



((تحليل لغوي اجتماعي للهوية في محادثات إنجليزية مختارة))
((A Socio Linguistic Analysis of identity in Selected English Conversation))

ALYAA HUSSEIN ABID

Abstract

This research analyzes sociolinguistic identity construction in sample English conversations. Identity is understood not as essential but as continuously negotiated across language and social practice, an index of cultural and collective rather than psychological circumstances. Identity incorporates categories like social class, temporary conversational roles, and culture-based positions in different contexts. This paper considers how interlocutors use linguistic resources- labels, implied meanings, code-switching, and dialogic positioning- to perform, challenge, or confirm identities. Intentional decision making, unconscious cues, external judgments, and system ideological factors condition all these processes. Through analysis of political discourse, mundane dialogues, and media talk, the study illustrates the dynamic interplay between structural constraint and personal agency in identity negotiation and how identities are enacted, contested, and reconstituted in communicative practice

Email:

saddamyaub1976@gmail.com

Published: 1- 9-2025

Keywords:

هذه مقالة وصول مفتوح بموجب ترخيص
CC BY 4.0

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

المخلص

يقدم البحث مفهوماً لتحليل تشكيل الهوية اجتماعياً ولغوياً في محادثات إنجليزية مختارة، حيث تُفهم الهوية كبناء ديناميكي يتفاوض عليه عبر الممارسات اللغوية والتفاعلات الاجتماعية بدلاً من كونها سمة فطرية. إذ تشمل الهوية عديد من الفئات مثل الطبقة، الأدوار التفاعلية المؤقتة، والمواضع الثقافية الخاصة. ويسلط البحث الضوء على كيف يستخدم المتحدثون استراتيجيات لغوية، كالتسميات، التضمينات، التبديل اللغوي، والمواقف الحوارية لإنتاج الهويات أو تحديها. إذ تتشكل هذه العمليات عبر الاختيارات الواعية، العوامل اللاواعية، تصورات الآخرين، والأيديولوجيات البنيوية. ومن خلال تحليل الخطاب السياسي، الحوارات اليومية، وتمثيلات الإعلام، يكشف البحث التفاعل المرن بين الفاعلية الفردية والقيود البنيوية في تشكيل الهوية، مُظهرًا كيف تؤدي الهويات، ثقافتهم، أو تُعاد صياغتها في السياقات التواصلية.

1. Introduction

Discourse analysis also follows suit, and there is a much broader application and use of "identity." "Identity" as a research tool is becoming increasingly popular, making it possible to discover some exciting things about human behavior and interaction (Bauman, 2005, p.12).

Communication is not just about information, things done, or emotions conveyed, but is also a way in which human beings represent who we are. Using language, we disclose our ethnic, cultural, and social identities, declare our values, and signal our politics. As we use language to represent our self-view, we use it to recognize, label, and judge. Using language, we form relationships and rapport based on similarities or differentiate and alienate based on differences. In certain senses, discourse and language are central to constructing and negotiating identities (Ibid.).

The Problem of the Study

The research concerns how some English conversations create, negotiate, and represent identities. The research explains how speakers use features in the language, discourse strategies, and positioning in interaction to build and shape identities. The research problem is conceptualizing identity as discursive and social and not as a fixed feature, as well as how and why discourse represents and influences social roles, belonging to some groups, and self-perception. The research explains how power relationships and societal frameworks influence discourse-based identities

The Research Question:

- How do speakers employ linguistic strategies (e.g., indexicality, positioning, dialogism) to hypothesize, negotiate, and contest social identities in English conversations?

The Hypothesis:

1. Social identities are not fixed but dynamically enacted through context-dependent linguistic practices, reflecting individual agency (e.g., resisting labels) and structural ideologies (e.g., class, gender norms).
2. Power dynamics constrain or enable identity negotiation, with some identities rigidly imposed (e.g., media stereotypes) and others fluidly negotiated (e.g., digital personas).

The Aims of the Study

The research is aimed at:

1. Study linguistic strategies (e.g., code-switching, slang) as markers for social categories (e.g., gender, class) in discourse
2. Analyze how personal agency and structural ideologies interact in identity formation.
3. Consider tensions between fixed (e.g., religious affiliations) and fluid (e.g., online) identities,

The Scope of the Study:

The research focused on three discourse types:

1. Political discourse (e.g., Sarah Palin's populist speech).
2. Daily interactions (e.g., gendered conversations among colleagues).
3. Media portrayals (e.g., analysis of Palin's speech).
4. Theoretical Framework: Grounded in sociolinguistic theories of indexicality, positioning, and performativity (Butler, 1990; Silverstein, 1976).

2. What is identity?

Discourse research in identity draws upon theory regarding self, how personal and social experience is structured and constituted in and through interaction, and how processes and structures in society and culture are impacted by language. The emerging methodology is inter- and interdisciplinary as it draws upon insights in a variety of different domains. The discourse in recent years regarding identity and language created a new way of thinking regarding social construction, practice, and interaction (De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006, p.11).

Such a paradigm shift is impacted not only by discourse research but is informed as well by thinking in other subject areas. Some key sources include discourses about the postmodern self in theory (social theory), feminism and identity (Butler, 1990, p.78), and discourses about social construction and ethnomethodology. Theoretical thinking in each of these arenas informed recent discourse analysis breakthroughs. Three major arenas have had shifts in thinking before achieving this (Butler, 1990, p.79).

The major shift in theory in our thinking about the self is how we conceptualize self. Researchers have moved away from conceptualizing the self as independent and fixed and have come to hold anti-essentialist assumptions, as a reaction to this way of thinking (Butler, 1990, p.80).

The second shift is about how interpersonal communication forms identity. Unlike defining identity as a personal quality, we now emphasize that it is formed, enacted, and negotiated in and through human relationships. That is, no longer is identity personal and fixed, but is formed in and through relationships.

The third shift is in how identity and language are associated. In early sociolinguistics, language and identity would be associated straightforwardly, in which some social categories would directly associate with some features in language. That is no longer how things are conceptualized today. Researchers are today concerned more with discourse practices using language in use rather than looking at individual aspects of language. More and more, there is a focus on variation in use rather than conceptualizing language as monolithic and invariable (ibid).

3. Identity and the self

Despite rising interest in identity in the social sciences and volumes and articles being produced on the topic, definitive descriptions of identity are still hard to find. The descriptions available are highly varied in scope and terminology. Identity can be thought about differently, as a personal quality or a structure produced in and through relationships. Identity can be in one's head or be enacted in social behavior. Identity can be tied to a person or a collectivity and thought about as a personal quality or constituted in relationships with others.

In psychology, self and identity are closely connected, as theory regarding personality is often coupled with theory regarding identity. As explained by psychologist Erik Erikson (1980, p.109), who is perhaps best known for his theory on personality development, there are two key dimensions to identity: a sense of inner consistency (consistent across time) and a communal tie with others regarding similarities.

4. Identity as a social construction

Judith Butler (1990, p.14) defines the non-essentialist understanding of identity. Her theory regarding gender identity has influenced thinkers across different spheres. According to her, gender identity is not based on a predetermined series of traits but is a fluid and flexible concept. Butler also emphasized that identity is not something someone "has" but is instead something they "does" or "acts." People continually shape and reconstruct identities in and out of discourse and social transactions.

Being male, female, or some class is not definitive but is context-dependent and continuously being reconstructed. Identity is not as much about inner emotions or cognition as performance and behavior. The idea of performance is used widely in research on identity as it reveals how identity is actively produced and enacted in daily life. In this way of thinking, to perform an identity is to act and behave in specific ways in certain social conditions.

Below are some instances when identities are enacted in discourse. The following is an example of male speakers in their early twenties. The speakers had grown up as close friends but had drifted away after graduation. Despite some distance, they remained in close telephone and email contact. The excerpt starts when they meet after being away for some time. Ed had traveled away from Washington, DC for college while Alex had remained there. Now, Ed is back briefly and is meeting Alex once again.

(1)

Ed: Alex what's up guy? How you doin' man?

Alex: Chillin' yo chillin' man.

Ed: Long time no see guy.

Alex: It's been a minute son I should be sayin'.

Ed: What's thrashing the DC scene man?

Alex: Ahh uffff I mean everything's pretty much the same man, you know man how it is!

Such a conversation is characteristic of everyday chat when language is used to achieve friendly and easy rapport and smooth out tensions between acquaintances who have not met for some time. However, in how they address each other, they also create identities. Alex and Ed are creating identities as youths and simultaneously emphasizing solidarity as they use identical speech forms. Using some words is a marker for them as being similar.

They each use a type of speech in line with the description for an unofficial, creative, and expressive kind of speech, different from formal speech (Crystal, 1997, p.53). Slang consists of innovative words, phrases, and modes of pronunciation, and is mainly used to signal belonging to a given group. In this context, they are identifying some aspects of speech, for instance:

- Using "chill" as a way to say "relax" or "
- Constantly calling each other "man" or "guy"
- Using phrases like "What's thrashing the DC scene?" for "What's going on in DC?"

- Removing the "g" in -ing forms (i.e., "doin'," "chillin'," "sayin"), typical in everyday speech
- Omitting "to be" (i.e., "How you doing, man" instead of "How are you doing, man"), a usage characteristic of African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

These illustrate how language is not just used for information but for conveying belonging and identification. Two key features of social constructionism are that there is no underlying, fixed self and that the self is not just possessed but is actively performed. Social and cultural phenomena are produced in and out of interaction, and this way of conceptualizing them is profoundly influential in discourse research and much else in the social sciences. (Zimmerman & Wieder, 1970, p.66).

5. Sorts of Identities

Individual personal identity comprises not only group identities but individual traits, such as moral or physical traits defining one person as distinct from another (i.e., being brave or timid). In addition, there are identities based on situation, or contextual identities, in which one is involved in some type of interactivity, such as teacher and student or doctor and patient (Zimmerman, 1998, p.67).

In everyday usage, different forms of identity overlap and are not readily discernible. Social identity categories are typically used in forming personal identities, and at the same time, collective identities can be expressed in individual forms, as in "I am the State."

In addition, identities are not necessarily contained in general categories such as gender or age, since there are continuously emerging identities. Some identities, such as those based on religious or national identities, are formed in prolonged processes and are settled and fixed; alternatively, some, such as identities formed in online networks, are short-lived and fluid. Whether or not an identity is fluid or fixed, identities are created and negotiated in daily discourse. It is mainly through interaction that human beings come to enact and form identities.

6. Methodology & Procedures (Data Analysis)

The research employs qualitative discourse analysis to analyze identity construction across English conversations. Sources of data are:

1. Political speech: Transcripts from Sarah Palin's vice-presidential debate, 2008.
2. Daily conversations: A taped discussion between colleagues (Mark and Lisa).
3. Media discourse: The Washington Post's commentary about Palin's rhetoric.

4. Coding Process and Derivation of Themes Approach: Inductive-deductive thematic analysis was carried out.
5. Deductive Phase: Early codes were drawn from sociolinguistic theories of indexicality (Silverstein, 1976), positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990), and performativity (Butler, 1990). These theories informed the identification of pre-defined categories (e.g., "slang as class marker," "gendered).
6. Inductive Stage: Emergent themes (e.g., "humor as resistance," "populist code-switching") were discerned through repeated close reading of the data, enabling patterns to emerge naturally.
7. The codes were organized under more general themes (e.g., "Indexicality and Class Performance," "Gendered Positioning"). These themes were checked for coherence and pertinence to the research query, and those that were repetitive were consolidated (e.g., "dialogism" and "relational identity").

A- Indexicality

Van Dijk (2010, p.12) explains how identities can be articulated in different forms, openly and directly or indirectly, in associated and symbolic forms. When one would say they are "an American," "a good mother," or "a Manchester United supporter," they are openly claiming some identity. Also in politics, in a political discourse, members can claim to be "pacifists" or "true conservatives" and talk about who belongs in each and why.

However, as in Example (1), meaningful associations indirectly create much. Sounds, words, phrases, and forms of speech are constantly linked to certain qualities, notions, social images, and even ideologies. The latter are connected in turn to social groups who are believed to represent or hold them. The whole process reaffirms established social meanings and constantly refashions them in time.

This process is known as indexicality, wherein symbols, although not limited to language, "refer to" or signal things about the immediate surrounding context (Silverstein, 1976, p.54). An illustration is when someone uses "mate" to refer to another person, and may signal a close rapport between them. Moreover, words, phrases, and accents can also be linked to broader social significance. They can be evocative of some qualities, notions, practices, or features customarily associated with some social identities.

A particularly salient way language forms identity is in the case of Sarah Palin, who in 2008 ran for vice president as a Republican candidate in the US and was the governor of Alaska at the time. A key part of her political brand was being portrayed as "regular hockey mom" outside politics in Washington and a plain American.

She played a significant role in reinforcing this personality in her use of language. Each of her words had been explicitly selected to yield what is known as "folksy rhetoric" (Goyette, 2008, p.112) in description, a form of speech for reinforcing populism. The link between personality and language is explained in detail in a blog in The Washington Post after Palin's debut vice-presidential debate against Democratic candidate Joe Biden. In this vice-presidential debate, she used certain forms of speech and gestures to reinforce populism.

Conversation (1)

Well, darnit all, if that dadgum girl (wink wink) didn't beat the tarnation out of Joe Biden. Maverick Sarah Palin fersure surpassed expectations and said everything under the sun, also. Palin is a populist pro. She hit all the notes that resonate with non-elite Americans: family (Hi, Mom and Dad), 'Can I call ya Joe?' personal responsibility, Wall Street greed, children with special need. Her most effective technique was speaking directly to the American people and letting Joe know that's what she was gonna do, doggonit. (Parker, 2008,p.45).

Sarah Palin is portrayed as a populist who works towards being attractive to non-elite Americans. The focus is on how she employs values and traits characteristic of this audience, such as family values, personal responsibility, and opposition to wealthy and influential elites.

Palin's blue-collar background is best illustrated by employing everyday slang words like "darnit all" and "doggonit." Also, in greeting or addressing her opponents in a friendly way, for instance, "Can I call ya Joe?" compared to saying "Joe," she affirms her plain, down-to-earth, and relatable personality.

B- positioning and dialogism

Framing identity as relational and dialogical highlights its social nature and how our own and others' identities are constituted in and through engagement. Identity is created and negotiated as we place ourselves in opposition or conjunction with another in discursive and social space. Frequently, who we are is thought about in opposition to who we are not or who we are like.

Such similarities and distinctions are key in constructing identities, even in cases involving a solitary speaker. Political discourse research constantly proves that creating "us versus them" differences is central in articulating political identities (Wilson, 1990; De Fina, 1995; Van Dijk, 2010). The same oppositional pattern is utilized in other domains since differentiating self and other is central to self-assertion and identity-making.

The relational and interactive nature of making identities is best understood regarding positioning. The concept is applied in some social theories to explain how discourse creates and delineates identities (Fairclough, 1992, p.45). More

recently, however, Davies and Harré (1990, p.47) have given it a fluid and flexible application. Positioning is "the discursive production of a variety of selves" and is presented as a shift away from the fixed idea of social roles.

This definition focuses on two main points:

1. Identities are multiple; they change depending on the social situations and types of discourse people occupy.
2. Identities are relational- people continuously position themselves, are positioned by others, and also position others in interactions.

The theory of positioning is widely applied in research on narrative identities (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p.65). It has particularly come in handy in studying how storytellers shift in and out of identities as narrators, characters in stories, and real human beings in everyday conversations.

However, positioning is not limited to storytelling. It is involved in some form in all discourse because human beings are continually positioned in social or moral stances. It is best observed in arguments and discourse about conflict, but is at work in everyday discourse, including routine and non-argument discourse. The following is an example: two friends greeting each other when I sit in on them.

Conversation (2)

1. J: Louis!
2. L: I was late tonight.
3. J: How are you doing?
4. L: Good how are you?
5. J: You gained some weight.
6. L: (talking to the researcher) Now see he looks good, he looks like
7. the skiing one who just got off the slope.
8. J: I don't, I don't do that.
9. L: You don't do that any more?
10. J: In my time we didn't go to the ski slope.
11. L: @@@
12. J: You know ((...)) my own time.
13. L: That's right.
14. J: We didn't go, we had no automobile.

Joe and Louis greet each other in a friendly way at the start of the transcript. Shortly afterward, Joe utters a statement about Louis having some weight (line 5). Louis responds to this statement by creating a basis for comparing himself and Joe, claiming he is in good shape and calling him "the skiing one" (line 7)-an emergent label for a personal identity.

In calling Joe "the skiing one," Louis implies that Joe is in shape due to skiing, a sport associated with wealth and privilege since skiing is an expensive sport. Joe quickly disputes it and retorts, "I don't do that" (line 8)-an attempt at negating this identification and evading being stereotyped as a skier.

But Louis insists by asking if Joe "don't do that no more" (line 9), suggesting he once went skiing in the past. Joe denies it once more (line 10), and later explains in detail to claim that he and his family "didn't have no car at no time" (line 14). By saying this, Joe once and for all establishes himself as not rich and not elite.

This is just one way identities are in a state of ongoing negotiation- ones can be given, taken away, or assumed in interaction. Identity is not, however, equally negotiable. Identity is formed in some way based upon power relationships, as some can be who they are freely, while others are not given this option.

Therefore, individuals and groups are sometimes relegated to roles they can neither easily dispute nor escape. A good illustration is in media representation, in which portrayals in the public eye can come to have lives of their own and resist alteration. It is especially damaging to marginalized or vulnerable members of society (Briggs, 2007, p.77).

So, positioning should be considered a concept embracing fluidity and fixity in identity. Identities are fluid, while others are imposed and intractable. The relational nature of identity is also manifest in its dialogical nature. Identity is spoken in and through discourse, not in direct speech alone, but in virtual or textual exchanges. In addition, discourse is multiple-voiced, as it engages multiple identities and positions in one discourse.

Sociologist Erving Goffman (1981, p.128) termed this idea of multi-vocality in his theory of "footing." As explained by Goffman, the footing is how speakers and hearers position each other and are positioned in speech. The speaker's role, in line with Goffman, can be divided into three different aspects:

- The animator, who physically presents or speaks the words.
- The sender – the person who creates or builds the message.
- The main – the person whose viewpoint or stance is represented in what is uttered (Goffman, 1981, p.144).

This structure helps to account for how identity is created, not just in content but in who is producing it and how it is being read.

Conversation (3)

(Two coworkers, Mark and Lisa, are chatting in the break room about their weekend plans.)

1. **Mark:** Hey, Lisa! Big plans this weekend?
2. **Lisa:** Oh, you know, just the usual—taking the kids to soccer practice, running errands. What about you?
3. **Mark:** Ah, I wish I had something exciting to say, but it's just me and my dog again. Maybe some Netflix.
4. **Lisa:** Oh, come on! You're always Mr. Chill, just living the bachelor life.
5. **Mark:** Ha! More like Mr. Boring. But hey, someone's gotta do it.
6. **Lisa:** Well, enjoy your peace and quiet. I'll be running around like a crazy mom all weekend.
7. **Mark:** Yeah, sounds like you need a break. I don't envy the soccer practice.
8. **Lisa:** Ha! Trust me, neither do I.

A. Indexicality

Indexicality is one manner in which language indexes membership and identification in society. In this conversation, Mark and Lisa tacitly construct identities from word choice, associations, and interactive style.

- Lisa indirectly signals she is a busy working mother using "the usual," "running errands," and "crazy mom." By invoking a description of her weekend in a manner presupposing communal background information, she indexes a typical parental experience of obligation.
- Mark's "it's just me and my dog"-indexes his status as solitary and having fewer family responsibilities. The "just me and my dog" conjures up solitude, but at the same time, a certain acceptance of having a quiet way of life.
- Lisa employs the label "Mr. Chill" in creating identities. Using this label, she frames Mark's bachelorhood as relaxed and easy-going in opposition to herself as a busy mother.
- His self-deprecating dismissal—"More like Mr. Boring"—plays on Lisa's characterization and redescribes himself as boring in place of being envied. It shows how identity is not predetermined but is negotiated in real time.

In making these exchanges, each speaker constructs and sustains broader social meanings surrounding family and being alone. Lisa uses language to index a busy, responsibility-filled family life, and Mark uses language to index an independent but not as active a form of being.

B. Positioning and Dialogism

Positioning theory explains how we position and are positioned in discourse in society. The dialogue exemplifies self-positioning and other-positioning.

1. Lisa is portrayed as a stressed-out mother

- She continually reminds us about the upheaval in her life ("running around like a crazy mom")
- She is implying that being a parent is exhausting but normal ("the norm").
- Indirectly, she compares herself to Mark's lonely lifestyle and defines her experience as unique.

2. Lisa introduces us to Mark as a free-spirited bachelor

- She uses "Mr. Chill," a name suggesting leisure and easy-going behavior when addressing him.
- That placement aligns Mark with a stereotype of unmarried men as easy-going and uncomplicated.

3. Mark struggles and readjusts himself

- He refuses to be "carefree" and self-describes as "Mr. Boring"
- That subtle reframing suggests being alone is not necessarily fun or glamorous, negating Lisa's initial framing

In addition, there is dialogism, where there are multiple identities in a dialogue occurring in this dialogue. The opposition between Mark's quiet weekend and Lisa's busy lifestyle creates a relational identity dynamic. The identities are created in opposition to one another: busy mother/Lisa and easy-going bachelor/Mark. Each does, though, playfully undermine and reconstruct these identities in self-deprecation and humor.

7. Findings and Discussion:

A significant implication is how positioning and dialogism are involved in constructing identity. Identity is not a fixed quality but is relational, dialogical, and produced in and through engagement. Identity is created as speakers position themselves in opposition or conjunction with others and negotiate themselves in context. Conversational sites are sites for negotiations of identity as speakers appropriate, reject, or rework identities ascribed to them.

1. Paradoxically, though Palin's rhetoric posits anti-elitism, her performance is predicated upon elitist conceptions about what can be considered "genuine" working-class speech. This reveals a contradiction: her identity construction perpetuates those same class dichotomies that she professes not to embrace.

2. Theoretical Connection: Relates to Bourdieu's symbolic violence (1991), whereby subordinated groups internalize and reproduce dominant ideologies to acquire legitimacy.
 3. Populist identities are not just "fluid" but strategically essentialized, which poses ethical questions regarding authenticity in political discourse.
 4. Power dynamics: Lisa's comedy ("running around like a crazy mom") serves as a performance of resistance (deflection of blame for less-than-perfect motherhood) and compliance (enforcement of gendered norms). This double effect indicates Butler's (1990) performativity as subversive and regulatory.
 5. Agency Paradox: The rejection of the "skier" label ("I don't do that") signals agency, but his use of working-class markers ("we did not have an automobile") puts him in a performative loop of authenticity for working-class membership.
 6. Wider Context: To contrast this with research into single dads (e.g., Miller, 2011), in which comparable tropes ("busy dad") are free from chaotic scripting, showing how gender interacts with cultural scripts.
 7. Dialogic tension: The encounter illustrates Bakhtin's heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981), in which Mark's voice conflicts with cultural narratives associating skiing and privilege. His counter-hegemonic challenge dislocates but does not destroy the dominating discourse.
 8. Limits of Fluidity: Mark's capacity for identification refusal is bounded by material conditions (e.g., financial constraints for skiing), making postmodern ideals of unbridled identity play difficult to sustain.
 9. Implication: Fluidity is unevenly distributed because marginalized groups lack the symbolic capital to redefine identity.
 10. Micro-context: Mark's dismissal of "skier" prevails among peers but does not solve macro-level class inequalities.
 11. Macro-context: Palin's discourse taps into national anti-elitist sensibilities but excludes structural obstacles that working-class communities encounter.
- Theoretical Contribution: A scalar approach to identity that nests macro-level structural inertia in micro-level agency.

To systematize the use of these concepts, the revised research includes a thematic matrix:

Positioning	Sociopolitical Implication		
Sarah Palin's rhetoric	"Darnit all" → working-class authenticity	Positions self as "outsider" vs. elites	Populist rhetoric masks elite power structures

Positioning	Sociopolitical Implication		
Mark vs. Louis	"No automobile" → working-class struggle	Mark resists privilege, asserts moral authority	Class identity is policed through interaction
Lisa's "crazy mom"	"Crazy" → gendered labor norms	Positions motherhood as inherently chaotic	Naturalizes unpaid emotional labor for women

Finally, research highlights the interrelationship between power, resistance, and negotiation in forming identities. Identity is produced in discourse but is simultaneously contested and reconstructed in other sites. Some assert agency in creating identities, while some may resist society's ascriptions as inevitable. The media contribution in reinforcing strict identity categories is noteworthy, particularly as mass representations circumscribe individual abilities to redefine identities. However, discourse is still a space in which identities can be re-negotiated, and positioning theory reveals how people actively form, oppose, or transform identity roles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, research on identity in communication has come a long way in recent years. I have outlined some variables informing a new conceptualization of identity, examining how speakers engage and use discourse in context. The key notions- indexicality, positioning, and dialogism- permit us to conceptualize identity as being created in and out of discourse and conversations. I have also mentioned how identity is made in and out of local and global contexts and how there is a need to bridge individual-level engagement in distinct conversations and discourse and larger identity categories in use.

References:

- Bamberg, M. and Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). *Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis*. In A. De Fina and A. Georgakopoulou (eds), 'Narrative analysis in the shift from text to practices'. Special Issue, Text & Talk, 28 (3).
- Bauman, Z. (2005). *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*. London: Open University Press.

- Briggs, C. (2007). *Mediating infanticide: theorizing relations between narrative and violence*. *Cultural Anthropology*, 22 (3).
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davies, B. and Harré, R. (1990). *Positioning: the discursive construction of selves*. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 20.
- De Fina, A. (1995). *Pronominal choice, identity, and solidarity in political discourse*. *Text*, 15 (3).
- _____. (2003). *Identity in Narrative. A Study of Immigrant Discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- _____. (2006). *Group identity, narrative, and self-representations*. In A. De Fina, D. Schiffrin and M. Bamberg (eds). *Discourse and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- _____. (2007a). *Style and stilization in the construction of identities in a card-playing club*. In P. Auer (ed.), *Style and Social Identities: Alternative Approaches to Linguistic Heterogeneity*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- _____. (2007b). *Code switching and ethnicity in a community of practice*. *Language in Society*, 36 (3).
- Erikson, E. (1980). *Identity and the Life Cycle*. New York/London: Norton.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Goyette, B. (2008). *Comment: On Sarah Palin's use of language*. *The McGill Daily*, 30 October, retrieved from: <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/article/5536-comment-on-sarah-palin-s-use>
- Parker, K. (2008). *Views from Post pundits*. *The Washington Post*, 4 October, A17.
- Silverstein, M. (1976). *Shifters, linguistic categories, and cultural description*. In K.A. Basso and H.A. Selby (eds), *Meaning and Anthropology*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Van Dijk, T.A. (2010). *Political identities in parliamentary debates*. In C. Ilie (ed.), *European Parliaments under Scrutiny: Discourse Strategies and Interaction Practices*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Wilson, J. (1990). *Politically Speaking: The Pragmatic Analysis of Political Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Zimmerman, D.H. (1998). *Identity, context, and interaction*. In C. Antaki and S. Widdicombe (eds), *Identities in Talk*. London: Sage.
- _____. and Wieder, D.L. (1970). *Ethnomethodology and the problem of order: comment on Denzin*. In J.D. Douglas (ed.), *Understanding Everyday Life: Toward the Reconstruction of Sociological Knowledge*. Chicago: Aldine.