

京大過去問 1994年 第1問

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People often use a language to signal their membership of particular groups. (1)Social status, sex, age, and the kinds of social networks people belong to turn out to be important dimensions of identity in many communities. I will illustrate the way people use language to signal such affiliations.

Telephone rings.

Pat: Hello.

Caller: Hello, is Mark there?

Pat: Yes. Just hold on a minute.

Pat (to Mark): There's a rather well-educated young lady from Scotland on the phone for you.

When you answer the telephone, you can often make some pretty good guess about various characteristics of the speaker. Pat was able to deduce quite a lot about Mark's caller, even though the caller had said nothing explicitly about herself. Most listeners can identify children's voices without any problem. When the caller is an adult it is usually easy to tell whether a speaker is female or male. (2)If the person has a distinctive regional accent, then their regional origins will be evident even from a short utterance. And it may also be possible to make a reasonable guess about the person's socioeconomic or educational background, as Pat did.

No two people speak exactly the same. There are infinite sources of variation in speech. A sound spectrograph, a machine which represents the sound waves of speech in visual form, shows that even a single vowel may be pronounced in hundreds of minutely different ways, most of which listeners do not even register. (3)Some features of speech, however, are shared by groups, and become important because they differentiate one group from another. Just as different languages often serve a unifying and separating function for their speakers, so do speech characteristics within languages. The pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary of Scottish speakers of English is in some respects quite distinct from that of people from England, for example. Though there is variation within Scotland, there are also some features which perform an overall unifying function. The letter r in words like girl and star is pronounced in a number of

English-speaking areas, and Scotland is certainly one of them. And a Scot is far more likely to say I'll not do it than I won't do it.