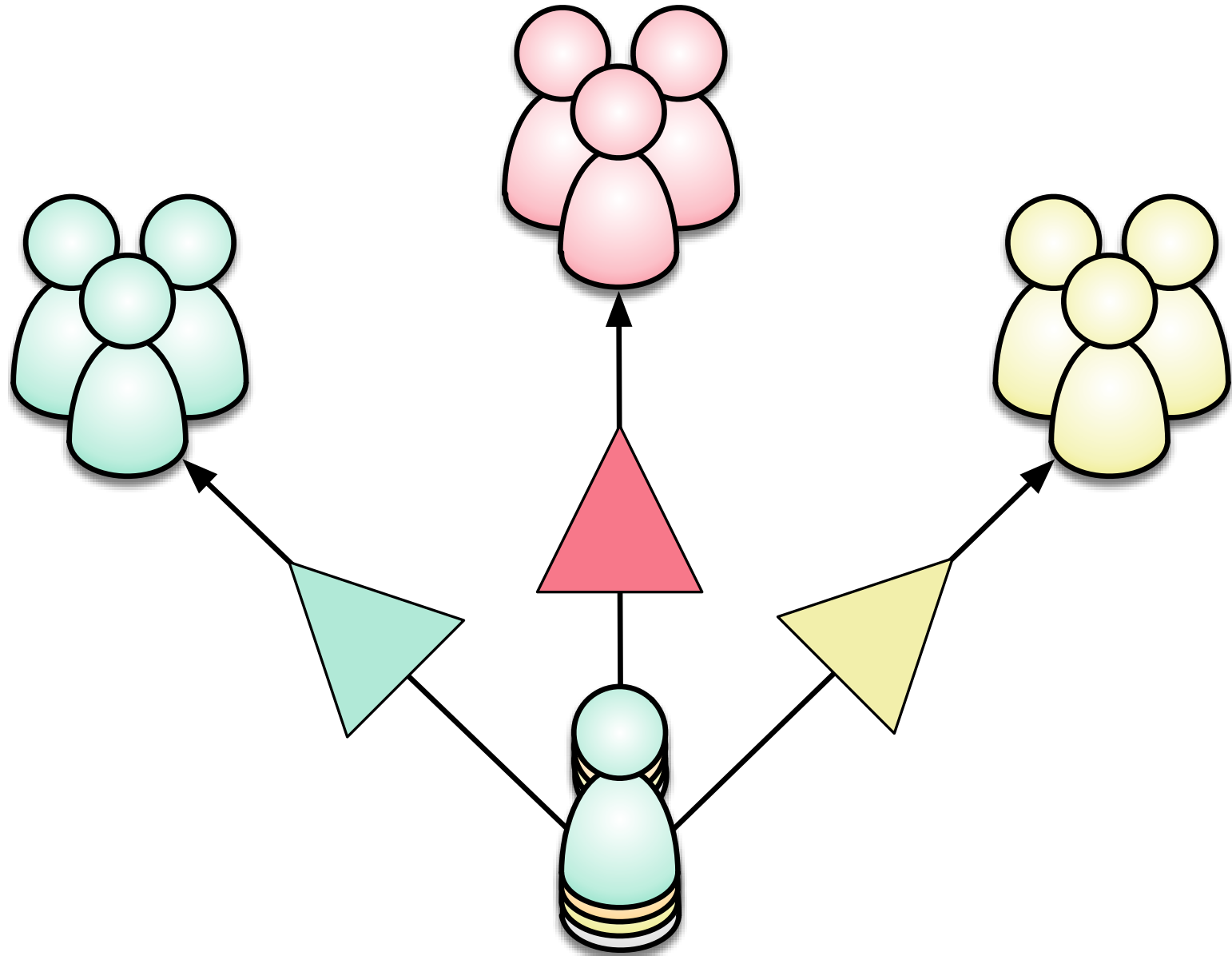
Multilingualism and social indexical meaning

- In many multilingual language ecologies around the world, language choice is **irrelevant to the encoding of semantico-referential meaning** (Fishman called it “intra-community multilingualism”)
- Rather, **it foregrounds the indexical functionality of signs** → produces pragmatic meanings (social indexical meanings)
- This is captured by concepts such as Fishman’s extended **di- / poly-glossia**
 - different languages are associated with distinct complexes “of behaviors, attitudes, and values”
- Which is based on what Irvine and Gal (2000) call “**iconization process**”
 - linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group’s inherent nature or essence (Irvine & Gal 2000: 37)









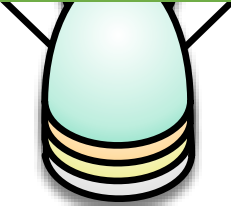




Categorical identity

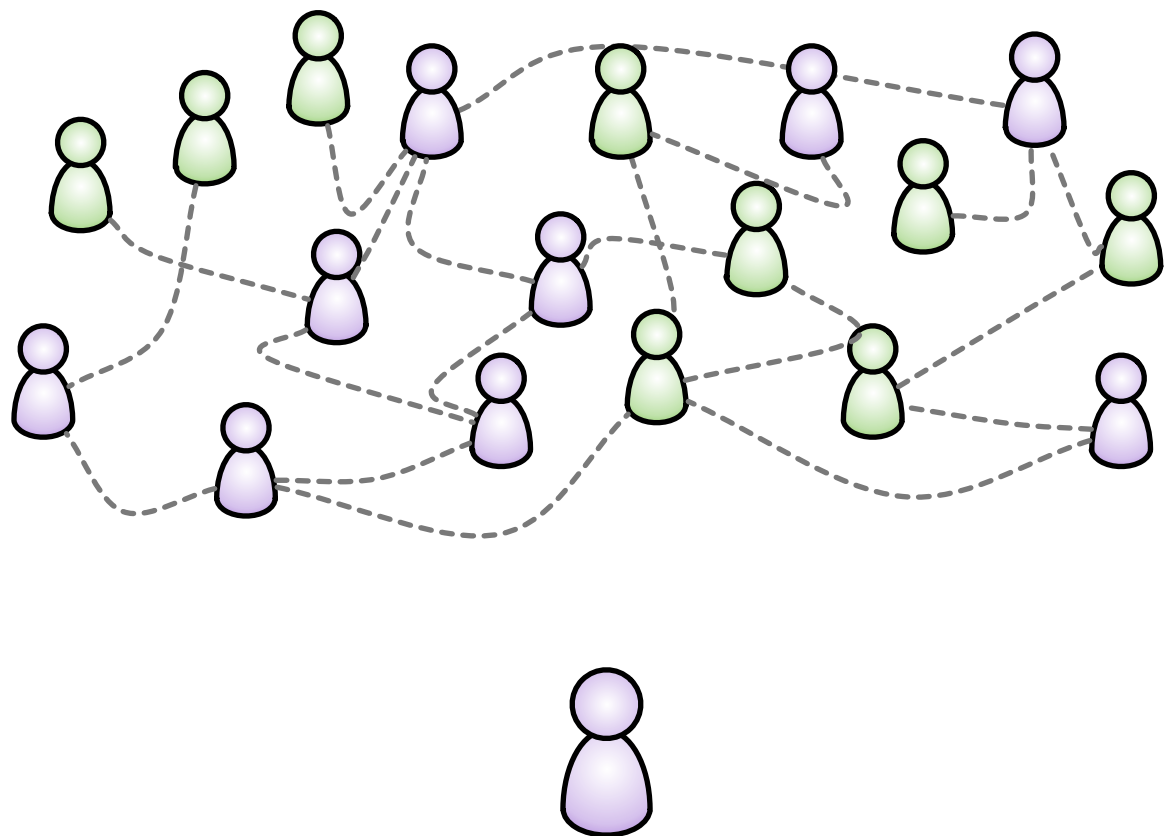


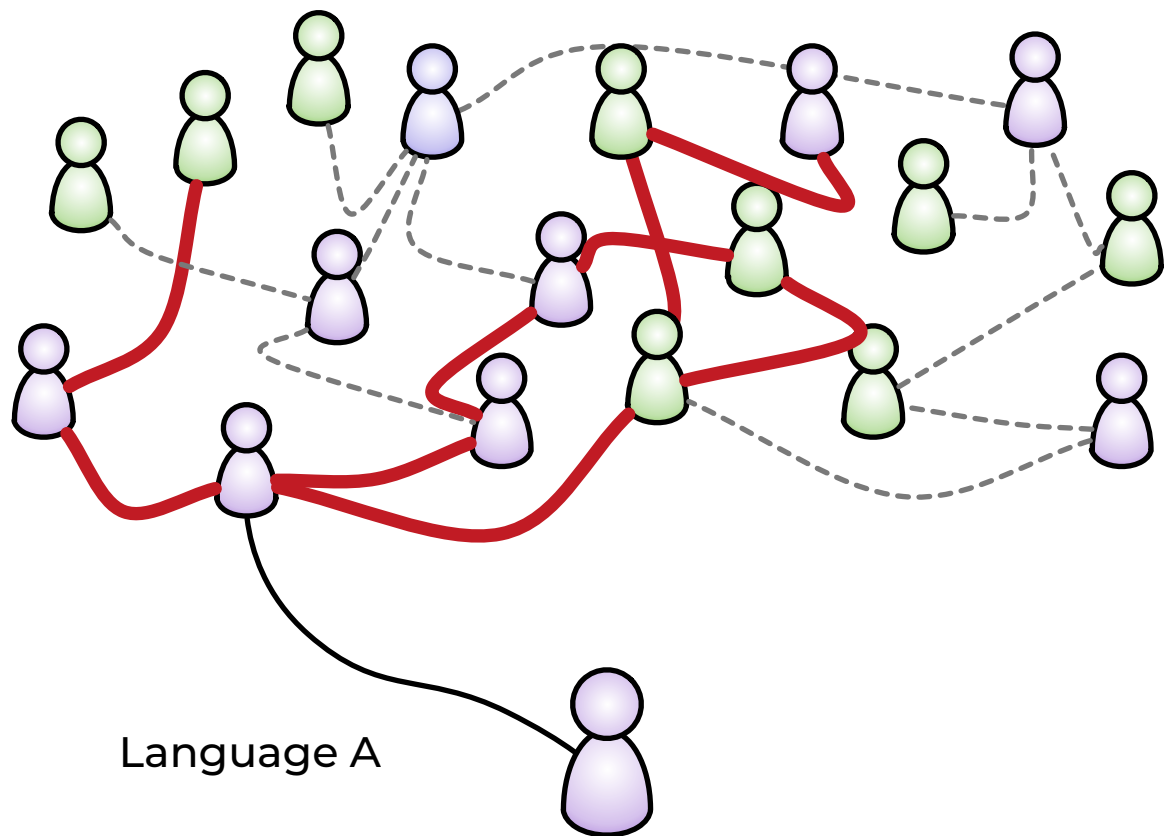
Identify oneself (or another person) by membership in a class of persons sharing some categorical attribute (such as race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)



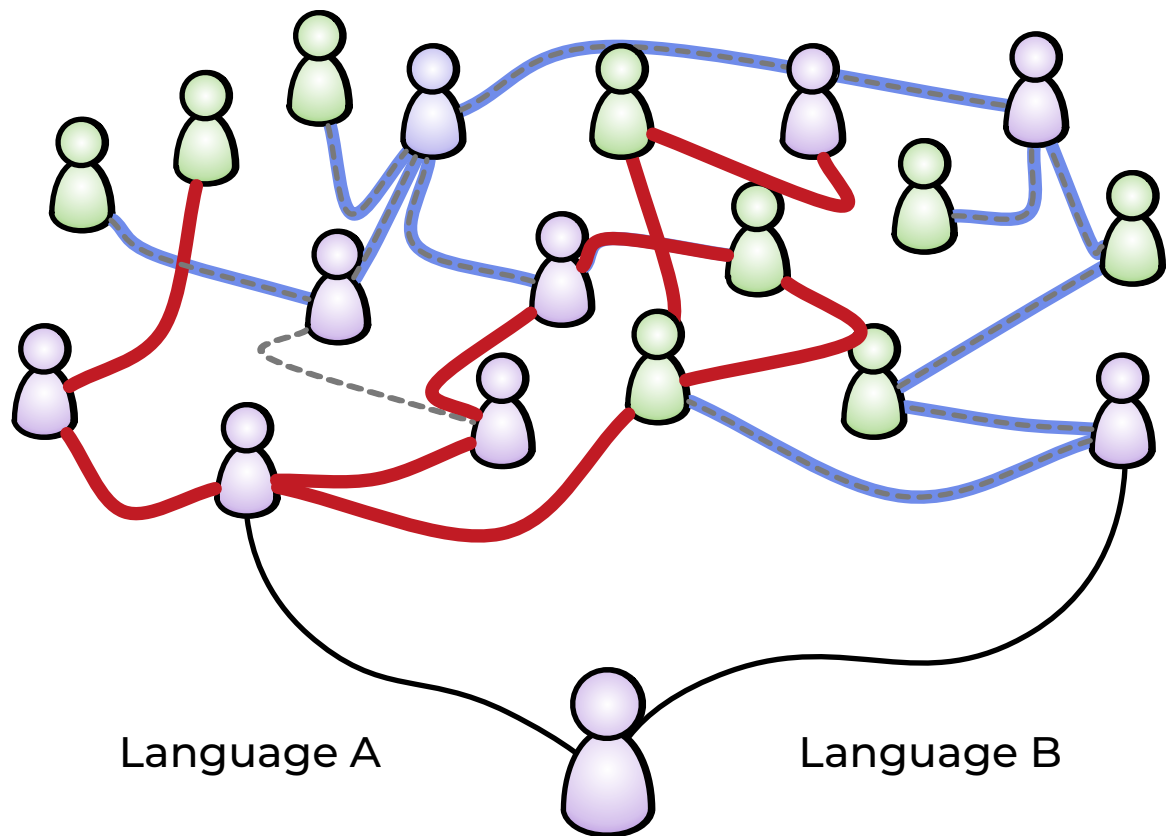
So-called “solidarity”

- The only exception to categorical identities that is found in mainstream sociolinguistic literature is that of so-called “**solidarity**”
- Solidarity is a **residual analytical category**: everything that is not categorical becomes “solidarity-driven”.
- **It is a cover term that limits understanding of identity targets that are non-categorical**
- **In fact, what goes under this term is reflective of a radically different process of personal identification.**



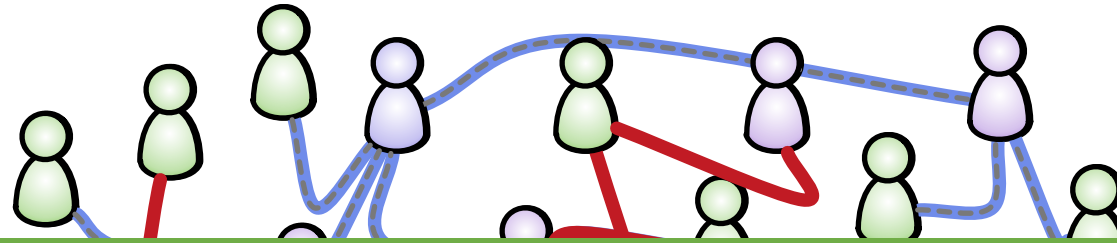


Language A



Language A

Language B



Relational identity

through which one may identify oneself (or another person) by position in a relational web (a web of kinship, for example)

Language A

Language B



Where is all this “stored”?

...in language ideologies, of course!

Sociolinguistic typology 1

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Linguistic features

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pressure



pressure



+/- "linguistic complexity"

Language ideologies??

Sociolinguistic typology 2

Sociological features

- Type of contact (amount of adult L2 speakers)
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- ...

&

Sociolinguistic features

Language ideologies



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Indexical targets

pressure

+/- "linguistic complexity"

This is where the brainstorming
would start

What would categorical vs. relational identity targets imply for language change and sociolinguistic typology?

- Prevalence of relational identity targets in a community's language ideologies may co-occur with some acquisitional and performative phenomena.
- For various extra-linguistic reasons, identity "policing" might be less strict than for categorical identity targets (relation vs. prestige / power).
- This may lead to:
 - **Higher individual variation** in performance
 - Higher "tolerance" (**different bases for proficiency assessment**)
- Salience of relational targets implies existence of choice, i.e. of multiple targets
 - individual variation is influenced by multilingual repertoires
 - **multilateral language change**

What would categorical vs. relational identity targets imply for language change and sociolinguistic typology?

For instance, this might mean that anywhere there is a dialect continuum of the kind that is intractable by historical linguists (where protolanguages can be reconstructed and described languages put in relation with each other mostly geographically, while genealogical subgroupings are difficult) there might have been prominence of relational identity targets in local language ideologies.

For GramAdapt

- Explore “solidarity” in multilingual repertoires and use
 - Who knows how many “things” are hidden underneath that cover term!
- ... discussion

Thanks!