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At the same time, we must also keep things in perspective. Changes in primitive belief systems, such as those governing religion, morality, and language, do not take place rapidly. Major changes in ideology can take generations to be realized, and even then there is continued, residual resistance. It has taken generations for the teaching of scientific theories of human development to be implemented in our schools, and there are still pockets of opposition. We cannot realistically expect a different time line for the scientific and humanistic understanding of sociolinguistic diversity. Perhaps the most we can expect is incremental progress as more people gain an understanding of the inevitable, orderly naturalness of language diversity.

While it might be easy to get discouraged about what has not yet changed with respect to the national consciousness about language variation, there are signs that a small movement towards equitable sociolinguistic policies and practice has begun. I personally am thankful that I have had an opportunity to be present at the initial stage of this movement.

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GLOBALIZATION

LANGUAGE AND YOUTH CULTURE

MARY BUCHOLTZ, *Texas A&M University*

One of the richest influences on American speech in the new millennium will certainly be youth culture, the diverse and rapidly changing stylistic practices that many teenagers and young adults draw on in the construction and display of their identities. As an important component of these cultural styles, language constitutes a flexible and omnipresent set of resources. Although styles and situations constantly change, the symbolic use of language to perform identity will endure as long as language itself.

The numerous youth identities that developed in the twentieth century, with their distinctive fashions in clothing, hairstyle, music, dance, and language, were facilitated through the concomitant growth of the mass media. Now at the beginning of the twenty-first century, as we witness the rise of interactive digital media such as the Internet, conditions are even more conducive to the production of innovative styles of youth culture. Language will necessarily take on new forms and uses in a world in which communication has become mediated to a heretofore unprecedented degree. And given that many of the most enthusiastic, expert, and creative users of new media are youth, it is likely that the cultural identities such media make possible will be most closely associated with this age group.

The rapid transmission of culture, and hence language, is perhaps the most obvious effect of the new media. What is often overlooked, however, is that Web-based communication still relies heavily on written language, and thus literacy itself is changing due not only to the medium but also to the needs of a new generation of users. Vernacular literacies developed by and aimed at youth are already evident in cultural documents from musical liner notes to graffiti to zines, and they are equally central to the Web pages, chat rooms, and other forums that support youth culture online. Also noteworthy is the possibility of mediated communication between individuals who might otherwise not have been able to interact. A shared interest in some form of youth culture can unify individuals across lines of nation and language, and despite the fact that standard English predominates as the language of the Internet, the influence of other languages and dialects in youth-centered cyberspaces cannot be ignored.

Likewise, while the widespread dissemination of American popular culture both online and off ensures that English will continue to shape the youth styles of other cultures, far less attention has been paid to the fact that the process of cultural and linguistic borrowing moves in both directions. The urban styles of other areas of the world, especially Asia, are already having a significant impact on American youth, who regularly encounter mediated forms of international youth culture in music, film, and fashion. In addition, transnationalism, new patterns of immigration, and increasingly multicultural populations in urban, rural, and suburban settings across the country create more direct lines of contact through which youth culture and language will reinvent itself in the coming century. While these changes may herald the "new ethnicities" of a panethnic youth culture described by researchers of British youth, it is important to keep in mind that in the North American context, many forms of youth culture are renewed mainly through cultural and linguistic appropriation, leaving unequal racial and ethnic configurations unchanged.

Among the linguistic phenomena most widely investigated in relation to youth culture are slang and sound change. Slang has long been a popular research topic, and clearly it is the most noticeable linguistic component of youth-based identities. Researchers have effectively documented the use and function of slang as an in-group marker, and some scholars have traced the origins of particular slang terms. Still in need of further exploration are questions concerning the use of slang to differentiate youth identities from one another and the process whereby slang is transmitted and transformed in its movement from group to group.

But if slang is remarkable for the rapidity with which it changes, the slower changes associated with phonology have greater linguistic consequences over the long term. Unlike slang, sound change is not age-graded; it is tied not to a life stage but to a generation. Its connections to youth identity may therefore seem more epiphenomenal than explanatory. Yet it is clear that here too youth culture influences language. Scholars have shown that different kinds of youth identities lead to different linguistic outcomes—whether one is a jock or a burnout, a Norteña or a Sureña (to choose two examples from recent ethnographic studies), shapes one's phonological choices as surely as it shapes choices in clothing, hairstyle, and activities. Here phonology is put to work as part of style.

Finally, as youth styles proliferate, we must also take into account those teenagers who opt out of youth culture altogether. Resistance to cultural trends—and to cultural trendiness generally—results in resistance to linguistic trends. Thus while young speakers are often at the leading edge of linguistic change, some teenagers may display a very low rate of participation in those changes most closely linked to youth and trendiness. These resistant speakers, sometimes called “nerds,” enact an alternative to the dominance of youth culture in all its forms.

These varied identities indicate that youth culture is never unitary and that context still matters in the new millennium. In light of global youth culture, it may seem that the investigation of small local communities is no longer necessary or relevant. But youth culture is not a top-down phenomenon. Regardless of the number or source of available linguistic resources, speakers still use language creatively in specific local contexts to achieve particular social and interactional goals, and in the process both language and culture are reshaped to fit new, locally meaningful identities. It is therefore important to study the practices of youth culture ethnographically and to analyze youth language not at a single linguistic level but more comprehensively as a set of stylistic resources that together produce a multitude of age-based identities. In allowing researchers to see youth

culture and language as emergent and ever-shifting local practices, such methods promise to have continuing utility well into the new millennium.

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THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF AMERICAN ENGLISH: TWO CHALLENGES

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Driving through rural eastern North Carolina in June 2000, I noted the following sign promoting the sale of double-wide "mobile" homes:

Tres dormitorios! Dos banos! [*sic*] \$199 mes!

Such a sign today would perhaps not surprise a resident of southern Texas or southern Florida, but the use of Spanish as an advertising medium in small towns of the American South is definitely something new, and it illustrates well one of two aspects of the internationalization of American English that students of the speechways of North America will necessarily confront in the next quarter century. True, immigration has for generations brought the United States a rich linguistic heritage, one that long predates the current influx of Spanish-speaking new residents; at various times and places, bilingual and multilingual communities have existed in the United States (as they still do). However, linguistic assimilation has generally brought about a gradual decline in the immigrant tongues and the concomitant rise of English. It is possible that the interaction of English and Spanish will eventually go that same way. But whatever the outcome, at least during the next quarter century the United States will almost certainly continue to move in what is for us the essentially new direction of becoming a bilingual COUNTRY, rather than just a country that contains various bilingual communities. Sociolinguists of both the applied and theoretical sort will have a lot to do in studying the various phenomena of Spanish-English contact and easing the transition. Whatever social and political