
“I Meant to Say That”: How Adult Language Learners Construct Positive Identities Through Nonstandard Language Use

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The aim of this article is to raise awareness in L2 education about the relationship between second-language learners' linguistic choices in the L2 and their identities. The author reviews empirical research and language-learning narratives that show that L2 learners may purposely use nonstandard L2 forms. Using a poststructuralist framework to conceptualize identity, the author argues that these second-language learners use nonstandard language in the L2 in order to create positive identities, and in some cases to resist social inequalities, in the L2 community. The implications of this research for second-language teachers are discussed and suggestions for classroom practice are offered.

Cet article a comme objectif de conscientiser le milieu d'enseignement en langue seconde quant au rapport entre les choix linguistiques que font les apprenants dans leur L2, d'une part, et leur identité, d'autre part. L'auteure passe en revue des récits portant sur l'apprentissage d'une L2 et des recherches empiriques qui indiquent que les apprenants en L2 choisissent parfois d'employer des formes non standard ou populaires dans leur L2. S'appuyant sur un cadre poststructuraliste pour conceper l'identité, l'auteure fait valoir son point de vue selon lequel les apprenants de L2 emploient un langage populaire dans leur L2 pour se créer, au sein de la communauté de langue seconde, une identité positive et, dans certains cas, résister à des inégalités sociales. L'article se termine par une discussion des conséquences de cette recherche pour les enseignants en langue seconde et la présentation de suggestions pour la pratique en salle de classe.

Introduction: Error Correction and Additional Language-Learner Identity

Additional language (AL)¹ instructors are often faced with the task of identifying and correcting learners' errors. Considerable attention has been paid in pedagogical research and teacher education to when and how teachers should give error feedback to learners (Chaudron, 1977; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). However, this focus on timing and method, although valuable, may not be enough to help AL teachers fully deal with the

complex endeavor of error correction. The question of what kinds of utterances should be corrected in the first place also merits our attention.

Language instructors whose students wish to improve in several areas of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) may be concerned not only about errors of form, but also about sociolinguistic and pragmatic errors. They may endeavor not only to help learners be intelligible in the AL, but also to communicate in ways that seem appropriate to their interlocutors. In other words, these teachers may correct utterances that seem inappropriate considering factors such as learners' age or sex, the context of interaction, and cultural norms, thinking that such corrections will help learners to give positive impressions of themselves in the AL. Teachers who are concerned about discrimination based on nonnative accent may also attempt to correct intelligible but "accented" pronunciation.

Indeed, helping learners to create positive impressions of themselves in the AL—which may involve helping them to approximate the standard dialect—is an important responsibility of AL instructors. However, I suggest here that correcting nonstandard utterances of AL learners may also in certain cases be damaging to learners' identities. A number of empirical studies and personal narratives, to which I turn below, show that learners do not in all cases wish to emulate native speakers of the standard AL. In fact, this research indicates that AL learners may purposely reject certain AL variants.²

There has been increasing interest in the relationship between additional language and identity in applied linguistics research (*Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, 2003-present; *TESOL Quarterly*, 31[3], 1997; *TESOL Quarterly*, 33[3], 1999; *Linguistics and Education*, 8[1],(2), 1996; *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 5[3], 2001; Norton, 2000). However, the research has mainly focused on how multilinguals construct desired identities in certain contexts by using one of their languages instead of another (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Pavlenko & Piller, 2001). It has also focused on how language learners resist social inequalities in the AL community by using their native language when the AL is called for (Heller, 1996; Lin, 2000; Miller, 2000) or by claiming their right to be heard in the AL despite their "nonnative" status (Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko, 2001). There has been little consideration of how AL learners may negotiate their identities through the purposeful rejection of standard AL forms. Although a small number of studies have investigated this subject (which I discuss in detail below), I have seen little attention to the relationship between identity and choice of AL forms by language learners in literature for AL educators. This article aims to bring the trends in this research and their pedagogical implications to the attention of AL instructors.

Focus: A Subset of AL Learners

In this article, I focus on teenage and adult AL learners as opposed to child AL learners or proficient bilinguals or multilinguals. My focus on teenagers and adults stems from my interest in the conflicts of identity that may arise for individuals who are learning an AL later in their lives: those whose primary languages³ (native or first language) have already had a significant influence.

I also limit the current investigation to learners who do not see themselves as belonging to a social group whose members use an indigenized variety of English (such as Indian English, Singapore English, and Filipino English). A thorough discussion of why language educators and researchers concerned with indigenized varieties of English should steer away from native-speaker models is provided elsewhere (Sridhar & Sridhar, 1994).

Theoretical Framework

Identity Defined

Borrowing Weedon's (1997) definition, I take *identity* to mean "[the individual's] sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (p. 32). Various scholars have defined identity more precisely in terms of social group membership (Giles & Johnson, 1981; Pavlenko, 2001; Tajfel, 1974). Social group membership is indeed one important element of an individual's identity; however, I believe that learners' use of an AL is related not only to their sense of themselves as members of socially recognizable groups such as Canadians, women, Blacks, and so forth, but also to their sense of themselves as *individuals* with characteristics such as *polite*, *competent Japanese speaker*, and *mature*. Therefore, I use Weedon's definition of identity, taking it to mean both an individual's sense of membership in a particular social group and what Ting-Toomey (1999) called "personal identity," an individual's sense of himself or herself as a unique individual.

Identity and Language

Although a number of theories attempt to explain the relationship between identity and language (e.g., variationist sociolinguistics, the social psychological paradigm, among others), poststructuralist theories seem to be the most useful in understanding the relationship between AL learners' identities and the AL variants that they use. For poststructuralists, identity is not something that people have, but something that people construct through their behavior and, more specifically, through their language (Butler, 1990; Weedon, 1997). The premise is that identity is fluid and is always in the process of being formed (Weedon). Every time individuals speak, their use of particular linguistic variants shapes how others see them and how they see themselves.

If language is the site of identity construction, then identity must also be context-dependent and multiple (Norton Peirce, 1995). From this point of view, people expose and create different aspects of their identities in different situations. Moreover, because identity is multiple, it is also contradictory, because some aspects of a person's identity may conflict with others (Butler, 1990; Weedon, 1997). Identity is also taken to be a "site of struggle" (Norton Peirce) because individuals continually attempt to define themselves while social discourses continually redefine them (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001).

In this article, I write under the assumption that identity is constructed in language, and that it is flexible, multiple, and a site of struggle.

The Importance of Standard and Native-Like Language

As suggested above, AL learners do not necessarily wish to use only standard, native-like variants in the AL. Some learners may in certain situations reject particular standard variants in favour of variants of a nondominant AL dialect (e.g., an ethnic or regional variety) or variants of their primary language (PL). However, this is not to say that learners should not learn and be taught the standard dialect or that instructors should allow all instances of transfer from the PL. On the contrary, it is vital that learners become familiar with the standard AL dialect.

There are several reasons for this. Immigrants or learners temporarily in an AL community know that speaking "like a native" may enhance their abilities to build personal relationships with other AL speakers.⁴ Numerous studies show that both native and nonnative speakers may have unfavourable opinions of AL learners who make sociolinguistic or pragmatic errors or have nonnative accents (Fayer & Krasinski, 1987, Lindemann, 2002; Munro, 2003; Pavlenko, 2001). For learners in an AL community, these personal relationships may be necessary not only for emotional well-being, but also for access to the material resources that they need to succeed in the new country (Norton, 2000). Although using the AL "like a native" may not be a priority for AL learners who do not wish to live in an AL community—those who are learning an AL for international communication, for example—being intelligible is. These learners know that using too many variants from their PL in an AL is likely to reduce their intelligibility. Finally, adult AL learners, whether learning an AL as a foreign, second, or international language, are aware that learning a standard AL dialect is beneficial because of its "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, 1991) or its "ability to provide access to more prestigious forms of education and desired positions in the workforce or on the social mobility ladder" (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 283).

The Negotiation of Adult AL Learner Identities Through AL Variants: Findings of Empirical Studies and Personal Narratives

Although there are several benefits to using standard AL variants and the use of nonstandard variants is often stigmatized, the studies that I consider below show that AL learners may consciously use nonstandard AL variants. As a group, these studies suggest that AL learners may purposely use nonstandard variants because these variants help them to create what to them are positive identities in the AL. I use the term *positive* rather than *ideal* because AL learners may be limited in terms of the identities that they are able to choose. We see that because AL learners are faced with conflicting social discourses from at least two languages (the AL and PL), various aspects of their identities come to be in conflict. We also see that because of these conflicts, learners may wish to choose nonstandard variants, but choose standard variants.

Transfer of PL Variants to an AL

The following studies show that some AL learners purposely transfer variants from their PL into the AL.⁵ It seems that these learners feel more comfortable—or more “like themselves”—in some cases using PL variants than they would if they used AL variants. In some situations, learners may even use PL variants in the AL as a way of resisting what they perceive as social inequalities in the AL community.

Vocal, lexical, and pragmatic variants. A study by Ohara (2000) shows that some United States women learning Japanese used pitch to negotiate their identities in Japan. More specifically, these women constructed positive identities for themselves in Japanese by using a lower pitch than is expected of them as female speakers. A detailed look at Ohara’s study offers insight into the relationship between pitch and identity in Japan.

Ohara’s (2000) study was motivated by earlier studies that revealed that some Japanese women fluent in English used higher voice pitch in Japanese than in English. The author argues that this is because in Japanese, a high-pitched voice connotes a variety of characteristics associated with Japanese femininity such as cuteness, weakness, and politeness. Ohara’s study was an attempt to see whether the opposite is also the case—whether English-speaking learners of Japanese “employ a higher pitch when speaking Japanese in order to satisfy cultural expectations” (p. 234).

To answer this question, the researcher interviewed and recorded the voices of 10 female Japanese learners with English as their PL in a variety of English and Japanese speaking tasks. Five were beginning learners who had never lived in Japan and the other five were advanced learners who had lived at least one year in Japan. She found that among the five learners who

were aware of the social significance of pitch in Japan, only three used a higher pitch in Japanese than in English.

Ohara (2000) turns to her interview data to explain these results. The two women who did not raise their pitch in Japanese both stressed that despite wanting to be accepted by Japanese people, they did not feel comfortable raising their pitch. One woman claimed that this was because to her, using a high-pitched voice was unnatural and fake and she wanted to “use her natural voice” (pp. 244-245). The other emphasized that for her, the use of high pitch by Japanese women made them seem immature. These learners carefully considered the impression that their use of a high pitch would give to others. It seems that this impression—as “fake woman” or “immature woman”—was not consistent with the identities that they wished to construct in Japanese.

For one of the learners in this study (Ohara, 2000), refusing to use the pitch expected of her in Japan was a way of creating a positive identity, but also a way of resisting gender inequalities that she saw in Japan. This learner said that she purposely did not use a high pitch in Japanese because she believed that the use of a high pitch by Japanese women contributed to their oppression by Japanese men. She explained:

I feel bad for Japanese women because men treat them so poorly sometimes, and I can understand how it would be so difficult for them to break out of their traditional roles. But even so, I think by willingly taking on such a cute way of acting and using language they contribute very much to being treated that way. (p. 246)

For this woman, resisting gender inequality in Japan meant using a nonstandard pitch in Japanese.

The three women who did raise their pitch in Japanese also mentioned a resistance to doing so. But for them, the desire to be accepted by Japanese people outweighed their negative feelings about using a high pitch. One of the three clearly expressed that her use of a high pitch despite her aversion to it, was fueled by a desire to use appropriate Japanese: “It’s not like I enjoy talking in a high pitched voice but it’s like you kind of have to do that when speaking in Japanese” (Ohara, 2000, p. 243).

The feelings of these learners remind us of the conflict that AL learners may feel when learning a language with a different social organization than their PL. The desire to be accepted by Japanese people and to speak correct Japanese was a strong motivation for these women to use a high pitch. On the other hand, their desire to create identities that were acceptable to them and to feel equal to Japanese men encouraged them to use a low pitch.

Research by Siegal (1994, 1995, 1996) on Western women learning Japanese complements Ohara’s (2000) findings. Like Ohara, Siegal demonstrates that some Western women learning Japanese resisted inequality and created

positive identities for themselves by using nonstandard variants in Japanese, including nonstandard pitch. But Siegal's informants did this also by avoiding particles and exclamations associated with Japanese women's language.

During her ethnographic research of four white Western women learning Japanese in Japan, Siegal (1994) found that two of the women—who each had intermediate to advanced Japanese proficiency—purposely avoided some elements of Japanese language. Arina, a 25-year-old native Hungarian speaker, explained her dislike of humble Japanese women's language when referring to a female Japanese acquaintance: "I cannot stand the way she talks. She is so humble all the time. I don't want to be that humble. I am just going to stick with the [polite form], it is polite and safe" (p. 647). Whereas she saw Japanese women's language as redundant, she thought Japanese men's language was "direct and clean" (p. 647). This is perhaps why she avoided the prefix *o*, associated with Japanese women's language, even after being chastised for doing so by a Japanese male acquaintance.

The other woman in Siegal's (1994) ethnographic research who showed resistance to Japanese women's language was Sally, a 21-year-old Western woman. She expressed her dislike of the high-pitched voice, enthusiastic demeanor and exclamations (*sugoi ne!* [that's great!], *kirei ne!* [that's beautiful!]) associated with young Japanese women's language. For her, these elements of the speech of young Japanese women seemed "babyish," "irritating," and "unnatural" (p. 645). Although she admitted that this language was perhaps natural for young Japanese women, she mentioned trying but not being able to continue to use this language herself. She seemed particularly troubled by her observation that some young women were "not saying anything deep or meaningful about [the subject]" (p. 645) and that they changed their demeanor and language around men. Although Sally and Arina did not express feeling a conflict between using Japanese appropriately and using language that suited their identities, Sally did mention to Siegal that a friend of hers had such a concern. When Sally asked her friend why she used what to Sally seemed silly and childish women's expressions and demeanor, her friend replied that "she didn't like it either but she felt that she had to ... it's what's expected of you" (p. 645).

Ogulnick (1998), a US applied linguist, describes a similar experience to that of the participants in Ohara's (2000) and Siegal's (1994, 1995, 1996) work in her personal account of learning Japanese in Japan. She expresses her initial desire "to fit into the culture as much as possible," which led her to use variants (e.g., low volume, high pitch, tentativeness) that she was uncomfortable using but that were expected of her. The conflict between her desire to fit in and her desire to maintain an identity as a strong woman is obvious: "My desire to be accepted and recognized as a speaker of Japanese overpowered any subconscious resistance I may have had to complying with what I perceived as submissive behaviour" (p. 135). However, she also

describes how her feelings changed over time as she gained more experience interacting in Japanese. At a later point in her stay in Japan, she resisted using standard variants despite her desire to be accepted in Japan because she saw these variants as contributing to gender inequality and her own possible oppression by Japanese men. She describes her feelings:

[I had a] strong internal sense ... when I first went to Japan to find my place among a group of women, even if it meant having to change the way I looked, acted and spoke. Conversely, I became more resistant to speaking “like a woman,” or *kirei na nihongo* [pretty Japanese] when I sensed that, by doing so, I was submitting to patriarchal control. (p. 105)

Like the participants in Ohara’s and Siegal’s work, Ogulnick negotiated an identity in Japanese by using standard and nonstandard variants.

In her autobiographical reflection on language and culture, Mori (1997), a Japanese woman who emigrated to the US in her 20s, expresses similar feelings about Japanese to those expressed by the women mentioned above. The conflict between using appropriate language and language that reflects one’s identity is obvious in her words.

Every word I say [in Japanese] forces me to be elaborately polite, indirect, submissive, and unassertive. There is no way I can sound intelligent, clearheaded, or decisive. But if I did not speak a “proper” feminine language, I would sound stupid in another way—like someone who is uneducated, insensitive, and rude, and therefore cannot be taken seriously. (p. 12)

Although Mori is a native Japanese speaker (and not an AL learner of Japanese), her perspective adds to our understanding of women’s feelings about Japanese forms.

Millison (2000), in a personal narrative about his experience as an American learning Mandarin, living in China, and interacting with Chinese in-laws, also writes about his uneasiness when using some of the standard variants in his AL. Like the women discussed above, he felt a clash between his identity and ways of speaking that were expected of him by the AL community. He articulates his resistance to the hierarchy and indirectness in the pragmatic conventions of this language: “Evasion, submission, and yielding still grate against my sense of myself as an outspoken American who says what he means in a culture that values emotional transparency [sic] and openness” (p. 150). Kasper and Zhang (1995) report a similar case of an American woman learning Mandarin who found Mandarin address terms for adult women offensive.

The female Japanese and Mandarin learners discussed here were uneasy using standard variants that they felt positioned them as tentative and inferior because of their sex, and the male Mandarin learner felt conflicted

using Mandarin variants that to him positioned him as tentative and inferior because of his age and his status vis-à-vis his in-laws.⁶

Phonological variants. A study by Gatbonton (1975, as cited in Dowd, Zuengler, & Berkowitz, 1990) reveals the possibility that some French-speaking Canadian learners of English may transfer phonological variants from French into English for reasons related to their identities. Looking at the English development of both “nationalistic” (having strong pro-French attitudes) and “non-nationalistic” (having strong pro-English attitudes) learners, she found “a significantly higher development for both /___/ and /___/ among the *non-nationalistic* learners” (p. 19, emphasis in original). Although there are a number of reasons not related to identity for which this might be the case (e.g., non-nationalistic learners have more contact with English speakers and/or more exposure to English materials), it is possible that nationalistic learners deliberately used nonstandard pronunciation. This argument, although speculative, is not unreasonable given Gatbonton’s findings about the attitudes of *listeners* toward French-accented English speech. As revealed in a later report on Gatbonton’s results, “the non[French]-accented speakers (and in most cases the moderately [French]-accented speakers as well) were judged to be significantly more pro-Anglophone and less pro-Francophone than the heavily [French]-accented speakers” (Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, in press). It is possible that French-speaking Canadian nationalistic learners of English, knowing about the perceptions of others about French accent and nationalism, purposely avoided standard pronunciation and transferred French phonological variants into their English speech to project a pro-French identity. This would make sense considering that the research was done in the 1970s, a time when there was a threat to the French language in Quebec and an obvious tension between Anglophones and Francophones. It is also possible, as Gatbonton et al. (in press) suggest, that these AL learners did not consciously transfer PL variants into the AL, but strove to improve their English pronunciation only enough to be intelligible. In other words, these English learners may not have seen the point of aiming for native-like pronunciation when “the only ‘reward’ for doing so [was] aspersions on their group loyalty.”

Abercrombie (1949) tells a few interesting anecdotes that also reveal that some learners deliberately transfer phonological variants from their PL to the AL. The daughters of one of his colleagues, who had been educated in France, admitted that they used English-accented French in their British schools because “life at school would be intolerable if they were to use in class the kind of French they used in France” (p. 119). Abercrombie also mentions a conversation that he had with some Egyptian students of English who preferred not to use the British vowel sounds that they had been taught in class. They said that they did not want their friends to hear them speaking in what to them was an affected way.

Surveys have also shown that some AL learners prefer to maintain an accent from their PL in an AL. Benson (1991) asked 311 freshmen at a Japanese university, "Which kind of English would you like to be able to speak well?" He found that although 47.3% chose American English, 24.1% of students preferred "English with a Japanese accent" (p. 41). A survey by Porter and Garvin (1989, cited in Jenkins, 2000) also showed that some learners of English preferred to maintain their (PL) accents rather than adopting native-like pronunciation.

In this section, I examine empirical studies and language learning narratives that suggest that learners of Japanese, Mandarin, and English may use nonstandard variants in the AL. Work by Ohara (2000), Siegal (1994, 1995, 1996), Ogulnick (1998), Millison (2000), and Kasper and Zhang (1995) suggests that Western learners of some Asian languages may be uncomfortable using standard variants in these languages because they feel that these variants position them as inferior, weak, or indecisive. These learners may transfer variants of pitch, register, and pragmatics from their PL into the AL or simply avoid AL variants such as gendered particles or address terms. The data also reveal that although some Western learners may be uncomfortable using standard Asian variants, they may do so anyway because of their desire to be accepted and gain social (and perhaps material) benefits in the AL community.

The work of Gatbonton (1975), Gatbonton et al. (in press), Abercrombie (1949), Benson (1991), and Porter and Garvin (1989) suggests that AL learners may wish to keep their PL accents as a signal to listeners of their linguistic background, political leanings, or group solidarity. These studies reveal that learners of English may transfer phonological variants from their PL (French, Arabic, Japanese) into the AL.

Variants of a Recognized Nondominant Dialect

The studies in this section, like those above, reveal that some AL learners consciously use nonstandard variants to construct positive identities in the AL. In the following studies, learners do not transfer variants from their PL, however, but use variants of a nondominant dialect.

Ibrahim (1999) shows that Black English (BE) may be a linguistic target for some English learners in North America. After a six-month ethnographic study of 16 Black immigrant youths from Africa at an urban Canadian high school, he concluded that some of his participants used BE as a way of constructing positive racial identities in their new environment.

More specifically, Ibrahim (1999) found that many of his male informants were attempting to learn and use Black Stylized English (BSE), a subcategory of BE. These youths tended to use grammatical variants typical of BE such as distributive *be* and negative concord, which they learned from African-American rap and hip-hop music. He suggests that they chose to adopt this English dialect because they saw themselves "mirrored" in African-

American pop culture. According to those who used BSE, they identified with the purveyors of African-American pop culture because of genetic connections and because they shared similar racist and race-mediated experiences. One BSE user suggested that a Black person using standard English would be as strange as a Black person playing country music.

Especially interesting about this study is that the learners who decided to use variants of BE to signal their Blackness did not identify themselves as Black before arriving in Canada. Ibrahim (1999), himself an immigrant from Africa, explains that in Sudan his Blackness was not a salient aspect of his identity. It was only when he arrived in Canada that his race was highlighted—as he was positioned as Black by others—and he developed an identity as Black. Ibrahim sees his research participants as experiencing the same shifts in identity in the North American social world. For him these youths make a place for themselves in Canada by “becoming Black” (p. 354). They create an identity that North Americans understand by using BE variants.

We can see that these youths are limited in terms of the ethnic identities they can construct in Canada. Although many of the youths were from Somalia, they could not, for example, construct identities as Somali, because Somali is not a widely recognized identity in Canada that can be signalled through English variants. Pavlenko (2001), in her investigation of the autobiographies of bilingual writers in the US, found that some of the authors who were immigrants to the US encountered the same limitations. She notes,

Many authors ... suggest that certain ethnic identities may be hard or even impossible to perform in the U.S.A. context. Thus new arrivals may face the fact that their own identity categories are meaningless to the members of their new community and that they have to reposition themselves (or to allow others to reposition them) in order to be “meaningful” in the new environment. (p. 331)

So the teenaged boys used BE to construct positive, though not ideal identities. In North America, they recognized that they were positioned as Black by others. Instead of resisting this positioning, Ibrahim argues, they took pride in these identities and strengthened them by choosing BE variants. In this way, they collaborated with the mainstream by positioning themselves as Black, but at the same time resisted social inequalities by celebrating Blackness (Ibrahim, 1999).

Ibrahim’s (1999) study also shows that the identities available to the young African women were more limited than those available to the young men. He notes that although the younger African girls in his ethnography used some variants of BE, the older girls used mainly variants of plain Canadian English (the dominant dialect). He proposes that this was because the hip-hop and rap music from which the boys learned BE and with which BE is associated often contains sexist language. Although the girls may have

wished to create positive identities as Black, they may have found that they were not able to do so without compromising their identities as respectable young women. They were limited in their ability to construct both positive racial and gender identities.

An earlier study by Goldstein (1987) also shows that AL learners may use variants of a nondominant dialect. Like the learners in Ibrahim's (1999) study, Goldstein's participants used variants of BE, but unlike Ibrahim's participants, they were not Black. The participants in Goldstein's study were all Latin Americans with Spanish as their PL.

Goldstein's (1987) participants were 28 teenage males who were learning English. The purpose of the study was to find out why those who used BE variants did so. The researcher used statistical methods to find the relationship between learners' use of two BE variants (negative concord and distributive *be*) and first, "extent of contact with Black Americans," and second, "feelings of identification with Black Americans" (p. 421). Extent of contact and feelings of identification were determined through a multiple-choice questionnaire.

Goldstein (1987) reports that although there was a significant correlation between *extent of contact with Black Americans* and BE, there was no correlation between the learners' identification with Blacks and their use of BE. Although the researcher proposes that this unexpected result may have come from faulty methodology or an inaccurate measurement of *identification with Black Americans*, I would argue that it may in fact be accurate. Her participants may have used BE for reasons related to their identities, but not as Blacks. One idea is that they used BE to signal their "coolness." Reporting on a comparable study of children aged 11-13, Poplack (1978) argues that Puerto Rican learners of English who had almost no contact with Black Americans used BE because of its "covert prestige" (p. 101). Similarly, Cutler (1999) argues that the White teenager in her ethnography used BE as a symbol not of Blackness, but of a commodified ("hip") lifestyle. Another idea is that Goldstein's participants may have used BE as a way of distancing themselves from mainstream (white) culture, but at the same time, avoiding the stigma of sounding like nonnative speakers. They may have used BE to construct positive identities from among those available to them in English. Whatever the reasons, it is clear that the learners in Goldstein's study chose Black English over the standard dialect.

The studies in this section suggest that AL learners may project positive identities for themselves by using variants of a nondominant AL dialect. Research by Ibrahim (1999) and Goldstein (1987) reveals that some African and Hispanic learners of English learned and used Black English as a way of constructing "Black" and perhaps, "hip" or "nonwhite" identities. As I propose in the above section, although these English learners may not have

been able to construct ideal identities in the AL, they constructed positive identities with the resources that were available to them.

Contexts of AL Use and Consequences of Variant Choices

We see that AL learners may make AL variant choices based on how particular variants affect their identities. However, it is important to note that AL learners are not always free to make such choices. The material or social consequences of using particular variants—regardless of how these variants affect learners' identities—may leave learners no choice but to avoid them.

As mentioned above, immigrants and sojourners in AL countries may find that the material and social benefits of using standard and native-like AL variants far outweigh the potential gains to their identities of using nonstandard language. Research on public attitudes in Canada, the US, and Australia has shown that some residents of these three countries are intolerant toward those with noticeable PL influences in their AL (Tse, 2001; Cummins, 1990; Miller, 2000). In fact, in interviews with 100 adult immigrant AL learners in Edmonton, Derwing (2003) found that although there were accounts of acceptance and patience, there were many more accounts of discrimination or rudeness that were thought to be related to learners' accented English. This intolerance may be why 95% of the learners in this study stated that they wished to develop native-like English pronunciation. It could also be because these learners were able to continue interacting in their PL and saw it, not English, as a medium to express their ethnic identities.

However, not all countries are generally intolerant toward deviations from standard or native-like language. Some of the learners in Ohara's (2000) study mentioned that they were "allowed" to resist Japanese norms. One woman was told by her host mother that because she was a foreigner, she was not expected to speak in a feminine way. Another noted that despite using her "natural voice" in Japanese, she "was able to make many very good Japanese friends" (p. 245). Scholars interested in Japan (Siegal, 1996; Loveday, 1982) have also expressed the idea that Japanese people have low expectations of the Japanese proficiency of Caucasians. Had these women been ostracized in their host society for using their normal pitch, they might have decided to raise it.

On the other hand, some female AL learners have had more to worry about in choosing AL variants than being understood and accepted. Sexual harassment and aggression has had an influence on the variants that some women have chosen. Ohara (2000) mentions that one of the three women in her study who generally raised her pitch in Japanese did not necessarily do so in all contexts. The learner explained:

At some *enkai* [parties] when some of the older men employees would get drunk and try to act a little too friendly, I made sure I changed my

mannerisms and actions so they would know I didn't like that kind of stuff ... I was not conscious of lowering the pitch of my voice, but I am sure I did that too. (p. 246)

Had this learner used standard variants in this situation, she might have encouraged her male interlocutors in their mistreatment of her. One of Siegal's (1994) participants, Sally, was also the victim of sexual harassment. This may have been one reason why she had negative feelings about variants of Japanese women's language that to her seemed childish or passive. Ehrlich's (2000) overview of studies that document the sexual harassment or abuse of female AL learners indicates clearly that such experiences are not uncommon.

Because of the consequences of particular AL variant choices in varying contexts, identity negotiation may be a secondary concern for some AL learners. Social acceptance and safety may encourage AL learners in certain contexts to choose particular variants instead of others.

Implications for AL Education

I show that AL learners may purposely use nonstandard variants in an AL, either variants from their PL or from a nondominant dialect. I also argue that AL learners may use nonstandard variants in particular situations because in so doing they may construct positive identities or resist being positioned as unequal in the AL community. These findings have a number of implications for AL education.

Nonstandard Variants Are Not Necessarily Mistakes

First, AL teachers should keep in mind (and perhaps discuss with their students) that standard variants are not linguistically superior to nondominant variants, but have achieved or been assigned a higher status because of their use by powerful social groups (Milroy & Milroy, 1991). Smitherman and Cunningham (1997) propose that regular classroom teachers help their African-American students understand that Black English is not *bad* English by discussing in class the history of English dialects and the sociopolitical factors influencing their relative prestige. AL teachers whose students may be interested in (or misinformed about) nondominant dialects may find it useful to do something similar in their AL classrooms.

Second, AL teachers should be aware that what may seem like a mistake may in fact be a learner's deliberate expression of her or his identity. This is not to say that teachers should stop correcting mistakes. Nor am I suggesting that language instructors ought to know the difference between purposeful and unintentional mistakes. I am simply suggesting that teachers be open to the possibility of resistance to the standard. Of course, if an AL learner is unintelligible, correction is necessary. But because we are speaking here of

variants—linguistic forms with the same literal meanings—the substitution of one variant for another should not affect learners' intelligibility.⁷

On the other hand, it is important to remember that learners' use of nonstandard variants may be misinterpreted by listeners. Listeners may misjudge AL learners (as rude, childish, or uneducated, for example) if these learners use variants that are not expected of them in certain contexts and as (perceived) members of particular social groups (Gumperz, 1982). Therefore, teachers should explore with learners possible interpretations of relevant nonstandard variants.

AL Learners May Negotiate Their Identities Through Nonstandard Variants

AL educators who are interested in helping learners build positive identities in the AL may wish to encourage students to express any negative feelings they may have about particular AL variants. Following Norton Peirce (1995), I would suggest that such teachers encourage learners to keep diaries of their AL interactions, noting surprising occurrences or others that made them uncomfortable. Teachers can collect these diaries periodically and use students' observations to structure future class discussions. During such discussions, teachers can help learners to discover the social meanings and consequences of using particular standard and nonstandard variants in the AL community. Another idea would be for teachers to use learners' diaries to create scenarios in which learners have to imagine themselves and decide what they would say and how. Teachers may, for example, have learners consider an interaction between an AL speaker and an AL learner in which one or the other was made to feel uncomfortable and then discuss what might have caused the problem (Dunnett, Dubin, & Lezberg, 1986).

Code-Switching Can Be a Useful Tool for Learners

AL teachers and learners should consider the benefits of code-switching—using either standard or nonstandard variants of a particular linguistic unit (e.g., high or low pitch, *am* or *be* as in *I am going* or *I be going*) according to the context of interaction. Smitherman and Cunningham (1997) recommend that Black students (with English as a PL) be encouraged to code-switch between Black English and Standard English using one or the other depending on the context of interaction. I would suggest that AL learners could also benefit from learning to code-switch. They may code-switch between PL variants and native variants or between variants of the dominant dialect and variants of a nondominant dialect depending on the context of interaction and the social and economic consequences of using one or the other. Some AL learners, like the young Hispanic learners in Goldstein's (1987) study, may even learn to code-switch on their own.

Power is Created and Reproduced in Language

As shown above, AL learners may feel that social inequalities are reflected in particular AL variants. But what do we do with this information if we as AL speakers and AL teachers do not see such inequalities ourselves? We may suppose that AL learners perceive inequalities where they do not exist because of being biased by their PL cultures. On the other hand, it is important to consider that AL learners may have special insights into power relations reproduced in language that are invisible to AL speakers.⁸ Although this is a complex matter and may not be easily dealt with in the classroom, AL teachers should keep in mind that power is created and reproduced in language. As Norton (2000) notes,

While it is important for language learners to understand what Hymes (1979) calls the “rules of use” of the target language, it is equally important for them to explore whose interests these rules serve. What is considered appropriate usage is not self-evident (Bourne, 1988), but must be understood with reference to inequitable relations of power between interlocutors. (p.16)

As educators, we should ask ourselves: When we are teaching standard variants, are we in fact teaching some learners how to be oppressed in the AL community? For example, when Japanese educators teach women to use a high pitch or the honorific register in Japanese, are they teaching these women to sound weak and consequently to be weak in Japanese communities? When English teachers teach students that double negatives are incorrect, are they teaching them that African Americans who use Black English are uneducated or unintelligent?

The way to proceed seems to be not to tell learners which variants to use and which not to use, but to show learners their options. Our job as teachers is not to tell learners how to speak in the AL (and thus who to become), but to examine with them their choices and the potential consequences of these choices.

Concluding Remarks

The studies and personal narratives reviewed in this article focus mainly on the experiences and feelings of Western learners of Japanese and Mandarin and African and Hispanic learners of English. Although these learners represent a minute proportion of AL learners worldwide, their experiences are valuable because they raise our awareness of the intricate relationship between identity and AL variants and of the possibility that other AL learners may encounter similar issues. Needless to say, future research in this area that considers learners of other languages and learners with other backgrounds will be a valuable addition to our understanding of AL learning and identity.

Notes

¹In this article, I use the term *additional language (AL)* instead of *second language* or *foreign language*. This is because I consider here language learning in both second-language and foreign-language situations. It is also because I recognize the problematic implications of the term *second language* (discussed elsewhere, see Jenkins, 2000).

²I borrow the term *variants* from variationist sociolinguistics, which takes as a premise that there exist in a language different grammatical, lexical, and phonological forms (variants) with the same literal meaning (Chambers, 2002). For example, in English, the words *car* and *automobile* are different lexical variants of the same object. However, whereas variationist sociolinguistics is interested in the different variants that native speakers use in their native language, I use variants to refer to the different linguistic forms with the same literal meaning that adult AL learners use in the AL. I also consider not only grammatical, lexical, and phonological variants, but also pragmatic variants.

³I use the term *primary language (PL)* instead of *native language* or *first language* because of the problematic implications of the latter two terms (see Jenkins, 2000, for a detailed discussion of these terms).

⁴I use the term *AL speakers* to mean both native speakers and nonnative speakers of an additional language (AL). My purpose is to emphasize the fact that AL learners, especially learners of international languages, do not interact in the AL only with native speakers, but also with other nonnative speakers.

⁵We see in Siegal (1994, 1995, 1996) that learners may also omit some standard AL variants. I treat this as a transfer from the PL because when learners do not use such variants, they are doing as they would in their PL (English), a language in which gendered particles do not exist.

⁶It is important to note that AL learners interpret the AL and AL culture according to their own perspectives and biases. It is certainly not the case that the Western learners discussed here were more enlightened or wiser than their Asian hosts or that there is necessarily more inequality in Asian than in Western societies. It is also possible that the Western learners in the above studies misinterpreted the social relations expressed in their AL. However, it is important to acknowledge and respect learners' individual feelings about the AL and how it positions them in AL society.

⁷Although this may not be the case for phonological variants, it is also not necessarily the case that nonnative accents lead to misunderstandings (Jenkins, 2002).

⁸I would add that monolingual AL educators may benefit greatly from learning an AL themselves. This experience might give them insights into the inequalities in both the language that they are learning and the one that they teach (see Ogulnick, 1998, for more on learning an AL as a window into the biases of one's own language).

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