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SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIABILITY IN ORAL NARRATIVE

VOL 2

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## MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF NARRATIVES

### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter focusses on the characteristics which are shared by the samples of narrative collected. Those characteristics fall under three headings: humour, structure and language patterning.

As stated in Chapter 2, the analyst specifically set out to elicit humorous stories. As a result, humorous effects appear in large quantities in the narratives, as do certain recurrent linguistic devices which contribute to realising these humorous effects. A comprehensive analysis of humour in social interaction is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, in order to see the linguistic devices which narrators use to humorous effect in perspective, it is of value to consider briefly what humour is; what its social functions are; in what situations it flourishes; and why certain kinds of topic are exploited in the narrative data.

## 5.1 Towards a Definition of Humour

The Oxford English Dictionary defines humour as;

- The faculty of perceiving what is ludicrous or amusing, or of expressing it; jocose imagination or treatment of a subject (Less purely intellectual than wit, and often allied to pathos.) 1682<sup>a</sup>

Clearly, humour involves a reaction to an event which is usually external to the individual. The reaction may be evident in a smile, a lightening of facial expression, or laughter which is sometimes accompanied by a change in body posture. Humour cannot of course be studied purely in terms of observable physical responses. Amusement may have no outward sign. Ultimately, amusement is a cognitive state which may be accessible only through introspection and intuition.

### 5.1.1 The Social Functions of Humour

Coser(1960), who studied the social functions of humour at staff meetings in a mental hospital, suggests that humour serves to reduce the social distance between people occupying different positions in a social hierarchy. She says, " In laughter, all are equal; social barriers, such as those of status, are temporarily lowered." Coser(1960) quotes Henri Bergson who says that, "laughter always implies a kind of secret freemasonry or even complicity with other laughers, real or imaginary ....." . In fact, humour often signals mutual understanding between friends or colleagues

and as such, it can only be understood in terms of the network of role-relationships which exists among individuals who laugh together (Coser, 1960). This implies that the themes which form the basis for humorous interaction might reflect group bonds and group preoccupations.

Giles, Bourhis, Gadfield, Davies and Davies(1976) say that humour has four primary functions, which are:

### 1) Creation or Maintenance of In-Group Solidarity

A joke in the context of one group may fail to be perceived as a joke in another context, the implication being that humour is group specific. In fact, Norrick(1984) says that telling funny stories and jokes is a popular way to signify group membership, since a story or joke which is well received indicates that the narrator has correctly interpreted the group's concerns. Therefore, humour is able to maintain and reinforce group bonds since it relies on the collective perception of group members.

### 2) Attack or Superiority

Humour can provide a non-physical outlet for conscious or sub-conscious aggression. Wit as a form of attack may result in the physical or social denigration of others (Harlow, 1969).

Coser(1960) discovered that humour can be used as a

therapeutic outlet against senior staff by lower status members of a work hierarchy. However, only certain forms of humour are acceptable. In her study of psychiatric personnel, Coser found that staff lower in the hospital hierarchy made fewer witticisms than senior staff, although they might have been expected to use senior staff as a butt for suppressed aggression. In addition, low-status paramedical staff members directed their humour at patients and patients' relatives rather than at senior staff. It seems that to attack senior members through humour involves a degree of risk since it directly challenges the authority invested in senior personnel. The only way in which the low status speaker can use humour is to offer himself as the "victim" of that humour, thus dissolving barriers in an acceptable way.

This strongly suggests that there is relationship between humour and power. Since humour tends to enhance the status of the speaker in relation to the target, upward directed humour is risky, while downward directed humour is not threatening to social stability.

### 3) Need for Approval

If people are made to laugh, they may view the instigator more favourably as a result. Humour can be used to gain approval from group members, or even to gain entry to the group. Hence, although a witty response on the part of the speaker is a sign that he is secure and confident vis-a-vis

the group, the initiative in humour is likely to be taken by the person who needs it most. This is often the person who has the least power to dominate group interaction (but can dominate through humour).

#### 4) Removal of Attention

Humour can direct attention away from a negative act which a speaker has performed or is about to perform. If a narrator makes fun of an incident which causes them shame or embarrassment, audience attention is focused away from the negative aspects of the incident to the positive characteristics of the narrator. In fact, many funny stories surround the violation of a social norm. Humour shows that the norm has been violated and simultaneously reaffirms the norm (Coser, 1960).

Speakers often use humour to divert attention away from unpleasant or difficult situations. Nurses, for example, joke with sick patients to prevent them from dwelling on their illness. Crises are often alleviated or defused with humour.

While the major functions of humour, identified above, suggest that, at one time, any function may be paramount, it is not true to say that only one function operates at a time. Individuals often satisfy a mixture of needs in producing humour.

### 5.1.2 Preconditions for Humour

At least three factors appear to encourage humour to flourish:-

#### 1. Setting

Individuals are more likely to be humorous in a relaxed setting. Environments or situations which create tension do not appear to be conducive to humorous interaction. The present work provides evidence to support this view. In the process of collecting samples from the taxi-drivers, it was found that the restaurant setting, following an Indian meal, produced a far greater number of funny stories than other less informal settings.

#### 2. Group Presence

Eisner(1975) suggests that group size has an effect on story quality, claiming that the funniest stories are told in groups consisting of more than three people. It does appear that humour is more likely to be generated in larger groups. Individuals often feel more self-conscious in small units and are more reluctant to take the initiative. However, in interviews, the narrator's consciousness of the group can be reinforced by the presence of the microphone. The taxi-drivers, in particular, played to the microphone, and appeared to want to produce maximum performance. The nurses, on the other hand, were relatively more inhibited by



the presence of the microphone.

### 3. Story-Teller/Recipient Relationship

The production and appreciation of humour depends on the relationships between members of the group and on the extent of their shared knowledge. The more shared knowledge and shared occupational concerns there are within a group, the greater will be the probability of a round of jokes or funny stories.

In addition to being facilitated by shared concerns, humour is also more likely to occur in groups where members have equal or similar status. As we have seen, in a status hierarchy, low status members are more restricted than high status members with regard to the direction which their humour can take. Humour is more likely to be directed at equals, or downwards in a hierarchy.

#### 5.1.3 Humorous Topics

In her (1960) study, Coser notes that a doctor follows a story about a patient who had destroyed \$7000 worth of property with the remark:

"Now that is hard work" (Coser, 1960:88)

She says that the reason this remark caused amusement among hospital staff is that work is positively evaluated by most people, and is not normally applied to an anti-establishment

act like destroying property. The use of humour here, resolves the conflict between condemning the act morally, while recognising the personal effort that must have been involved.

It has been suggested that humour is group specific, and what amused the doctors in Coser's anecdote may not seem funny to people excluded from that group. Examination of the narrative data elicited from the four occupational groups (taxi-drivers, chefs, nurses and hairdressers) reveals content which reflects group concerns and preoccupations, and shared experience.

Taxi-drivers focus on incidents of violence, risque stories and "bilkers" (fare-avoiders). Chefs describe kitchen disasters, while nurses relate similar tales of disasters (in the ward). Hairdressers focus on odd, unusual or flamboyant customers. It is clear, therefore, that the context of the storytelling round within the occupational group predisposes narrators to focus on group concerns. Themes which emerge in the humorous narratives collected involve embarrassment, taboos, faults and failures, and norm violations.

Topic is returned to in Chapter 6, where differences in narrative style, and, specifically, differences between the sexes, are examined in detail.

## 5.2 Structure in Narrative

The narratives in the corpus share a macro-structure of the form

SCENE SETTING  
STORYLINE DEVELOPMENT  
ESTABLISHMENT OF "POINT"  
RESOLUTION/CLIMAX  
CODA (Optional)

The component structural parts do not necessarily occur in any fixed order, although aspects of scene setting (like time reference and location) tend to occur in the early stages of narrative, whereas the climax and the coda (where it occurs) can usually be found in the final stages. Temporal development constitutes the storyline. This particular format may have been encouraged by the following social contextual features;

1. the elicitation technique - i.e. "Do you know any funny stories?"
2. the "gallery" effect - i.e. playing to the group.
3. pressure (unseen of course) exerted by patterning in the storytelling round.

These features are examined below.

### 5.2.1 The Elicitation Technique

In telling funny stories, narrators often aim to create audience laughter, hence, humorous narratives (probably more

than other forms of discourse) seem to necessitate some kind of "punchline". The "punchline" often takes the form of a particularly amusing, dramatic, elaborate or unusual story climax.

Although the narratives collected tend to have climaxes which are unusual or arresting, it is possible that the manner of provoking (i.e. do you know any funny stories) encouraged this format. It must be acknowledged that other elicitation techniques might produce stories with a less obvious resolution (or even without one altogether).

A dramatic peak is more usual in humorous storytelling since it appears to have greater potential for audience arousal (the escape from which is usually laughter, Ransohoff, 1977). The climax from the story, "Going to Worcester", told by a taxi-driver A., effectively illustrates this point. On reaching the destination in Worcester, the somewhat intoxicated passenger discovers that he has no money to pay the taxi-fare and so he suggests that A. should accept a rather unusual form of security (which gives rise to the story climax).

A. he said "Go and open the doors",  
I said "What?" he said  
"Go and open the taxi-door"....  
so, all the doors are open, and  
I I said "What?" he said  
"Don't ask questions" he was sort  
of sobering up by then he'd sort of  
got his wits about him..and erm  
(indistinct remark)  
I said "Oh fair enough" so I did  
and er I heard this rumbling  
and I I looked up  
and he's coming down the hall  
with the television..  
[laughter]

STORY CLIMAX

BB. You what?

A. he's coming down the hall with the television on the stand....

CLIMAX REPETITION

(For the complete transcript of the story "Going to Worcester", see Section 5.5)

It is noticeable that the build up to the climax is stretched over several utterances. The audience are initially presented with a mystery ("Why does the man want Alfie to open the taxi-doors?"). The dialogue delays the action, as do the indications of sound ("rumbling") and vision ("I I looked up"). Hence the suspense is sustained, which probably heightens audience excitement, making the subsequent drop (in arousal) upon resolution quite considerable.

The point is, that the Labovian procedure; "Tell me about an accident/ an illness/ something funny" (Labov and Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972); may actually produce a narrative type which is "conformist" - i.e. adheres to a strict structure, such as is outlined above. However, it must be acknowledged that there is at least the possibility that a "free-standing" narrative might be less structured, or differently structured.

### 5.2.2 The "Gallery" Effect

In the climax of "Going to Worcester", it can be seen that the taxi-driver A. initiates and prolongs the suspense via dramatic underlining ("Go and open the taxi-doors"... "I heard this rumbling"). He is actually exploiting the "gallery" effect (i.e. playing to the group) by extracting

every vestige of dramatic tension present in the episode. In so doing, he receives a positive audience response in laughter.

It is possible that stories which are a group venture (and particularly those involving humour) are more staged than those which occur on a one-to-one basis. In contrast to ordinary conversation, where mutual knowledge is exploited, narration before an audience appears to be more akin to a "theatrical performance". Playing to the group is not only an acceptable feature of storytelling, it is expected. In fact, the storyline of lengthy humorous stories like "Going to Worcester" appears to progress through a series of mini-punchlines which are primarily designed to play to the group (and sustain audience attention) as in the example below, which provokes a punning retort from a member of the audience, T.

- A. ..and I I eventually got him in the cab  
and he'd got this Cheshire grin all the ti-  
Oh he's pleasant..you know what I mean  
he kept asking silly questions,  
and I only turned first left  
he said  
"Where are we?" MINI-PUNCHLINE  
[laughter]
- T. On the verge of a nervous breakdown  
[laughter]

It is clear from the response that the audience enjoy this kind of interchange. In fact, the utterance produced by T. is also a mini-punchline which complements the narration. The "gallery" effect" or the need to play to the group might therefore explain narrators' remarkable consistency in adhering to the structure of scene setting, storyline

development, resolution and so on, even in stories which have been related many times before (where the audience obviously know the outcome). It is possible that narrators select this organisation not only because it may be the most effective one for transmitting the story point (although this has not been substantiated) but because of their own wish to "perform" effectively as storytellers and because of listeners expectations that they should do so.

### 5.2.3 Patterning in the Storytelling Round

When it comes to storytelling, story recipients have certain expectations. They expect the story to encode some worthwhile, reportable happening; they anticipate that the story will have a "point"; and finally they hope to receive sufficient information, encoded in a way which will enable them to ascertain what that "point" is (Polanyi, 1978). Thus, without actually realising it, story recipients may apply imperceptible pressure to the narrator causing him to conform to a particular structure like the one outlined above (although neither the narrator nor the audience may be consciously aware of such pressure). Also, since storytelling is one way in which to signify group membership, the narrator may be constrained by the organisation of stories told by other narrators in the group. If he/she adopts a different format to other narrators, this might signal a rejection of group values and this is not likely to evoke a positive group response.

The following sections describe and exemplify the linguistic devices which are realisations of the macro-structure outlined above.

### 5.3 Linguistic Devices in Narrative

Several linguistic devices recur frequently across all narrators in the socio-economic groups selected. The major function of these devices is to mark out stretches of information in such a way as to throw them into sharp relief, or differentiate them from the surrounding text. For this reason they may be referred to as "differentiators" (as noted in Chapter 4, they are called "evaluation devices" in the literature on narrative).

Differentiators are capable of drawing audience attention to a particular stretch of information in the discourse. However, this is not the only reason why they are prevalent in narrative. The motivation for differentiation is largely dramatic. The narrator wants to make his story interesting and sustain audience attention, however, he/she only has his/her own voice as a dramatic resource. Narratives which contain a variety of characters necessitate some characterisation, or role shift and this can only be achieved by versatile use of voice features. Hence, if the narrator is to successfully portray himself/herself and the various characters in the story, ways must be found of "marking off" the role of narrator from the role of story participants, and of distinguishing these from each other.



This, essentially is the explanation for the use of constellation effects in re-enacted speech, and token mimicry.

Stories, more than other forms of narrative discourse, tend to be "acted out" and hence, the narrator must supply what any good dramatic production must provide: sound effects, highlighting, dramatic underlining, tension and tension relief (which explains why humour is necessary). Aspects of kinesics, like gesture, facial expression, body posture and proximity obviously contribute to story portrayal, but they are not of course the focus of analysis in this study.

The linguistic devices which recur with great frequency in the data, and are common across all narrators, are: direct speech; token mimicry; constellation effects; expressive phonology; "blocking" effects in verb tense alternation; repetition and reiteration; lexical contrast; and linguistic ambiguity. Since each narrative displays its own combination of these features, an overview of the nature of these features is presented first (Sections 5.3.1 to 5.4) together with brief examples. Then in Section 5.5 they are exemplified in the form of annotated transcripts of selected narratives.

### 5.3.1 Direct Speech

In telling stories, narrators often change footing (Goffman, 1981) from that of narrator to that of a character in the

story they are relating. This role-playing is usually achieved through the use of direct speech. Many researchers have noted that stories which contain direct speech appear more vivid than those which contain only indirect quotation (Labov, 1972; Schiffrin, 1981; Chafe, 1982; Tannen, 1982). Clearly, in direct speech, the narrator has more opportunity to use the expressiveness and the versatility of the human voice.

In the data, direct speech is generally introduced by a personal pronoun and a laminator verb (Goffman, 1975), e.g. I said "...". It is also often accompanied by a perceptible change in pitch level, either a step up or a step down. The change in pitch frequently occurs in conjunction with an increase or decrease in loudness, a change in voice quality, or a shift in tempo (acceleration or deceleration). Another feature of direct speech is that it is almost always preceded by a pause.

Direct speech is heavily used for marking changes of footing which involve role shift, or persona change. In the story "Ulysses" told by T. a taxi-driver, there are no fewer than 17 direct quotations, representing 4 roles: the taxi-driver/narrator, the client- Ulysses, the policeman, the taxi-radio system controller. In A's story, (another taxi-driver) "Going to Worcester", there are 89 examples of direct speech (counting each instance, from one word to several words in length), and 5 roles are represented: the narrator/taxi-driver, the customer, his wife, the

disembodied voice of the taxi-radio, and the hotel porter/receptionist.

Direct speech increases in frequency around the climactic moment of stories.

An illustrative example of a series of Direct Speech re-enactments is selected from Trevor's story "Ulysses".

T. I I took a couple to Chelmsley Wood.....  
and er.....when I got there  
the guy said erm.....  
"You'll have to whistle for your money"  
I said,  
"I don't like whistling, search  
your pockets".....  
So, he he comes up with about 30 pence..  
an' a, an' a, chromium plated, chain  
around his wrist...  
[a listener coughs]  
so, I said,  
"Can you get me a policeman"..  
and give 'em the address..and..  
like, in no time half a dozen cabs are  
there and, the the woman's gone  
into an house..so like I'm trying  
to watch which house she's gone into..  
and keep my eye on the geyser..  
which I do quite successfully,  
I. Yeh  
T. and the police come and they've got  
this guy and, I take 'em to this  
house and the gas and electric  
meter's been done...and the copper said,  
"Have a walk around see if there's anything  
you fancy"..

Pause  
PITCH DROP  
Pause  
PITCH DROP  
Pause  
PITCH DROP  
Pause  
PITCH  
RAISING

Cases where direct speech does not involve pitch dropping or pitch raising can be found in the narrative data. However, it is certainly a heavily used device (i.e. in around 70% of cases). Perhaps more important than a quantitative statement is the fact that it is characteristic of lively, involved narrative style. It may also be possible that the

choice of raising as opposed to lowering pitch may relate either to individual narrator style, or to the type of character being portrayed. However, the samples of narrative collected provide insufficient evidence for a study of which narrators drop, and which raise pitch level, and in what circumstances. Further work on this would be worthwhile.

In the example above, all quotes are introduced by past tense forms of the verb "to say". However, this is not the only way in which dialogue can be marked. In fact, an examination of the percentage distribution of types of introducers within the data reveals that many quotes are introduced in the absence of any laminator verb. The percentage distribution is as follows ( $\emptyset$  represents the absence of a laminator):

| Dialogue Introducer | % Distribution |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Say                 | 74             |
| $\emptyset$         | 13             |
| Go                  | 6              |
| Thought             | 3              |
| Like                | 2              |
| Other               | 3              |

Table 5-1 - The percentage distribution of types of dialogue introducer in the narrative data.

As Table 5-1 indicates, forms of the verb "to say" are most frequently used to introduce direct quotes. Other verbs utilised are "to go", which sometimes substitutes for "say" in informal registers, and "to think". The use of "like", which constitutes a small percentage of introducers is similar to using no introducer at all. As Tannen(1986)

points out, it is "a formulaic introducer, not by its literal meaning but by convention". However, the literal meaning may sometimes function when "like" represents the kind of thing that the character was saying or thinking. This is exemplified by the following quote which could represent the thoughts or speech of a group of taxi-drivers who become party to embarrassing information about a colleague.

so of course everybody's  
"WAAH:: this is it" like, "Now we've got him  
WOH:: we can have him on about this",

Thirteen percent of quotes appear in the absence of any kind of lexical marker. A typical example serves as the opening for the story "Going to Worcester" (see annotated data, section 5.5), in which the narrator quotes the disembodied voice of the taxi radio.

..and I had this fellow..  
"Oh thanks, thanks Amber Nine, erm Grand Hotel  
Mister Smith going to Worcester he's been quoted,  
ten quid" ...

This quote is marked by a pause, a step up in pitch, increased loudness and an increased pace. In the sample, changes of footing which are not facilitated by a lexical marker are generally marked prosodically and/or paralinguistically. As the following section illustrates such shifts are also often accompanied by a change in voice quality, as the narrator assumes the "voice" of one of the characters in the narrative.

### 5.3.2 Token Mimicry

Token mimicry occurs in conjunction with the prosodic phenomena mentioned above (pitch shift, change in loudness level, change in voice quality, tempo shift). Token mimicry is a shift in speech style which the narrator sustains over a few words or utterances in order to put the audience in mind of an absent "third party". It is an irony aimed at style which consists of mimicking stereotyped, often highly stigmatised, segmental (and sometimes prosodic) features of the speech of the person whose role the narrator is portraying. Narrators do not attempt to produce total imitation. Rather specific segmental and/or prosodic features are singled out as being powerful enough to evoke the portrayed character in the minds of the audience. It will become clear from the following sections that the features which are chosen depend on the type of character who is being depicted and the function which the mimicry is expected to perform.

Three major types of token mimicry can be observed in the narrative data. These depict;

1. **Regional/Social Accents**
2. **Ethnic Accents**
3. **Idiosyncratic Effects**

These three categories will be examined and exemplified in turn. The examples are followed by a discussion of the

factors which favour token mimicry and the functional basis of such style shifts. (N.B. In the context of the following discussion on Token Mimicry: <a> = allegro; <st> = staccato; <p> = piano; <f> = forte. However, for a full explanation of these and other transcription symbols used see the appendix to this chapter - Section 5.5).

### 5.3.2.1. Regional/Social Shifts

Some of the style shifts observed are intended to portray a speaker with a particularly broad regional accent. In this type of mimicry, speakers tend to approach accent stereotypes, choosing noticeably stigmatised features of the target's speech. This can be seen in the extract below, taken from one of the chefs, LC. (from the story, "Inky the Printer", see section 5.5).

- LC. ....and we had a printer, we used to  
call him Inky, Inky the printer  
you know,  
I. Yeh  
LC. that that was his..not  
only his name, but every printer was  
called Inky, see..  
I. [laughs]  
LC. and he was always crying this fellow..  
"This Merchant Navy's no good to me"      Falling Contour  
..he was from, from Nelson he was      'merchant'  
up by Burnley, you know....      (3) - [ʒ]  
"This Merchant Navy's no good to me"...      'navy'  
      (eɪ) - [e:]  
      'no' (oʊ) - [ɔ:]

Here, the Liverpudlian chef is attempting a Lancashire accent in his imitation of Inky. Liverpudlian (3) in "Merchant" has a well known variant [ɛ], to which he only

normally approximates. Here, the variant [ɜ̃] is used (a close variety of (ɜ) ). The vowel (eɪ) in "Navy" is realised as [e:] (an open variety of [e] ), which contrasts with the narrator's more usual [e], as in "name". Similarly [ɔ:], realising (oʊ) in "no good" is not characteristic of (oʊ) in the chef's speech. Also affrication, which is characteristic of consonant release in the chef's speech, is reduced in the utterance representing Inky, and in its echo. Finally, prosody plays a part, Inky's utterance involving falling contour with a marked step up in pitch on "to". Intonation in Scouse, it has been claimed (Knowles, 1978) cannot involve a fall to a pitch level which is lower than a fall in the first part of the utterance.

Accents are not simply imitated for themselves, but because they carry social meaning. It has been mentioned (See Chapter 1, section 1.2.3) that speakers of Received Pronunciation (RP) are perceived as being of higher socio-economic status than speakers with urban or rural accents (Tajfel, 1959; Giles, 1972; Giles and Powesland, 1975). This undoubted social meaning of accents is exploited by the narrator of the following sequence. The extract is related by a Birmingham hairdresser.



POSH CLIENTS

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>H. The thing is though<br/>they complain about,<br/>I had in a posh lady<br/>the other day<br/>and she was going,<br/>"I'm not me::an::"<br/>she said,<br/>"but I used to go to<br/>Rackhams to have my hair<br/>cut" she said,<br/>"and its coming<br/>to ten pounds a cut"</p> | <p>'complain', 'day'<br/>(eɪ) - [aɪ]</p> <p>'going' (ɪŋ) - [ɪŋ]</p> <p>PITCH RAISING [nasality]</p> <p>PITCH RAISING &lt;st&gt;</p> <p>'have', 'hair' (h) - [h]</p> <p>'cut' (ʌ) - [ə] &lt;a&gt;</p> <p>'coming' (ɪŋ) - [ɪŋ]</p> <p>'cut' (ʌ) - [ə]</p> |
|---|---|

Chapter 3 (Table 13) presents evidence that this hairdresser (Speaker 20) uses a high percentage of non-standard variants in her speech. In enacting the posh client, however, she uses a cluster of features which assist in marking out what the posh client says, and in portraying this character. The [h] variant of (h) is used in "have" and "hair", the [ɪŋ] variant is preferred to her normal [ɪŋ] in "coming"; and effort is made to push vowel values closer to RP ([ə] is closer to [ʌ], in "cut" than [ɔ] which is her usual pronunciation); and a staccato effect is evident in her effort to enunciate more clearly. The shift towards standard variants in the direct speech representing the posh client can be contrasted with the usual variants in "complain" and "day" where (eɪ) is realised as [aɪ], a typical Birmingham feature. Two further effects should be noted which serve to differentiate the narrator from the posh client: in addition to the staccato effect in the posh client's speech, there is marked allegro, and considerable nasality (in auditory terms at least - c.f. Mitchell-Kernan, 1972).

In the example above, a regional speaker converges towards RP to portray a social class/status difference. It has also been observed in the data that an RP speaker can adopt features of a particular regional accent to depict a character of lower social class/status than themselves (although few RP speakers were recorded). Hence regional shifts are often intended to portray a particular social class accent. It is probably rare that speakers imitate RP or a regional accent without an awareness of their inherent social meaning.

#### 5.3.2.2. Ethnic Shifts

Another type of accent convergence occurs where English speakers attempt to imitate the voices of members of different ethnic populations. The focus is usually on those linguistic features of English which non-native speakers have difficulty in assimilating. Again the portrayals tend to approach ethnic stereotypes. The story below, told by a Liverpool taxi-driver, S, illustrates communication problems between another driver and his Chinese passenger.

#### THE CHINESE MAN

- S. Georgie Randall said he got a fare and like he said er, a Chinee, he said erm, "[kərə] Road" <f>  
 you know "[æɹɔ] Road"  
 and he said "Harrow Road", so he took him up
- B. Hail Road
- S. to Harrow Road, you know up in Wavertree nearly, and he said, "No no no [æɹɔw] Road" and he's going on like that <f>
- B. Gladstone Dock, where's Gladstone Dock?

- S. he said "Whereabout?" ... like that  
"Through the hole" you know
- X. (Indistinct comment)
- S. through the tunnel, Burrow Road he  
wanted, bloody Burrow Road, took him all  
the way up to Wavertree...

<F>

The stereotype which persists of Chinese and other oriental speakers who have not mastered the English language is that they are apt to omit syllable final consonants or alternatively, they glottalise them. They are also thought to be unable to distinguish between (r) and (l) (Wells, 1982c). A major feature of the attempts at mimicry in the above sequence is the lack of consonant closure. This appears to be the main cause of confusion since the driver thinks he hears the fricative (h) in place of (b) in "Burrow". This probably contributes to his interpretation of the destination as "Harrow Road". Also the (r), where it occurs is produced as a flap or a tap, an unusual choice in intervocalic position for native speakers of English (except perhaps in some varieties of RP). The diphthong [oʊ] is more like a monophthong. It is characteristic of Chinese speakers of English that they produce certain diphthongs as monophthongs and their vowels are often clipped (Wells, 1982c).

Another noticeable feature of the utterances attributed to the Chinese man is that they are louder than those utterances which the narrator attributes to the taxi-driver, "Georgie Randall". It is quite common for people to speak more loudly when addressing someone with obvious problems in comprehension. However, it is also possible that

"conversational loudness" varies from one culture to another.

One other feature of Chinese which was used by narrators in mimicry is its tonal quality. The Liverpool chef related a story about a visit to Mongolia in which he briefly mimicked a Chinese spokesman by producing incoherent sounds which moved in rapid succession from one tone to another.

Other populations portrayed in the data include people from India/Pakistan, Irishmen (although this could possibly be classed as a regional shift) and Arabs. The type of accents, (whether ethnic or regional) which appear to provide sufficient material for mimicry are those which are highly stereotyped and which have a wealth of stigmatised features. Ethnic mimicry appears to be the prerogative of male speakers and particularly the Liverpool taxi-drivers, perhaps due to their proximity to the Liverpool docks. As Chapter 6 will illustrate, women show a distinct avoidance of this kind of mimicry. However, they do show a preference for idiosyncratic style shift.

#### 5.3.2.3. Idiosyncratic Effects

In idiosyncratic mimicry, the attempt is not to put the audience in mind of a particular reference group (eg. Liverpudlians or Chinese), rather it is to portray a particular individual whose personality characteristics are noteworthy because they are different from the norms and

expectations of the storytelling group. Unlike, regional and ethnic mimicry which are characterised primarily by shifts on the segmental level of speech, idiosyncratic mimicry seems to be characterised by shifts which are mainly prosodic in nature. The distinct approach to this kind of mimicry is illustrated by the following story related by a Birmingham hairdresser, D.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- D. He came in, and he said  
 that you did his hair last time  
 and he wanted to speak to you..  
 and you weren't here, it was you were o-  
 it was your day off it was a Thursday,  
 and they asked me to go out  
 and speak to him,  
 Julie says  
 "I don't know what he's going on  
 about" he wan-, he, he said,  
 "Natalie layered one side of my  
 hair for me last time"...  
 and I thought Ooh there's something  
 funny going on here  
 so I went out to him,
- Z. Bit like that barber who come in  
 [laughter]..
- D. and he was a real,  
 honestly he was a real divvy,  
 he had this three piece suit on right..  
 and he was like sitting on the,  
 roundabout section in ..
- A. Yeh,
- D. reception..and erm, I went up to him  
 and I said "Hello, erm what were  
 you thinking of having done?".. PITCH RAISING  
 and he said...."WELL" ["WELL" - Breathy]  
 and he keeps going like this  
 [mimes touching her own clothing]  
 he kept touching me and patting PITCH RAISING  
 me all the time, he says,
- A. (overlapping indistinct comment)  
 "Well, Natalie did my hair for me  
 last time", and he says  
 "and you can see I haven't got  
 very much hair it's re::ally:: (i) - elongation  
 fi::ne::" he was going,  
 "and she kind of layered this one  
 side going BACK",

[laughter]  
 like this..  
 and he didn't bother that, PITCH RAISING  
 he wasn't interested in what  
 happened to the other side  
 and he says, and he says,  
 "Well I've fallen head over heels PITCH DROP <p>  
 in love with this girl and she  
 absolutely ADORES highlights  
 so, what do you think about me 'what do you...PITCH <a>  
 having highlights?" ...highlights RAISING  
 [laughter] <st>  
 and he'd come in just because  
 this girl that he was going out with,  
 we later found out that she was  
 thirty two, she'd got another boyfriend,  
 and he'd got highlights in his hair  
 and his hair was like really slick and  
 smooth and he wanted his hair exactly  
 the same and better...

The linguistic tokens which the hairdresser uses to depict this character appear to be mainly prosodic and paralinguistic. In fact the man's speech is characterised by features which would probably not draw comment if spoken by a woman, but seem unusual and rather affected (at least to the hairdressers) coming from a man. For example, certain words like "WELL", "BACK" and "ADORES" are produced with emphatic stress. "WELL" is also "breathy" and it is followed by an extended description (with accompanying gestures) of the "affected" mannerisms of the customer. Segmental lengthening is a feature of the phrase ".re::ally:: fi::ne::" and the text is also full of lexically intense, elaborate language like the phrase "Well I've fallen head over heels in love with this girl and she absolutely ADORES highlights..". Such features have typically been associated more with women's speech than with men's (Lakoff, 1973; 1975; O'Barr and Atkinson, 1980).

The hairdresser also seems to use a greater proportion of her potential pitch range when she speaks in the voice of the man, which reverses expectations for male speech. For example, the utterance " .. so what do you think about me having highlights?" is uttered on a higher pitch level than the preceding discourse. The rhythm of this question is also faster than previous speech (allegro), and the utterance is staccato, the syllables being clipped and occurring in rapid succession. Thus, although phonetic shifts may accrue, characterisation is primarily achieved through the use of prosodic features of pitch contour, stress, rhythm and also through lexical choice.

Obviously statements describing this man's appearance, "...honestly he was a real divvy, he had this three piece suit on right.." and the visual imagery provided by the narrator's gestures contribute to the picture which is formed. In fact, the initial comment made by the hairdresser, "Ooh there's something funny going on here" leads the audience to expect that the customer's behaviour is unusual in some respect. However, characterisation is greatly assisted by shifts at the prosodic level.

This character appears to be worthy of comment since his behaviour ignores certain aspects of the male sex-role stereotype. Idiosyncratic mimicry in the narrative data often focussed on the violation of sex-role and behavioural stereotypes. This type of mimicry was prevalent in the larger all-female groups and in particular the hairdressers,

whose main preoccupation in storytelling appeared to be client/customer relationships. It will become clear, in Chapter 6, that idiosyncratic effects are not favoured by male narrators.

#### 5.3.2.4. Factors Conducive to Token Mimicry

Token mimicry occurs more infrequently in discourse than one might suppose. However, there are certain features of the social context which favour its occurrence. Such style shifts are more likely to occur

- A) when the person who is being imitated (the referee) is so salient to the narrator that they must take account of his/her characteristics.
- B) when the speaker has a particular purpose in mind, for example, humour or ridicule.
- C) when the speaker is sufficiently knowledgeable about the tokens of speech which will put the audience in mind of the absent referee.
- D) when conditions of the social context and audience/narrator relationships are such that the speaker will feel confident in using those tokens in front of audience members.

It must be pointed out that the phonetic variants which are selected for "token mimicry" do not occur in any great quantities. Also, since the style shifts are usually achieved by adopting a variety of features, both segmental



and non-segmental, it is impossible to make any straight statistical correlations between token mimicry and the type of variants which speakers utilise.

#### 5.3.2.5. The Functional Basis of Mimicry

Token mimicry provides a good example of what Tannen(1986) calls "constructed dialogue", since there is no serious attempt by the narrator to present the character's speech as being what was actually spoken in the situation being described. As has been illustrated, the portrayals are only token, not accurate.

When narrators take on the "voice" of someone else, they are changing their footing (Goffman, 1981). However, these changes of footing invariably involve style-shifting on the model of code-switching (Gumperz, 1982). When the narrator is speaking as himself, it could be said that he is using the "WE" code, that is, the code which the group normally use in interacting with each other in informal, storytelling contexts. When he targets someone for mimicry and assumes their "voice", the narrator shifts to another code, one which is usually (but not always) characteristic of an outgroup whose values the storytelling participants do not share. This could be described as the "THEY" code. In many cases, mimicry functions to laud the positive characteristics of the ingroup by indirectly comparing them with the perceived negative characteristics of some outgroup. As Tajfel(1974) has pointed out, ingroups often

create dimensions on which they can be viewed as positively distinct from a relevant outgroup.

As we have seen, in the story "Posh Clients", the narrator shifts speech style to adopt the more standard variants of her client. In this case, a shift into the "THEY" code signifies that the narrator is not disposed to agree with the views she is repeating, in other words, an alien animator is operating (Goffman, 1981). The elongation and emphasis on the word "mean" in the initial utterance, breaks Grice's maxims of Quality and Manner (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.3) and has the effect of indicating just the opposite to the audience - that this client is mean, and from the subsequent mention of a rather prestigious hairdressing salon, the audience are expected to glean that she is also a snob. Hence by her shift, the hairdresser distinguishes the values of the ingroup - working class hairdressers - from the outgroup - middle class clients, and also manages to make the values of the outgroup appear much less attractive (i.e. to indicate pretentiousness). At the same time, she creates interpersonal involvement between herself and her listeners by not stating directly what she thinks of the client. She allows the audience to interpret the message by drawing on their own similar experiences.

Ethnic shifts seem to operate in a similar way distinguishing "Englishmen" (the ingroup) from non-native speakers (the outgroup). The goal of such shifts is rapport (Lakoff, 1979) (although it cannot be assumed that mimicry

which takes place in the presence of the target has the same goal). The fact that group members perceive a common reason for the narrator's choice of referee and for the type of caricature, signals a mutual understanding which reinforces group solidarity.

Token mimicry is similar to what Roy (1978) following Wayne Booth, calls "dramatic irony". Roy says that through this device "the speaker can mean what he says and at the same time disclaim what he says by taking on a role, frequently stereotypical or at least well-defined". The speaker frames the talk as "not meant literally" by using lexical, prosodic and/or paralinguistic features which are not consonant with his personal speech style in order to portray a stereotypical figure. Although the narrator is only the animator of the words he utters in mimicry, he signals meta-messages through an alien author (Goffman, 1981) who manipulates the expressive content of the utterance to transmit metaphorical information which was probably not a part of the original author's intent. Thus in the hairdresser's story "Highlights", it is the alien author who adopts a falsetto voice and uses emphatic stress to underline and make fun of the effeminacy of her male client. Similarly, in "The Chinese Man", the taxi-driver mocks his own attempts at imitating a Chinese accent and at the same time, the alien author mocks the attempts of the Chinese passenger to speak English.

In addition to maintaining and reinforcing group bonds,

token mimicry can provide an outlet for suppressed aggression. It has been noted that mimicry in the narrative data rarely compliments the target of that mimicry. In fact narrators often go out of their way to highlight stigmatised, socially undesirable features of the target's speech. This would not happen in normal convergence towards another person's speech (Giles, Bourhis, Gadfield, Davis and Davis, 1976), but it is greatly appreciated in the context of a humorous storytelling round (as evidence by the audience laughter it evokes).

The people imitated are often those who threaten the status of the narrator in some way. For example, the hairdressers often imitated particularly finicky clients who criticised the salon or their own hairdressing abilities (idiosyncratic mimicry) and the chefs mimicked awkward customers who criticised their culinary talents. Through attack, narrators can simultaneously remove audience attention from a faux-pas of which they are guilty (c.f. removal of attention as a function of humour).

Token mimicry provides a good example of what it is to enlist the audience by identification and division (Burke, 1969). At the same time as the narrator is striving for rapport by dissociating himself from the negative traits of character of the target of mimicry and identifying himself with the positive characteristics of his audience (c.f. Burke, 1969), he is also defending his own position. The present work suggests that this can only be achieved by

placing himself and the referent on unequal footings (Goffman, 1981), with the narrator awarding himself the higher-level footing.

For example, the taxi-drivers appeared to use ethnic mimicry not only as a source of amusement but also as a means of asserting their superiority over immigrants. The foreigner's inability to speak English often resulted in the driver misunderstanding the intended destination ("The Chinese Man", section 5.3.2.2). This could potentially result in a loss of face for the driver who relates such a story (Brown and Levinson, 1978). However, by humorously portraying the foreigner as uneducated and foolish, this risk is averted.

Clever mimicry can be entertaining and diverting. A person who is successful in this speech form may gain status as a valued member of the group. Speakers who desire group approval are therefore more likely to attempt mimicry providing that they feel confident in behaving in this way in front of the group. Token mimicry requires a degree of nerve since the possibility of failure seems greater. Less confident speakers will probably seek group approval in other ways.

In summary then, the major function of the token mimicry observed in the data is rapport (Lakoff, 1979). It reinforces and maintains group bonds by attending to the positive face of the storytelling group (Brown and Levinson,

1978). Secondary functions are the diffusion of subliminal aggression and self-aggrandizement (Labov, 1972) for the narrator. As token mimicry is often intended to be humorous, it is not surprising that these functions closely parallel the social functions of humour described in section 5.1.1.

One noticeable feature of role shift which links the functions listed above is that it signals a change of footing on the part of the narrator. As mentioned above, through this device the narrator can assert his superiority over the absent referee by awarding himself a higher-level footing. However, it is often the case that narrators shift to a higher-level footing by changing roles within their own role-set. A valuable way to illustrate what is meant by a higher level footing is to look at what happens in linguistic terms when a speaker takes on a higher-status role within their own role-set. When speakers shift to a higher status role, it is likely that they will use a higher proportion of standard variants. The two extracts below illustrate a marked shift in speech style by a Liverpool hairdresser, Mrs. S., who shifts from the role of raconteur into the role of salon manageress. The first extract is taken from a story which she tells in lively, narrative style (for complete story see section 5.5). The second is taken from a conversation which relates the merits of the salon.

THE DRUNK

Mrs. S. and last week ..last week  
I'm walking down the road, 'walking'-  
this is at eight thirty in the (ing)-[ɪn]  
morning ..  
this very nice dressed man ..  
very, who was there with me when  
it happened?

B. Me

Mrs. S. Walking down the road, very,  
but he was as TIGHT as a lord, PITCH RAISING  
wasn't he? 'TIGHT'(t)-[t<sup>s</sup>]  
But an awful nice man .. 'wasn't he?-(t)-[t<sup>h</sup>]  
so as I went past he says, -(h)-[h]  
"Darling .. PITCH RAISING  
could you tell me PITCH 'Darling'- drawled  
the time, could you tell DROP 'could', 'tell'- held  
me the time?" .. <di> <l> slurring  
[laughter]  
I says, "Half past eight" .. <p>  
"Oh" .. <p>  
[laughter]  
"Could you tell me now dear  
where I can get a cup of coffee,  
ee::hh:: I'm pissed love"..  
[laughter]  
I says,  
"You are drunk aren't you?" PITCH RAISING  
I said,  
"How did you get like that PITCH RAISING  
tell me so early in the morning (Bouncing pitch  
it's very nice" contour) <a>  
[laughter]  
.. so he said,  
"Oh my bloody wife's gonna kill slurring  
me when I get home",  
he said,  
"I've been out all night love" .. PITCH RAISING  
so I said  
"Well wh- how are you getting <p>  
home have you got a car?" PITCH RAISING  
he says  
"I have but I don't know where PITCH DROP  
it is",  
[laughter]  
he says  
"I tell you what", he says,  
"You've got lovely eyes love..  
[laughter]  
ee::hh:: you've got lovely eyes", 'eehh' - <f> and  
couldn't get away could I? higher pitch level  
[laughter] slurring

In the above piece, Mrs. S. imitates the drunken man's

speech. She slurs her speech so that consonant transitions become blurred. The release of syllables is sometimes delayed which gives her the appearance of speaking with deliberation. She often speaks more slowly in the guise of the drunk than as herself and marked variations in pitch level, pitch range and loudness levels accompany these changes in character. For example, in the phrase, " ..ee::hh:: you've got lovely eyes", the lengthened segment is spoken on a higher pitch level than the rest of the utterance and also with rising pitch. It is also louder than what follows. In addition, Mrs S. uses a high percentage of non-standard variants in this narrative. The tone of the story contrasts sharply with the following excerpt (the main addressee is the interviewer, I. Herbert is the salon proprietor.)

#### THE SALON

- MRS. S. So these are some of the things that have happened you know, which if mind you, I don't think you'll ever FIND.. <1>  
a SALON..  
with as much that goes ON.. 'Humour, Herbert,  
er as much HUMOUR.. Have' - (h) - [h]
- I. No
- Mrs. S. but it revolves round HERBERT, REALLY, <1>  
that HUMOUR, because we are  
allowed to HAVE that HUMOUR,  
if you understand what I mean,  
if you go to another hairdresser,  
an apprentice, and that ends there,  
but in Herbert of Liverpool, it's a family  
business and he expects that image to be in  
the salon you see
- I. Yeh, Mum and I always have, are always  
killing ourselves laughing when we come here
- Mrs. S. So .... yes ... because he is that type of  
man, but that's the reason the humour is in  
this salon .... that that's my idea anyway  
of it you know
- G. But he encourages it doesn't he? I mean



- some places sort of you know who do you think  
you
- Mrs. S. He encour- he-
- G. are shouting all over the place like
- Mrs. S. but not Herbert, Herbert will sing and dance  
no matter who's in the salon, as long as the  
work's getting done and his clients are  
attended to, but if you slip up on a client  
he will roar like a bull
- I. Well I think it's good because it makes you  
happier in your work
- A. Makes you more relaxed yeh
- Mrs. S. He will not have a client abused at all, he  
reckons they pay a lot of money, that client  
is your wages and that's how I feel, it is  
my wages and it's your attitude to that  
client that will bring her back

The most striking feature of the second piece above is the greater proportion of standard variants used. The discourse is characterised by a very high percentage of the variant [h] (93%), a high frequency of the RP variant of (t) and a preference for [ɪŋg] rather than the non-standard [ɪn] (as Chapter 3, Table 13. shows, Mrs S. (speaker 11) normally uses a higher proportion of the non-standard variant [ɪn], and although she appears to use [h] and [h<sup>σ</sup>] in similar quantities, the high value for [h] is influenced by the large number of instances of [h] which are used in the second extract above).

The style shift occurs not only at the segmental level but also with regard to prosody. In contrast with the marked changes in pitch and loudness levels observed in the story, the second piece is delivered evenly without any sharp rises or falls in pitch or loudness level. The words are enunciated clearly, many of them with emphatic stress. There is a consistent tempo and rhythm throughout the discourse.

The two pieces are bound to differ in some respects since one is a story and the other is not. As has been pointed out, stories demand a degree of narrator involvement and are often "acted out" (especially stories which contain token mimicry). This explains the heightened pitch level and stretched pitch range characteristic of the story as compared with the conversation which has a much narrower pitch range.

The shift at the segmental level is not so easily explained. However, it could be explained in the following way. In the story, Mrs. S. is entertaining her colleagues. She wants her story to be well received and so she assumes a speech style which reduces any status differences between herself and the group (or puts them on a more equal footing). It has already been suggested that a prestige speech style may be inappropriate and positively disadvantageous for use in storytelling (Chapter 1, section 1.6). In the second extract, however, she is extolling the virtues of the salon. She therefore assumes a more authoritative role, that of manageress, which gives her the power to speak on behalf of her employer. In adopting this higher status role, she distances herself from the audience, and the interviewer who is the primary addressee. This results in the shift to more standard variants.

The suggestion is, therefore, that although the difference between the style of the extracts can be partially explained

in terms of the fact that they are distinct forms of discourse, one requiring more verbal agility than the other, it is primarily the role-shift (or change of footing) and the accompanying social distance between speaker and audience that is significant. Similarly, in token mimicry, narrators can award themselves a higher-level footing merely by using a higher proportion of standard variants when the speaker roles of animator, author and principle coincide, than they do in utterances for which they do not claim authorship (Goffman, 1981). However, the use of more standard language is not to be equated with higher-level footings. Standard language can also indicate a lower-level footing when attributed to the speech of others by a narrator whose aim is to indicate affectation (c.f. the story "Posh Clients", section 5.3.2.1). In such cases, prosody may differentiate the story characters. Narrators may also use devices other than status to indicate that they have a higher-level footing, for example, humour, verbal or physical agility, ingenuity, and/or novelty. However, the role they adopt for themselves will depend on the messages (both direct and indirect) which they wish to convey.

### 5.3.3 The Constellation Effect

Token mimicry, as we have seen, involves specific variants at the segmental level, which facilitate role switch. Effects at the segmental level are often assisted by features at the prosodic level, although prosodic features may sometimes predominate. Other linguistic levels besides

the phonetic may also contribute to role switch. In Alfie's story, "Going to Worcester" lexis and syntax support the segmental and prosodic aspects of the character portrayed.

Alfie's story concerns a wealthy professional man, who orders a taxi to collect him from a respectable high-class hotel. The client is rather the worse for drink as he emerges from the hotel to locate his taxi.

- A. ..I pulled up on the rank and  
 I went into the grand and he..  
 this bloke staggered past me and,  
 dishevelled you know what I mean {dishevelled'-  
 [laughter] lexical contrast}  
 like probably when he went 'what'(t)-[t']  
 to his office in the morning  
 he was very smart  
 but he'd..had had a binge
- T. Oh this is ace this is
- A. He'd had a binge and he'd had  
 a meeting an' everyth-  
 and he comes staggering  
 past me and BUMP  
 "Oh I'm awfully sorry" he said PITCH RAISING  
 and he fell backwards down the step, Slurring  
 [laughter] Falling Pitch Contour  
 I sai- and I I went in the rece-  
 and he's\* sat on the floor by the kerb,  
 and I w- I walked  
 the doors open on their own at the  
 Grand like they're the automatic,  
 and I says erm..  
 "Mister Smith here for Worcester?" PITCH RAISING  
 he said  
 "That's him out there" PITCH RAISING  
 I thought Oh God what a lovely start PITCH DROP
- T. Is that your bird
- L. Yeh.....
- A. he said  
 "Oh that's him out there"  
 And I thought Oh good God.. and he's  
 sat on and he never made an  
 attempt to get up  
 he's sat on the kerb right by the,  
 I says  
 "You going to Worcester?" PITCH RAISING  
 "What a wonderful idea" PITCH DROP  
 he says.. Slurring <1>  
 [laughter]

\* he's sat on the floor = he is sitting on the floor  
The Construction does not have the passive meaning found in Standard English.

In the section of Alfie's story quoted above, two occurrences of lexico-syntactic marking ("awfully sorry" and "wonderful idea" ) underline the gentility of the client. At the same time, the narrator shows him in a highly undignified state, drunk and "sat on the kerb". In both cases, the lexical marking coincides with a combination of prosodic features: pitch level stepping and slurring. In addition, there is segmental accommodation towards RP - in "what a wonderful" (t) is realised as [t̥] rather than Alfie's habitual intervocalic [tʳ].

Lexis in this narrative thus assists in identifying the drunken client as genteel. It also assists in setting the tone of the opening scene, with "dishevilled", which suggests a lapse from gentility. The lexical item "dishevilled" contrasts stylistically with the informal colloquial tone of the rest of the narrative.

The constellation effect involves the use of a cluster of features on several linguistic levels simultaneously: segmental, prosodic, lexical and syntactic. The features serve to differentiate stretches of text in order to portray speaker role and character to the full.

#### 5.3.4 Expressive Phonology

A type of expressive phonology observed in the data involves

the onomatopoeic use of sound to represent action. Typical examples are "bump", "smack", "bonk", "bash", "wham", "waah". Tannen(1983) calls these "sound words" (although they are often sound non-words). They are usually monosyllabic and frequently involve sound sustension or segmental lengthening. The sound words observed in the data are primarily composed of the back vowels /ɑ/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ɒ/, and the abrupt voiceless and voiced stops /p/ /b/, /k/ /g/, the approximant /w/ and consonant clusters /sm/, /ʃ/. There are 17 examples of sound words in the 143 narratives which form the data base. They are regularly used by the taxi-drivers, but not the other 3 professions, and specifically not by the majority of female narrators. This sex difference is incorporated in the discussion of more general sex-related differences in narrative style in Chapter 6.

For example, in taxi-driver Z's narrative, "Sylvia's Knickers" (complete transcript in section 5.5) Z is re-enacting events when a private conversation was inadvertently broadcast on the taxi-drivers' intercom:

Z. click over to channel two,  
and it's gone across like  
"Can you go back to Sylvia's  
She's left her knickers in the cab"  
So of course everybody's WAAH:: like this  
Now we've got him WOH::

Another example, from taxi-driver T. occurs in Ulysses tale:

T. er the copper said  
"She ain't got a light she's on the dole"..  
So he said to the bloke  
"What's your name?"  
So he said,  
"Ulilles"  
And the copper went SMACK, he says,

"I know you ain't Ulysses,  
what's your proper name?"

It is noticeable that examples like the above ("the copper went smack") which depict an act of violence, tend to follow a past tense form. This may function to underline the fact that the action and the sound are instantaneous, rather than prolonged (as in the first example above).

A third example from a Liverpool hairdresser, Mrs. S, (from "The Brush Story", complete transcript, section 5.5) shows expressive phonology underlining physical events which form the climax of the story:

Mrs S. ...and as I came through..I tripped,  
and I went through the air, with this brush,  
and fell, FLAT in front of this client  
with the brush..with the brush..  
[laughter in the speaker's voice -  
audience laughter follows]  
she'd got the brush up here  
[points to her own skirt]  
[laughter]  
AA::HH::  
[intake of breath with audible friction]  
[laughter]  
she jumped up she shouted  
"Jesus Christ"....  
[laughter continues]  
I couldn't get up...  
[laughter continues]  
I heard Pat scre::aming:...

Mrs S. ...but you've got to see it, the way I went,  
(CODA) I went with this brush flying through  
the air, BASH in front of her  
and it went right up her coat,  
[laughter continues]

Expressive phonology is rarely used by female narrators in the sample. Examples which do occur (as in the third example, above) accompany a more relaxed narrative style, with the narrator showing greater freedom with taboo subjects.

Tannen(1986) suggests that sound words provide a variation on what she calls "constructed dialogue" - dialogue which could not represent words which were actually spoken in the situation being described. Clearly, although they are not dialogic, they are constructed, since they replace the gestures or sounds in the original action. Tannen says that sound words involve listeners in the narrative and make it seem more vivid, by forcing listeners to recreate the original action represented by the word or non-word.

#### 5.3.5 Verb Tenses and the Blocking Effect

A verb tense which is used frequently in narrative is the Conversational Historical Present (CHP), that is, the use of the present tense to refer to past events (i.e. events which began and ended before the moment at which the narrative itself is related). Traditional analyses of the way CHP functions in narrative have suggested it is capable of bringing the story events "alive" for the audience since as Schiffrin (1981) points out, "it is formally equivalent to a tense which indicates events whose reference time is not the moment of experience but the moment of speaking."

However, Wolfson(1982) refutes the argument that CHP takes listeners back to the time of the story events by pointing out that:

1. the present tense in English is timeless and takes its time reference from the context, and



2. in stories where CHP occurs at all, there is always switching between Past and CHP.

(Wolfson, 1982: 34-36)


In addition, she notes that it is often the case that the most dramatic story events are related entirely in the Past tense. Since it is common for narrators to "switch" between CHP and the perfective verb form in telling stories, Wolfson (1982) argues that it is not merely the use of CHP which dramatises the story events, rather it is the "switch" between CHP and the Past Tense which has narrative significance. The switch (whether from CHP to Past or vice versa) serves to separate important story events and points from one another.


The present study, in agreement with Schiffrin(1981) and Wolfson(1982) finds that the use of the CHP in narrative appears to be restricted to the complicating events whose time reference is inferrable from the co-text or context. It seldom occurs in the orientation section, where the past tense assists in setting the reference time of the action, or in abstracts, codas or external evaluation clauses. Time adverbial phrases with a past tense reference are found to co-occur frequently with CHP, while certain time subordinators - "after", "before", "because" - are almost never found in parts of the story where CHP could occur (Wolfson, 1982). In addition, tense does not switch between main and subordinate "when" clauses.

Wolfson(1982) and Schiffrin(1981) disagree on the issue of

tense maintenance across coordinate sentences, Schiffrin saying that tense maintenance does not occur. However, as Wolfson herself points out, their definition of what constitutes an "event" is somewhat different and she goes some way towards clarifying the term (as the following section illustrates Schiffrin also disagrees about the significance of the direction of the tense switch).

The following extract from the story "Ulysses" demonstrates that narrators do not switch randomly from one verb to another. There is a blocking effect, such that a whole cluster of CHP forms occur together, then a cluster of past tense forms marking a distancing of narrator role, then another block of CHP as the action becomes more intense and dramatic.

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>T. So I <u>took</u> a couple to Chelmsley Wood.....<br/>         and er.....when I <u>got</u> there<br/>         the guy <u>said</u> erm.....<br/>         "You'll have to whistle for your money"<br/>         I <u>said</u>,<br/>         "I don't like whistling, search your<br/>         pockets".....<br/>         so he he comes* up with about 30 pence..<br/>         an' a, an' a, chromium plated, chain<br/>         around his wrist...<br/>         [a listener coughs]<br/>         so, I <u>said</u>,<br/>         "Can you get me a policeman" ..<br/> <u>give</u> 'em the address..and..<br/>         like, in no time<br/>         half a dozen cabs <u>are</u> there<br/>         and, the the woman's gone<br/>         into an house..so like I'm trying<br/>         to watch which house she's gone into..<br/>         and keep my eye on the geyser..<br/>         which I <u>do</u> quite successfully,</p> <p>I. Yeh</p> <p>T. and the police <u>come</u> and they've got<br/>         this guy and, I <u>take</u> 'em to this<br/>         house, and the gas and electric<br/>         meter's been done..and the copper <u>said</u><br/>         "Have a walk around see if there's</p> |  | <p>(PAST)</p> <p>10</p> <p>(CHP)</p> <p>20</p> |
|---|---|--|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>anything you fancy"..</p> <p>So I <u>walked</u> around, the only thing there <u>that was</u> any good <u>was</u> the soda stream thing, you know, television <u>was</u> a bit battered..all the pots and pans <u>were</u> all smashed, the transistor radio with no knobs on..</p> <p>A. Yeh</p> <p>T. the best thing in this house was this, soda syphon</p> <p>BB. soda stream</p> <p>T. [speaker coughs]<br/>so..we're in the kitchen..sink's piled high with dirty washing up and oh it was* a right shit bin..<br/>er, the copper said*.....<br/>"She ain't got a light she's on the dole"..so he said* to the bloke<br/>"What's your name?"..<br/>so he <u>says</u> "Ulilles" and the copper went* <b>SMACK</b>..<br/>he <u>says</u><br/>"I know you ain't Ulysses, what's your proper name?"</p> <p>BB. [listener laughs] Ulysses</p> <p>T. and he like,<br/>"I ain't saying Ulysses I'm saying Ulilles"..</p> |  <p>(PAST)<br/>30</p> <p>40</p> <p>(CHP)</p> <p>50</p> |
|--|--|

The above example illustrates that the blocking effect of verb tense alternation can be seen to be on the whole highly consistent. Only 5 verbs (marked by an asterisk) are mis-matched with the block in which they are located. One of these is followed by a sound word ("and the copper went smack") and it was suggested in the section 5.3.4 that these linguistic devices tend to attract past tense forms. Two others are forms of the verb "to say", and act as dialogue introducers. Wolfson(1982) suggests that dialogue introducers do not follow the rules of "blocking" due to overuse (this point is discussed further in section 5.3.6). Another mis-match ("it was a right shit bin") could be interpreted as an external comment by the narrator on the

story situation. In other words, it is not strictly part of the event sequence since the narrator steps outside the action to make this comment. The other example of mis-match could be regarded as a slip, on a par with slips on other linguistic levels (segmental, lexical, syntactic) which are well known in the literature (Fromkin, 1980; Cutler, 1982).

It is interesting that dialogue introducers in narrative do not appear to follow the pattern of CHP/Past tense switching observed for other verb forms. The assertion that they may form a special class of verbs in narrative deserves further attention.

#### 5.3.6 Dialogue Introducers in Narrative

A common pattern is for narrators to alternate between "says" (CHP) and "said" (Past) in introducing narrative quotes. This can be seen in an excerpt from the story "The Drunk" told by a female hairdresser (See section 5.5 for the complete story),

S. so I says  
"Well I'll, come on I'll put you on the road  
to the station"  
I said  
"Have you got your money with you?..  
he says "Why?"  
"Well" I said "If you haven't got your fare",  
he said,  
"Why would you give me a few bob?"

After examining several hypotheses, Wolfson(1982) was forced to conclude that tense switching in dialogue introducers

does not serve to separate events from one another (as other tense switches do), nor does it differentiate speakers. She notes that through overuse, "the say/said alternation may have lost its significance and distinctive meaning".

Although Wolfson(1982) states that in the blocking effect, the direction of tense switch is not significant, Schiffrin (1981) says that it is only the tense switch from CHP to Past which separates events. She claims that when the tense switches from Past to CHP, the CHP then acts evaluatively to highlight the unexpected events which cumulatively give the story its point.

In the light of Schiffrin's comments about the "evaluative" function of CHP, Johnstone(1986) re-examines one of Wolfson's hypotheses - that tense choice signals the relative status of participants. It was mentioned in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.5.4.) that Johnstone focuses on the distribution of dialogue introducers in interchanges (following Goffman, 1976, she defines an interchange as a conversational move and its response) between authority figures e.g. police officers, military superiors, parents; and nonauthority figures e.g. motorists, military subordinates, children. After examining twenty narrative interchanges between authority figures and non-authorities, Johnstone concludes that where there is a tense differential at all in the dialogue introducers, the speech of the authority is always introduced by CHP or  $\emptyset$  ( $\emptyset$  is the symbol she uses for the lack of a verbal introducer - quotes

introduced in this way are usually marked paralinguistically), while the nonauthority gets the Past tense.

Why should it be the case that the authority is introduced by the marked form, the non-past form for a past event? Johnstone(1986) explains this by saying that since dialogue introducers (with the exception of verbs like "scream, shout, whisper") are semantically neutral and merely mark the fact that someone's exact words are about to be spoken, they are available for use as evaluation devices (CHP being one of these) to indicate the "point" of the story (Labov, 1972; Polanyi, 1979). Johnstone argues that the authority figure's speech is marked evaluatively by CHP since it is their talk which is more crucial to the story point. In other words, it is the presence of the authority in interaction with the non-authority which marks a departure from expectations and makes the story worth telling (although it could also be argued that there would be no story without the presence of the non-authority).

The narrative data base used for the present study also provides examples of stories which recreate conversations with authority figures. Since Johnstone(1986) claims only a pilot study, her analyses were applied to the narratives told by the four occupational groups. Out of the 143 narratives comprising the present data base, eleven first-person narratives have at least one interchange between an authority figure and a nonauthority. Five

stories recreate conversations between policemen and "runners" (taxi-fare evaders); four contain discourse between nurses, doctors and patients and in one case between a medical examiner and a nurse; and two report interactions between chefs and their trainees (although the hairdressers do occasionally tell authority stories, the examples in the data do not contain dialogue between authorities and nonauthorities).

In these eleven narratives, there are a total of twelve interchanges. However, only seven of these show a tense differential (the remainder being in the past tense, except for one interchange which is in CHP), four of which contradict Johnstone's findings.

An example from the data appears in the story "Ulysses" presented in the preceding section (5.3.5). In this story there is interaction between a fare evader (non-authority) and a policeman (authority). However, if we examine the first interchange between the "runner" and the policeman on lines 45-47, it is obvious that the policeman who is the authority figure, has his speech introduced by the Past tense, while the offender gets the marked form, CHP.

It appears that what is being marked here is not authority vs. non-authority, but the reason why this story is being told. The whole "point" of this story is that the policeman gets the man's name wrong and is made to look foolish as a result. That this is the intended point can be gleaned not

only from the evaluative repetition of the man's name in the narrative itself, but also from the context in which this story is told. It is told in a round of stories relating incidents where the taxi-drivers had to call on policemen for help with fare-evaders. The first story in the round which sets the tone for following narratives is one in which two policeman commandeer a taxi-driver's cab in pursuit of a felon, and in urging him to ignore the speeding laws they destroy his vehicle. When the driver attempts to apply for compensation, the police deny liability and he is forced to pay for the damage himself. This story occurs immediately before the one above and is told by the same narrator (a dominant member of the storytelling group) who voices the conclusion felt by most of the drivers that policemen are not trustworthy. The above narrative is therefore tellable because the drivers view it as an incident in which a policeman has his authority discredited by a man who he believes is "taking the micky". It is not surprising therefore that the first appearance of the man's name, the focal point of the narrative, is marked in a direct quote introduced by CHP. In Schiffirin's terms, the tense of dialogue introducers switches from Past to CHP in this interchange, the function of CHP being to mark discourse which is relevant to the story point.

It might be suggested that the use of CHP for the man's reply "Ulilles" (line 47), could be taken as an act of defiance (on the part of the narrator as well as the character), and indicates that he is not intimidated by



authority (there is one other interchange in the data where CHP introduces the speech of an offender who defies a policeman's request). It is clear that the policeman thinks the utterance is defiant since he immediately hits the man, an action which reaffirms his position of superiority. In the interchange which follows this violence (lines 49-55), the policeman's speech is introduced by CHP, which could be a sign that he has successfully renegotiated his status. However, the man's reply in this case is not introduced by a verb tense at all, but is marked paralinguistically (by increased amplitude and a step up in pitch) and lexically by "like". According to Johnstone (1986) quotes introduced by CHP and those without a verbal introducer are both "marked" forms. This implies that both utterances in the second interchange are "marked" and have an evaluative function. In fact, both quotes do contribute to the story "point" (the first indicating miscommunication of the man's name and the second that a repair is necessary).

Although the alternation of CHP/Past tenses may track status relations in the story above, it is not the presence of the authority figure, the policeman, in this case which makes the story worth telling, rather it is the presence of the offender by virtue of his unusual name. Therefore the author would suggest, contrary to what Johnstone(1986) implies, that the authority figure's speech need not always receive CHP since there are clearly cases where the introduction of a nonauthority is what makes the story tellable.

It is possible that what CHP alternation indicates in the story "Ulysses" is not status per se, but the footing (Goffman, 1981) of the various participants. It was mentioned in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.2.) that stories have two temporal reference points (c.f. *sujet d'annonce* and *sujet d'annonciation* - Todorov, 1969). Dialogue introducers provide one means by which speakers can manage their footing on both the level of the reporting speech event and the level of interaction within the story. Johnstone(1986) suggests that in using a different tense to introduce the speech of authorities and non-authorities, speakers are indicating to their listeners that the two characters are on different footings. She proposes that since one might expect a different level of formality from characters whose speech is introduced by CHP and the past tense, the authority's speech is introduced by CHP since they can afford to sound more colloquial while the offender must be careful to speak within the prescribed norms.

The problem with this analysis is that one could argue that CHP signifies either informality or formality. There is no independent means (i.e. non-linguistic) of assessing formality/informality. The evidence is conflicting and it clearly is not possible to make a unique function inference about the formality dimension. However, it could be argued that the narrator of "Ulysses", introduces the non-authority's speech by CHP in order to signal to the audience that the runner has the "higher-level" footing in

relation to the policeman (higher-level in the sense that he inadvertently makes the policeman look foolish). The policeman then unsuccessfully tries to renegotiate his own footing by using CHP in reply. However, further examples are required to support or refute this claim.

Another explanation for the findings of the present work may be that in the humorous narratives which form the present data base, the use of humour overrides the status relations which would normally apply. It was pointed out in Section 5.1.1 of this chapter that humour temporarily reduces status differences (Coser, 1960). Consider the extract below, in which a nurse interacts with a medical examiner (See Chapter 6, Section 6.1 for the full story):

- K. ..and I remember having to do erm..  
a urine test on this diabetic you see ..
- I. Mmh
- K. and then you're supposed to tell them ..  
why you're doing it, and what are the  
consequences of the test and all that  
sort of thing .. and er this was at the  
the Q.E., and we'd got, four bedded wards  
there .. and er I briefed most of my  
patients .. 10  
[speaker laughs]
- T. I was going to say you have to
- I. You have to yeh
- K. "Now be good", you know ..  
[laughter]  
and erm .. I remember it was a guy  
actually that er .. came from the,  
General Nursing Council ..  
and we went up in the sluice then ..  
and he said, 20  
"Well if you could go and get a s-  
urine sample of Mrs So and So",  
I says "Righty Ho" ..  
get the bed pan go trotting down into  
this nice little four bedded ward ..

Why should it be in the interchange on lines 20-23, that the

examiner gets the Past tense while the nurse gets CHP?

First of all, it is very unlikely that the nurse's reply "Righty Ho" (line 23), is the one that she actually used in the situation she is describing since in gatekeeping situations of this kind, one would normally address the gatekeeper with respect (Erickson, 1976). It is more unusual in view of the nurse's lengthy abstract, which indicates that she clearly was intimidated by the hospital examination system. The utterance is an example of constructed dialogue (Tannen, 1986) and it is not intended to represent the exact words which the nurse used in this situation. In this case, the constructed dialogue "Righty Ho", has the evaluative function of setting the colloquial, humorous tone of the narrative. This tone is reinforced by the nurse's reference to the examiner as a "guy" (line 16), and the naming device "Mrs So and So" (line 22), another example of constructed dialogue (since it would not have made sense had it actually been used in the interaction).

Secondly, this story relates a humorous incident in which the nurse is the central character. The outcome of the narrative is that the nurse provides the urine for the test herself because she panics when the only diabetic patient in the hospital can not provide a urine sample at her request. Therefore the use of CHP for the nurse's speech in the interchange above could be seen as marking the central character, that is, the character whose antics are to give rise to the story point. Wolfson(1982) suggests that speakers for whom CHP alternation is high are often the

central figures in their own narratives. This aspect of the use of CHP is considered further in Chapter 6 (section 6.4.3).

In summary then, the present study agrees with Schiffrin(1981) concerning the evaluative function of CHP, but would suggest that although Johnstone's(1986) basic premise is correct i.e. that CHP is much more likely to introduce the speech of a character whose presence is necessary to the story point, this character is not always the authority figure. The central character depends on the point which the story is expected to illustrate (as pointed out in Chapter 4, section 4.2., this point may vary from telling to telling, hence the central character may also change).

### 5.3.7 Repetition and Reiteration

Storytelling provides narrators with a great deal of opportunity for repetition and reiteration, the former involving reproduction of a specific word, phrase or sentence, while the latter involves "recycling" a whole sequence in paraphrased form.

In Trevor's "Ulysses" story, the names "Ulilles" and "Ulysses" are actually mentioned no fewer than twelve times by members of the storytelling group. The story in fact begins and ends with a sequence which dwells on the name aspect. Trevor finishes the actual story with "and I never

heard no more about it", which is followed immediately by the echoing reminiscence "Ulilles". This echo is itself echoed by another taxi-driver, then a third taxi-driver states why the story is considered by the group to be worth telling when he says "Copper thought he was saying Ulysses".

Repetition and reiteration often surround the climactic moment of a story and their function appears to be to give maximum dramatic impact at this point. They also help to ensure that the "point" of the story is underlined and prolonged for listeners' benefit. It is characteristic of vernacular narrative that "recycling" of a particularly significant event sequence is not only permitted but expected.

The "recycling" effect is found in the coda of Alfie's story, "Going to Worcester". The story relates a journey in which Alfie delivers a drunken, genteel customer to his country home near Worcester. However, Alfie fails to extract any money from the customer and so he appropriates a clock as security. The story resolution involves the return of the clock to the customer, and the event sequence ends with

.....any anyhow I ended up with f- forty quid,  
so you know well th- another thirty quid he gave me,  
"Oh erm, Dorothy bring me thirty pounds out of the  
petty cash please" and he shook me hands and everything,

However, the coda continues immediately with

but er what a performance but he was in the end it ended up a very good night like the er the funny side of it, but when he brought that television I really couldn't believe it it was cracking, I wondered what he was going to bring, I didn't know what he was going to do like when he said "Go and open the taxi-door", I thought he was going to get back in like and say "Take me round to my mates I'll go and get you some cash",

T. Yeh

A. and he brought this television out  
[laughter]

Here, Alfie's reformulation "I wondered what he was going to bring, I didn't know what he was going to bring ... I thought he was going to get back in ..." allows him to prolong the suspense immediately before the climax. The climax is itself repeated in the last line in "and he brought this television out". As Burke(1969) points out, the cumulative effect is persuasive, and encourages audience involvement.

The degree of narrator involvement can be partly ascertained by looking at the amount of reiteration and repetition in a story. The more frequent such devices are, then the more likely it is that the speaker is heavily involved in the narration. Audience involvement can also result in the restatement of key elements in the narrator's theme and this assists in making an elaborate network which is created by the whole group. The use of such a tactic by a listener also reinforces group members' feeling of "being on the same wavelength".

### 5.3.8. Linguistic Ambiguity

Puns appear frequently in one liners, riddles and jokes, such as,

"Why did the cookie cry?  
Because it's mother had been a wafer so long."

This pun relies on the linguistic levels of phonology and lexis. The lexical identification of items, such as "a wafer"/"away for" is partially obscured by the difference in syllable quantity ( U— as opposed to U-U in Abercrombie's (1967) terms.)

In the narrative data examined, on the other hand, punning is rare. There are a number of cases, however, where humour relies on the potential of an expression for more than one interpretation. Thus in "Sylvia's Knickers", the climax of the story is encompassed in the voice of the taxi-radio, giving the re-enacted speech

"Can you go back to Sylvia's, she's left her  
knickers in the cab"

The humour relies on the predicted misinterpretation of knickers. "Knickers" is to be interpreted in the plural sense, pairs of knickers. They are not the personal belongings of Sylvia, but the fashion accessories of her boutique. The latter interpretation makes any sexual undertones invalid.



### 5.3.9. Story Climax

As Sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.7 show, a number of story features are associated with the climax. It has been shown that direct (or re-enacted) speech is most heavily used around the story climax; that verb tenses tend to operate in "blocks", past tense alternating with historic present blocks, the former being characteristic of narrator distancing, and the latter of narrator involvement, especially around the story climax. It has also been shown that expressive phonology appears to have the function of underlining the dramatic climax; and that repetition and reiteration serve to preserve and prolong the story climax, thus allowing the group extra time to savour it.

The role of prosody in differentiating the narrator's from other roles has been stressed, especially in the section on Direct Speech (5.2.1).

A brief characterisation can now be given of the role of prosody in the marking of story climax. Firstly, expressive phonology in elements such as "bash", "waah", "smack", "aagh", in addition to carrying onomatopoeic force and representing physical actions, also display some of the features of Direct Speech. They are frequently uttered with a maximum loudness, and on a higher pitch level than the preceding discourse. Secondly, since direct speech occurs with greatest density around the story climax, it is not surprising that story climaxes exploit a higher part of the

narrator's pitch range than the narrated episodes which do not involve re-enacted speech. Thirdly, an effect has been observed which is not the direct result of either the density of direct speech or pitch raising: it could be termed pitch updrift. This phenomenon involves successive chunks of direct speech being "re-set" at increasingly higher pitch levels as the narrator approaches the story climax. A good example of this is to be found in "The Drunk" , told by Mrs. S a Liverpool hairdresser (see section 5.5). The term phonetic updrift is coined to represent a phonetic counterpart to downdrift. Phonetic downdrift is the phenomenon whereby stretches of discourse which expand or develop one topic take the form of utterances whose intonational base line appears to be re-set at successively lower levels in each utterance, until a new topic is launched, when the intonational base line is re-set upwards, to mark a new topic boundary (Johns-Lewis, 1986; Lehiste, 1975, 1979; Brazil, 1975, 1985). The significance of phonetic updrift is that its function appears to be to increase dramatic tension. Metaphorically speaking, the drift upwards in pitch level acts as a parallel marking of dramatic tension.

#### 5.4 Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the social functions of humour, factors which facilitate humour, and the special importance of intra-group relationships in humorous storytelling rounds. It was suggested that the mechanics of

humour are essentially to do with group domination, and that while themes such as violence, sexual exploits and ego boosting are obvious devices enabling narrators to dominate via their own exploits, paradoxically, group domination can also be achieved through self-denigration, self-ridicule and display of personal faults and weaknesses. Narrators who display personal faults and weaknesses are actually displaying self-confidence vis-a-vis group acceptance.

The narratives are found to share a macro-structure of the form; scene setting; storyline development; establishment of "point"; resolution/climax; and coda which is optional. It has been acknowledged that this structured format may be a consequence of the manner in which the stories are provoked, as well as by the narrator's need to "perform" and the expectations of the audience.

Linguistic devices common to narrators have been set out and exemplified on the data, and attention has been drawn to the contribution of direct speech and token mimicry (of segmental and prosodic features) in distinguishing the narrator's from other character's roles. Direct speech involves in many cases a change in pitch level, voice quality or tempo, or any combination of these. Three distinct types of token mimicry have been identified and exemplified; regional/social, ethnic and idiosyncratic. Regional/social and ethnic mimicry are found to be characterised primarily by shifts on the segmental level of speech, although prosodic shifts may accrue. Idiosyncratic

mimicry is found to be characterised by shifts which are mainly prosodic in nature, although phonetic shifts may accrue. Token mimicry was characterised as the functional equivalent of interpersonal code-switching (Gumperz, 1982), through which narrators signal metaphorical information by taking on a role (frequently stereotypical). The major function of token mimicry observed in the present sample is found to be rapport (Lakoff, 1979). Subsidiary functions include the reinforcement and maintenance of groups bonds, the diffusion of subliminal aggression and self-aggrandizement (Labov, 1972). These functions closely parallel the functions of humour in conversation.

The narratives show "tense blocking" - switches between the conversational historical present (CHP) and the past tense. These serve to separate important story events and points (c.f. Wolfson, 1982). Narrators switch between CHP and the past tense in introducing narrative quotes. CHP is found to have an evaluative function in that it often introduces the speech of a character whose talk is more crucial to the story point. However, it is suggested that this character may vary from telling to telling. The alternation between CHP and the past tense may also be used to mark changes of footing of the various story characters.

Expressive phonology ("zap", "pow", "bash") and CHP are found to cluster around the story climax. Repetition, both by the narrator, and by members of the group, of expressions crucial to the story development have the effect of

corporate establishment of the story theme. Reiteration of the story climax, both by the narrator and by the group, prolongs the moment of dramatic denouement enabling the group to savour it to the full. In discussion of the constellation effect, it was shown that elements operating at very different levels of generality - segmental, prosodic, lexical and syntactic - are co-ordinated in story structuring and character/role differentiation.

The narratives collected are set out fully in the appendix below, (section 5.5) in annotated form, to enable the reader to apply the descriptive framework set out in this chapter.

Chapter 5 has examined what narrators have in common, in terms of humour, topic choice, organisational structure and linguistic devices. Chapter 6 investigates how narrators differ from each other, and focuses on sex and occupational differences in narration.

## 5.5 Annotated Data

The stories annotated below have already been examined in the preceding sections of Chapter Five. They are laid out in full here to enable the reader to see the extracts already illustrated in context. The order of the stories is as follows

|                    | Pages |
|--------------------|-------|
| GOING TO WORCESTER | 75-81 |
| ULYSSES            | 82-83 |
| INKY, THE PRINTER  | 84    |
| POSH CLIENTS       | 85    |
| THE CHINESE MAN    | 85    |
| HIGHLIGHTS         | 86    |
| THE DRUNK          | 87-90 |
| SYLVIA'S KNICKERS  | 90    |
| THE BRUSH STORY    | 91    |

The annotations in the right hand margin indicate only the most significant aspects of each story (from the point of view of the analysis already presented), in order that the reader should not be presented with a confusing array of notations in the limited space available (although two stories - "Going to Worcester" and "The Drunk" are annotated more extensively since they are illustrative of several linguistic patterns in the data). It must be acknowledged that this is one of the major stumbling blocks for researchers in the field of Conversation Analysis. However, several features are highlighted as indicated in the transcription system below.

### Transcription Conventions

The transcription conventions utilised are a combination of the author's own and many gleaned from the Conversation Analysis Literature: as used by Tannen (1982); Levinson (1983); and French and Local in Johns-Lewis (1986b).

- , indicates a noticeable pause or break in rhythm (less than .5 second).
- .. indicates a full second pause, an extra dot is added for each additional half second, thus .... is a two second pause.
- <f> placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicates that it is produced louder (forte) than the speaker's norm.
- <p> placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicates that it is produced quieter (piano) than the speaker's norm.
- <l> placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicates that it is produced more slowly (lento) than the speaker's norm.
- <a> placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicates that it is produced more quickly (allegro)

- than the speaker's norm.
- <di> placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicates that it is produced with decreasing loudness (diminuendo).
- <st> placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicates that it is produced with a rhythmic series of clipped syllables (i.e. syllables which are spoken very rapidly or abruptly), but without any sharp pitch contrasts (staccato).
- drawled placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicates that some part of one or more syllables is slowed down.
- held placed to the right of a word indicates that the release of the initial segment of that word is delayed.
- slurring placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicates that consonant transitions have become blurred.
- :: placed after a letter indicates a noticeable lengthening of the sound.
- STRESS underlined capital letters within a given stretch of talk indicate that a given word is produced with emphatic stress.
- BUMP** bold capital letters within a given stretch of talk indicate that a given word is an instance of expressive phonology.
- Ulysses bold letters within a word indicate the stressed syllable.
- (**PAST**) placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicates a block of past tense verb forms.
- (**HP**) placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicates a block of historical present tense verb forms.
- \* asterisks placed after a verb form within a given stretch of talk indicate that its tense is mis-matched with the block of verb forms within which it is placed (N.B. single instances of a verb tense do not constitute a block - see chapter 5, section 5.3.5).
- ( ) indistinct utterances are placed in round brackets within the text.
- 'word' ( )-[ ] placed to the right of an utterance indicates a phonetic choice by the speaker. The variable under scrutiny in a given 'word' in the discourse is indicated in round brackets and the variant used by the speaker is indicated in square brackets.
- { } curly brackets placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicate a lexical or stylistic contrast.
- [ ] square brackets placed below or to the right of a given stretch of talk indicate paralinguistic features (e.g. laughter and voice qualifiers) and non-verbal characteristics (e.g. gestures).
- PITCH RAISING and PITCH DROP placed to the right of a given stretch of talk indicate either a noticeable step-up

- = or a noticeable step-down in pitch level.
- = indicates one utterance follows on immediately from another
- th- a dash placed after a letter indicates an incomplete utterance.
- ] penned brackets linking two utterances indicate overlapping speech.

"GOING TO WORCESTER"

- A. ..and I had this fellow.. (PAST)  
 "Oh thanks, thanks Amber Nine, erm PITCH RAISING  
 Grand Hotel Mister Smith going to  
 Worcester he's been quoted, ten quid"  
 which is about the going price  
 for Worcester,  
 I thought that's a nice job ..  
 so .. I pulled up on the rank and  
 I went into the Grand and he..  
 this bloke staggered past me and,  
 dishevelled you know what I mean { 'dishevelled' -  
 [laughter] stylistic contrast }  
 like like probably when he went 'what' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 to his office in the morning  
 he was very smart  
 but he'd..had had a binge
- T. Oh this is ace this is
- A. he'd had a binge and he'd had  
 a meeting an' everyth-  
 and he comes\* staggering  
 past me and **BUMP**  
 "Oh I'm awfully sorry" he said and PITCH RAISING  
 he fell backwards down the step , Falling Pitch Contour  
 [laughter] Slurring
- I sai- and I I went in the rece- (PAST)  
 and he's\*+ sat on the floor by the kerb,  
 and I w- I walked  
 the doors open on their own at the  
 Grand like they're the automatic,  
 and I says\* erm..  
 "Mister Smith here for Worcester?" PITCH RAISING  
 he said  
 "That's him out there" PITCH RAISING  
 I thought Oh God what a lovely start PITCH DROP 'what' -  
 (t)-[t<sup>r</sup>]
- T. Is that your bird?
- L. Yeh.....
- A. he said  
 "Oh that's him out there" PITCH RAISING  
 I thought Oh good God.. and he's\* PITCH DROP (HP)  
 sat on and he never made an  
 attempt to get up 'get' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 he's\* sat on the kerb right by the,  
 I says  
 "You going to Worcester?", PITCH RAISING



|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| "What a wonderful idea"                | PITCH DROP                    |
| he says..                              | Slurring <l>                  |
| [laughter]                             | 'what' (t) - [ t ]            |
| I said                                 | (PAST)                        |
| "Have you got any money?"              | PITCH RAISING                 |
| "Hold on a minute"                     |                               |
| and he was sat on the kerb             |                               |
| and he pulled a fiver                  |                               |
| I said                                 |                               |
| "It's ten pounds"..                    | PITCH DROP                    |
| "Oh that's very reasonable"            | PITCH RAISING                 |
| he said,                               |                               |
| so a fiver here and two pound there    |                               |
| and in the end he came up with         |                               |
| ten pounds...and sixty pence..         |                               |
| so I put it in the bag                 | 'put' (t) - [t <sup>r</sup> ] |
| I said "Right",                        |                               |
| and I I eventually got him in          |                               |
| the cab and he'd got this              |                               |
| Cheshire grin all the ti-              |                               |
| Oh he's*+ pleasant..you know what      |                               |
| I mean he kept asking silly            |                               |
| questions, and I only turned           |                               |
| first left he said                     |                               |
| "Where are we?"                        | PITCH RAISING                 |
| [laughter]                             |                               |
| T. On the verge of a nervous breakdown |                               |
| [laughter]                             |                               |
| A. I said                              |                               |
| "Sit back and we'll get you to         | PITCH DROP                    |
| Worcester",                            |                               |
| anyway we got to a set of traffic      |                               |
| lights in Worcester..I I don't know    |                               |
| it very well, we got a, I said         |                               |
| "Where now?"                           | PITCH RAISING                 |
| he says* "Well"                        | PITCH DROP                    |
| he says*                               |                               |
| "You better stop here" ..              |                               |
| so he said                             |                               |
| "Well I'll have to direct you"         |                               |
| he said                                |                               |
| "I've brought you on a, wild g-"       |                               |
| he said                                |                               |
| "actually I don't live in Worcester    |                               |
| I live .. a little fur-                |                               |
| three or four miles the other side",   |                               |
| he said                                |                               |
| "but I haven't got any more money"     |                               |
| .. he said                             |                               |
| "so"..                                 |                               |
| he said                                |                               |
| "You've got to take me"                |                               |
| he said                                |                               |
| "but I've got some money in the bureau |                               |

- at home" ...  
 so away we go he said ..  
 "Turn right here", 'right' (t) - [t]  
 so we got back to this set of lights 'here' (h) - [h]  
 three times..  
 [laughter]  
 he said "Oh"  
 I said  
 "That's Woolworths there" I said .. PITCH RAISING  
 I said  
 "We've just come past here" I said  
 "for the third time" ,  
 he said  
 "I've got it now", PITCH RAISING <f>  
 [laughter] 'got' (t) - [t<sup>d</sup>]  
 he said  
 "Turn left here", PITCH DROP  
 so we turned left  
 and we come\*+ back to Woolworths again  
 and five times we got to the same set  
 of traffic lights  
 [laughter]  
 round the town..  
 and, then like I mean he,  
 [makes kissing sound]  
 the fare then was out of 'out' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 a tenner it would have gone by  
 the board you see ..
- S. Yeh  
 A. anyway he l-  
 I can't remember all the details,  
 eventually we found the right road  
 and he'd got this time he'd got  
 his head out the window  
 and he'd got a tor- 'got' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 he'd got a pencil torch .. 'got' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 and he was  
 well you couldn't see a thing <a>  
 we're\* doing sixty mile an hour PITCH DROP  
 [laughter]  
 he's\* look,  
 he said  
 "Well there's a turn off here  
 somewhere there's -"..  
 up a countr- ,  
 anyroad we got to his house  
 and it was a big house and he'd got ..  
 a big mansion thing  
 and he'd got these erm ....  
 double doors, on the front  
 with the big knockers on and suits of  
 armour in there ....
- L. (Indistinct comment)  
 [laughter] [hand clap]

- A. "Come in" he says\* "Come in" PITCH RAISING <f>  
 and he tripped up the mats an'  
 and his missis ca- his missis ca-  
 "Oh good God George where PITCH DROP <l>  
 have you been?" .. 'have' (h) - [h]  
 "This is my friend the taxi-driver  
 he brought me home".. 'home' (h) - [h]  
 [laughter]  
 "I'm going to bed" she said,  
 so she went off  
 "Will you be alright?" PITCH RAISING  
 I said  
 "Yes yes alright thank you" .. PITCH DROP  
 any road, we went, went in a lovely  
 room and he'd got all these antiques 'got' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 and nice, roll-top bureau  
 and there's clocks and pictures,  
 really nice ..  
 "Would you like a cup of tea?" PITCH RAISING  
 I said  
 "Well not really like" I said PITCH DROP  
 "we're a bit pushed for time"  
 I mean well, it had taken two hours  
 when it should have taken  
 three parts of an hour....  
 [laughter]  
 and erm .. and he opened the drawer ...  
 he opened the bureau  
 and he hadn't got a light ... 'got' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 he said "I".. he said  
 "I I was sure I didn't have any money  
 in here" he said
- X. Thank you very much  
 [referring to coffee]
- A. anyway he hadn't got a bean .. he said 'got' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 "Well look" .... he said  
 "the- ,what you'll have to do" .....
- T. More coffee Sharon?
- S. No thanks
- A. Yes please ... he said,  
 "What you'll have to do" he said  
 "is come back in the morning, and pi-" PITCH DROP  
 I said  
 "Well hold on a bit mate" PITCH RAISING  
 I says\* er, I said  
 "I brought you out here"  
 I says\*  
 "I ain't had a light yet" ..  
 he said "Well ....." " he said  
 "I'll have to give you some form of PITCH DROP  
 security" ...  
 I said  
 "Well that's the best bet"  
 he said

"Go and open the doors", PITCH RAISING  
I said "What?"  
he said  
"Go and open the taxi-door".... PITCH RAISING  
so, all the doors are\* open, and  
I I said "What?" PITCH RAISING  
he said  
"Don't ask questions" PITCH DROP <1>  
he was sort of sobering up by then 'Don't'(t)-[t]  
he'd sort of got his wits about him..  
and erm  
(indistinct remark)  
I said "Oh fair enough" so I did,  
and er I heard this rumbling  
and I I looked up  
and he's\* coming down the hall  
with the television..  
[laughter]  
BB. You what?  
A. he's\* coming down the hall with the  
television on the stand,  
he said "Put this-" PITCH RAISING (PAST)  
I said "Oh turn it off" PITCH DROP  
I said "I got work"  
he said  
"I want it back tomorrow"  
he said  
" 'Cause Wimbledon starts",  
I says\* "I".... PITCH RAISING  
[laughter]  
he said to me, I thought I can't have  
that in the back of the cab  
I said  
"I'd have to take it home, I can't",  
he said  
"Well, you must have some-", he said PITCH DROP  
" have a look round and see what you  
like",  
I said  
"Well what about one of those pictures PITCH RAISING  
off the wall",  
"Well they're quite valuable", PITCH DROP  
I said  
"Well, I'll have that one"  
it was a beautiful picture like  
with ornate frame it was a a small oil  
painting I said  
"That looks nice"  
he said  
"Will that cover it?" PITCH RAISING  
I said  
"Well I don't know the value of these PITCH DROP  
I'm no art dealer" ..  
I said erm

"What about that clock on-" =  
 "Oh good God don't take that,                   PITCH RAISING  
 it's my mothers a wedding present            <a>  
 she'll kill me if that's missing  
 she's coming over tomorrow" =  
 I said "Today"                                   PITCH  
 [laughter]                                        DROP        {lexical contrast  
 ...anyway, I said   'tomorrow/today'}  
 "No that looks nice"                           PITCH DROP  
 "Oh please don't have that"                   PITCH RAISING  
 I said "Well why not"  
 I said "I'm coming back"  
 "Oh please take care of it" ..               PITCH RAISING  
 so I I had this clock and er ....  
 he said  
 "Don't take it home we'll have to           PITCH RAISING  
 wrap it up"                                      <f> <a>  
 and he went into the lobby  
 and brought these old c-  
 and I'd got some sacks and things  
 in the boot, he brought this old  
 he said  
 "Wrap it up in that"                           <p>  
 and he carried it out like a baby,  
 he said  
 "Where are you going?"  
 I said "I'll have it in the front  
 with me and wrap it up so it won't",  
 "Oh please" he said                           PITCH RAISING  
 "Don't be late"  
 and he was really pleading with me then,  
 "How do I get back?"  
 he said  
 "Well where are we?"..                       PITCH RAISING  
 [laughter]  
 I said "Well"  
 "Oh yes"  
 and he he give\*+ me the  
 anyway that was it,  
 and I went in the morning ..  
 and picked him up  
 and he kept me waiting another hour  
 I had breakfast there and his daughter  
 was there and he's\*, relating this story  
 how good I was and ..  
 as I he was  
 but he was really glad to see this clock,  
 and actually he was a ... one of these  
 stockbrokers and he'd got his  
 big office in Bennets Hill,  
 and I took him there come up the st-  
 any anyhow I ended up with f- forty quid,  
 so, you know well th- another thirty quid  
 he gave me,

"Oh erm, Dorothy bring me thirty pounds PITCH RAISING  
 out of the petty cash please" 'out' (t) - [t]  
 and he shook me hands and everything, <l>  
 but er what a performance but he was 'what' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 in the end it ended up a very good  
 night like the er the funny side of it,  
 but when he brought that television  
 I really couldn't believe it  
 it was cracking, I wondered what he was 'what' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 going to bring, I didn't know what he 'what' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>]  
 was going to do like when he said  
 "Go and open the taxi-door", I thought  
 he was going to get back in like and say  
 "Take me round to my mates I'll go and  
 get you some cash",

T. Yeh

and he brought this television out  
 [laughter]

- \*+ he's sat on the kerb = he is sitting on the kerb  
 The construction does not have the passive meaning  
 found in Standard English.
- \*+ he's pleasant - this could mean 'he is pleasant'(HP),  
 or 'he was pleasant'(PAST).
- \*+ we come back to Woolworths again - the use of 'come'  
 here instead of the standard past tense form 'came'  
 does not appear in this case to be an instance of  
 the Historical Present(HP) Tense, rather it is an  
 irregular verb form i.e. we come = we came. This  
 feature occurs frequently in the taxi-driver's speech.
- \*+ he give me = he gave me, irregular verb form also  
 frequently used by the taxi-driver.

"ULYSSES"

- T. I I took a couple to Chelmsley Wood ..... (PAST)  
and er.....when I got there  
the guy said erm.....  
"You'll have to whistle for your money" PITCH DROP  
I said,  
"I don't like whistling, search your PITCH DROP  
pockets".....  
so, he he comes\* up with about 30 pence..  
an' a, an' a, chromium plated, chain  
around his wrist...  
[a listener coughs]  
so, I said,  
"Can you get me a policeman".. PITCH DROP  
and give 'em the address..and.. (HP)  
like, in no time half a dozen cabs are  
there and, the the woman's gone  
into an house..so like I'm trying  
to watch which house she's gone into..  
and keep my eye on the geyser..  
which I do quite successfully,
- I. Yeh
- T. and the police come and they've got  
this guy and, I take 'em to this  
house, and the gas and electric  
meter's been done...and the copper said (PAST)  
"Have a walk around see if there's  
anything you fancy".. PITCH RAISING  
So I walked around, the only thing  
there that was any good was the  
soda stream thing, you know, television  
was a bit battered..all the pots and  
pans are all smashed, the transistor  
radio with no knobs on..
- A. yeh
- T. the best thing in the house was this,  
soda syphon
- BB. soda stream
- T. [speaker coughs]  
so..we're in the kitchen..sink's piled (HP)  
high with dirty washing up and oh it was\*  
a right shit bin..  
er, the copper said\*... PITCH RAISING  
"She ain't got a light she's on the PITCH DROP  
dole"..so he said\* to the bloke  
"What's your name?"..  
so he says,  
"Ulilles" PITCH RAISING  
and the copper went\* SMACK..he says,  
"I know you ain't Ulysses, PITCH DROP  
what's your proper name?"
- BB.[listener laughs] Ulysses

T. and he, like  
 "I ain't saying Ulysses I'm saying PITCH RAISING  
 Ulilles"..  
 so, the copper gets the fellow's address..  
 got on the, radio and he said er,  
 "Can you find anything out, about  
 a U-, Ulilles"..  
 [laughter]  
 so..the voice came back immediately... (PAST)

A. Ulysses

T. "a:h:...you'd do no good with him,  
 he'd enjoy going to prison"..  
 so the copper said  
 "Can't help you mate".. PITCH DROP  
 so this bloke looked at me he said  
 "See fatty I told you you couldn't of"  
 I went, [speaker slaps one fist into  
 the palm of his other hand] **BUMP**,  
 [laughter]  
 he's\* gone over the sink **SMACK**,  
 right through the kitchen window..  
 so the copper said,  
 "Keep your hands to yourself, give him a PITCH DROP  
 good hiding when you get outside",  
 so I said "right okay",  
 so I've got this soda syphon.. (HP)  
 and they've told the woman that if she,  
 coughs the money up she can have her  
 soda syphon back..so...  
 they've told me to go now,  
 and they'll, let him come out of the hall..  
 in a couple of minutes,  
 so I'm in the cab with a half-inch  
 ballbearing, and my catapult..  
 and when they let him come out,  
 I went\* **BOSH**,  
 and I hit him on the back of the head  
 and put him out like a light..  
 [laughter]  
 and he was still lying on the floor,  
 when I left...it was a cul-de-sac,  
 and I had to go round a big square  
 to get out, when I come\*+ round onto  
 Wimbold Way the Police stopped me  
 I thought Christ I've killed him...  
 so, they, they said,  
 "He's hurt...but you won't get your  
 money so, keep the soda syphon",  
 I said "Oh righto thanks"  
 and I never heard no more about it...

BB. Ulilles,  
 All. Ulilles aye,  
 X. the copper thought he was saying Ulysses



"INKY, THE PRINTER"

- LC. ....and we had a printer, we used to  
call him Inky, Inky the printer  
you know,
- I. Yeh
- LC. that that was his..not  
only his name, but every printer was  
called Inky, see..
- I. [laughs]
- LC. and he was always crying this fellow..  
"This Merchant Navy's no good to me" Falling Pitch Contour  
..he was from, from Nelson he was 'merchant' (ə) - [ʔ]  
up by Burnley, you know.... 'navy' (əɪ) - [e:]  
"This Merchant Navy's no good to me"... 'no' (nə) - [g:]  
so this fellow said,  
"Oh Inky..for God's sake's shut up  
you're always moaning"  
so he pushed him like that,  
just pushed him,
- I. Mmh
- LC. ..and there they have, open drains..  
you know, they're not like ours you see,  
they're just a ditch, on the side  
of the road...like, a concrete..ditch....  
and about, I don't know, there must have  
been some water at the bottom of it,
- I. Mmh
- LC. 'cause this printer..  
he fell into the ditch see..  
and he banged his ribs, on the corner of  
the concrete,
- I. Yeh,
- LC. and it broke three of his ribs,
- I. Ooh,
- LC. anyway, we heard this terrible scream  
AA::HH::  
[screams quietly]  
and the splash, you know of the water,
- I. Yeh...
- LC. so this other guy that was with us,  
he thought he was drowning  
he dived in,
- I. [laughter]  
there was only about that much water  
in it,  
[measures about 12 inches with his  
fingers]  
[speaker laughs as he speaks]

- I. Oh no  
[laughter]  
LC. and there was nothing wrong with him,  
I. [laughter]  
nothing wrong, he said  
"God Blimey I thought you was drowning",  
anyway we we're dragging him and  
he's got three broken ribs  
I. Oh  
LC. you know, yeh  
I. It's funny the fellow didn't break his  
head open or something  
LC. Nothing wrong with him, honestly

"POSH CLIENTS"

- H. The thing is though  
they complain about, 'complain', 'day'  
I had in posh lady (eɪ) - [aɪ]  
the other day  
and she was going, 'going' (ɪŋ) - [ɪn]  
"I'm not me::an::" PITCH RAISING [nasality]  
she said,  
"but I used to go to PITCH RAISING <st>  
Rackhams to have my hair 'have', 'hair' (h) - [h]  
cut" she said, 'cut' (ʌ) - [ə] <a>  
"and it's coming 'coming' (ɪŋ) - [ɪŋg]  
to ten pounds a cut" 'cut' (ʌ) - [ə]

"THE CHINESE MAN"

- S. Georgie Randall's saying he got a fare  
(indistinct comment)  
and like he said er..a Chinee,  
he said erm,  
"[h əv ə] Road" <f>  
you know "[æ ɹ ɒ] Road"  
and he said "Harrow Road", so he  
took him up  
B. Hail Road  
S. to Harrow Road, you know up in Wavertree  
nearly, and he said, "No no no [æ ɹ ɒ ɔ:]" <f>  
and he's going on like that  
B. Gladstone Dock, where's Gladstone Dock?"  
S. I said "Whereabout?" ... like that  
"Through the hole" you know <f>  
X. (Indistinct comment)  
S. through the tunnel, Burrow Road he  
wanted, bloody Burrow Road, took him all  
the way up to Wavertree...

"HIGHLIGHTS"

- D. He came in, and he said  
that you did his hair last time  
and he wanted to speak to you..  
and you weren't here, it was you were o-  
it was your day off it was a Thursday,  
and they asked me to go out  
and speak to him,  
Julie says  
"I don't know what he's going on  
about" he wa-, he, he said,  
"Natalie layered one side of my  
hair for me last time"...  
and I thought Ooh there's something  
funny going on here  
so I went out to him,
- Z. Bit like that barber who come in  
[laughter]..
- D. and he was a real,  
honestly he was a real divvy,  
he had this three piece suit on right..  
and he was like sitting on the,  
roundabout section in ..
- A. Yeh,
- D. reception..and erm, I went up to him  
and I said "Hello, erm what were  
you thinking of having done?"..  
and he said...."WELL",  
and he keeps\* going like this  
[mimes touching her own clothing]  
he kept, touching me and patting me  
all the time, he says\*  
PITCH RAISING  
["WELL" - Breathy]
- A. (overlapping indistinct comment)
- D. "Well, Natalie did my hair for me  
last time", and he says\*  
"and you can see I haven't got  
very much hair it's re::ally::  
fi::ne::"  
he was going,  
"and she kind of layered this one  
side going BACK",  
[laughter]  
like this..  
and he he didn't bother that,  
he wasn't interested in what  
happened to the other side  
and he says\*, and he says\*,  
"Well I've fallen head over heels  
in love with this girl and she  
PITCH RAISING  
PITCH DROP <p>

- absolutely ADORES highlights  
 so, what do you think about me 'what do you... PITCH <a>  
 having highlights?" ...highlights' RAISING  
 [laughter] <st>
- and he'd come in just because  
 this girl that he was going out with,  
 we later found out that she was  
 thirty two, she'd got another boyfriend,  
 and he'd got highlights in his hair  
 and his hair was like really slick and  
 smooth and he wanted his hair exactly  
 the same and better,
- B. Was this the one that went down the pub  
 and got drunk?
- D. Yeh, he'd been in the pub all afternoon  
 plucking up courage to come in
- A. and I've done his hair before?
- D. and ask to have his highlights done
- D. Yeh, he's got glasses and it's re-  
 his hair's really short there's nothing  
 to it, it's just layered through and  
 cut over his ears, he's got glasses  
 and he's really vain and a real pain
- A. Is he little?
- D. No he's quite tall, tall and thin

"THE DRUNK"

- Mrs S and last week..last week  
 I'm walking down the road, (HP)  
 this is at eight thirty in the  
 morning..  
 this very nice dressed man..  
 very, who was there with me when  
 it happened?
- B Me
- Mrs S walking down the road, very,  
 but he was\* as TIGHT as a lord, PITCH RAISING <f>  
 wasn't he?  
 But an awful nice man..  
 so as I went past he says,  
 "Darling..  
 could you tell me the time, PITCH 'Darling' - drawled  
 could you tell me the time"..DROP 'could', 'tell' - held  
 [laughter] <di> <l>  
 slurring
- I says, "Half past eight".. <p>  
 "Oh".. <p>  
 [laughter]
- "Could you tell me now dear <l> <p>  
 where I can get a cup of coffee,

ee::hh:: I'm pissed love"..  
[laughter]  
I says,  
"You are drunk aren't you" PITCH RAISING  
I said,

(PAST)  
"How did you get like that PITCH RAISING  
tell me so early in the morning (Bouncing pitch  
it's very nice" contour) <a>  
[laughter]  
..so he said,  
"O my bloody wife's gonna kill slurring  
me when I get home",  
he said,  
"I've been out all night love".. PITCH RAISING  
So I said  
"Well wh- how are you getting <p>  
home have you got a car?" PITCH RAISING (HP)  
he says,  
"I have but I don't know where PITCH DROP  
it is", Slurring <a>  
[laughter]  
he says  
"I tell you what", he says,  
"You've got lovely eyes love.. PITCH RAISING  
[laughter]  
ee::hh:: you've got lovely eyes", 'eehh' - <f> and  
[laughter] higher pitch level  
slurring

couldn't get away could I?  
[laughter]  
A He had his arms round you  
didn't he?

Mrs S I said,\* "Come on now where <p>  
you go- how are you getting  
home?"  
he says,  
"O I'll have to get a train PITCH RAISING  
then..but don't know where slurring  
I am love"..  
so I says  
"Well I'll, come on I'll put <p>  
you on the road to the station"  
I said

(PAST)  
"Have you got your money with PITCH RAISING  
you?"..  
he says\* "Why?" .. <p>  
"Well" I said "If you haven't  
got your fare",  
he said,  
"Why would you give me PITCH RAISING  
a few bob?" slurring <f>  
I said, "If you haven't got PITCH DROP  
your fare love I would give  
you your fare home, the way

you are",  
 he says "Would you?" PITCH RAISING (HP)  
 "Well, tell you what love" slurring  
 he says  
 "I'm quite a rich man.. <l>PITCH DROP  
 do you believe me?".. PITCH RAISING  
 he was\* dressed impeccable..  
 he said\*,  
 "Come on love, come on I'll slurring  
 buy you a fur coat".. <a>  
 [laughter]  
 he says "Come on now lets PITCH RAISING <f>(HP)  
 these go these sho-" slurring  
 I quite believe he would  
 actually,  
 I Yeh  
 Mrs S he said (PAST)  
 "Don't worry you about money love, PITCH RAISING  
 there's never a WOMAN has ever  
 offered ME a bloody PENNY in my  
LIFE  
 [laughter]  
 and YOU who don't PITCH RAISING  
 and you'd give me my fare love, (very high pitch  
 come on, fur coat I'm telling you, level) <f>  
 anything in these shops you can  
 have",  
 honest of God..  
 [laughter]  
 and he came looking for me  
 didn't he?  
 came up the stairs..[speaker laughs]  
 and he says "Where do you work?" PITCH RAISING (HP)  
 I says "I've got to go now  
 I've got to go now love I've got <p> <a>  
 to go because I've got to open up  
 for staff you see I've got, I've  
 got keys",  
 "I'll punch your boss in the FACE" <f> Bouncing Pitch  
 [laughter] <l> Contour  
 he said (PAST)  
 "If he gets at YOU" <l>  
 he said,  
 "Ooh" I said  
 "No my boss is lovely but I must <p>  
 open up for staff, you know I've  
 got keys"  
 "I'll come with you" PITCH RAISING  
 I said "No, I work round there,  
 right dow-"  
 he said "Oh come on I I'::ll::"  
 I said "I've got to go honestly  
 I'm awful sorry",  
 he says\*,

|                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| "Well I want to come with you", | "come", "with" - |
| he says*,                       | held syllables   |
| "Come on let me come with you", | "come" - held    |
| anyway I ran up there and come* | <a>              |

up the stairs he come\* after me..  
and went upstairs looking for me  
into the sun bedroom and everything,  
he said to buy me a fur coat  
[laughter]  
...honest of God

\* and come up the stairs he come after me - appears to be irregular verb form consistently used by the speaker and not an instance of the HP, i.e. come = came.

### SYLVIA'S KNICKERS

- Z. See on on our, well on like on our  
(Indistinct comment)
- A. It would certainly be very tempting, wouldn't it  
[overlap - this comment refers to the  
previous story]
- Z. there's two channels, one for work and one  
for messages, if there's a message say like  
for Alf to go somewhere, they'd say  
"Red one seven, go to Channel 2"..  
so you'd go over to Channel 2,  
well, if you're nosy like,  
and you want to know,  
you click over to Channel 2  
(Indistinct comment)
- A. and all your mates are listening in you see
- Z. and they called somebody one night,  
I I can't forget who ..  
do you know off hand who the radio code was..  
very well known..one of the characters,  
and he was erm, how shall we say,  
he was a bit of a ladies man,  
he's got this reputation like,  
he'd pull anything and get anybody
- A. (Indistinct comment)
- Z. so..
- T. It wasn't me,
- Z. I I'm almost sure he did the Good Shepherd,  
but I, I can't say for sure ..  
so, channel two for a message clear so,  
Oh-, click over to channel 2 like
- BB. everybody's got on
- L. too right mate
- Z. this is supposed to be private you see,

(Indistinct comment)

you can imagine, everybody in Birmingham,  
click over to Channel 2,  
and it's gone across like,  
"Can you go back to Sylvia's, she's left  
her knickers in the cab",  
[laughter]

so of course everybody's

**WAAH::** this is it like, now we've got him

**WOH::** we can have him on about this,  
it turns out he'd been to a boutique  
in Harbourne called Sylvia's,  
to take a woman into town, to a  
wholesalers, for a large plastic bag  
[laughter]

full, of dozens and dozens of pairs of  
knickers..

T. Sylvia's

Z. and she'd left them in the cab like,  
and of course everybody was

**WOH::** we've got him now like,  
we know all about it, who's Sylvia like

### THE BRUSH STORY

Mrs S I was in the salon one day you see  
[voices talking over first utterance]  
I was in the salon this day,  
Herbert asked me to come in and help  
I used to work in Herbert's cold shop..

(PAST)

I. Yeh

Mrs S so I came into here..and it was packed  
out, it was on a Thursday..  
so we're all rushing around rushing around <a> <p>  
you see...and, I'm walking through  
this, alleyway here with the brush in my  
hand to brush the floor,  
and there was a client,  
with a dryer,  
just sitting right in front of the alley  
we were that busy..  
and as I came through..I tripped,  
and I went through the air, with this brush, <l>  
[laughter]  
and fell, FLAT in front of this client PITCH RAISING  
with the brush..with the brush..  
[laughter in the speaker's voice -  
audience laughter follows]



she'd got the brush up here  
[points to her own skirt]  
[laughter]

AA::HH::

[intake of breath - with audible friction]  
[laughter]

she jumped up she shouted

<f>

"Jesus Christ"....

PITCH RAISING

[laughter continues]

I couldn't get up...

[laughter continues]

I heard Pat scre::aming::...

PITCH RAISING

and when I looked..

'screaming' <f>

I I'd got my face on the floor,

PITCH DROP

[laughter continues]

and when I looked up there, I seen\*..

these two little red things, going

round the floor you see..

[laughter]

in round the corner,

well it was Pat's feet in these shoes,

she'd fallen over,

[laughter continues]

I. Oh God

Mrs S and she was crawling on her knees

[laughter in the speaker's voice]

to get out the way, I'm lying on my face  
with the brush and Herbert shouts up..

(HP)

"Jesus Christ it's like a flying

PITCH RAISING

fucking circus",

[laughter continues]

well I nearly died I couldn't get up,

I. Yeh

Mrs S the woman stood with the tears, running

down her face, and she hit her head

getting up, and she was holding her head

with this hat on under the o::h::,

and I went round to Pat and

Pat's sitting on the floor round the corner

and she said,

"S I can't get up I'm laughing too much", PITCH RAISING

and that d- that was hilarious that day

and the salon was PACKED to the door,

but you've got to see it, the way I went,

I went with this brush flying through

PITCH RAISING

the air, **BASH** in front of her

<f>

and it went right up her coat,

[laughter continues]

hysterical we really were

## Chapter Six

### VARIATION IN NARRATIVE

#### 6.0 Introduction

It has been established that the narratives analysed have a number of features in common: they display humour; they exploit themes of violence, sexual exploits and other taboos, and involve embarrassing incidents showing personal faults and weaknesses. They manifest similar structural characteristics, the classical structure being scene setting, storyline development, establishment of "point", resolution/climax, and (optionally) coda. Finally, they exploit recurrent linguistic devices: direct speech, token mimicry, verb tense blocking, expressive phonology, constellation effects, linguistic ambiguity, repetition and reiteration.

This chapter examines inter- and intra-narrator variation; and does so under three major headings: firstly, narrator perspective; secondly, sex differences; and thirdly occupational group influence.

A number of researchers have addressed the question of perspective in narrative and have found that different individuals and groups characteristically adopt different viewpoints in telling stories (Chafe, 1980; 1982; Tannen, 1983, 1984; Polanyi, 1978; 1982). It has been demonstrated

that the stance adopted is often culturally or sub-culturally based (Tannen, 1982; 1983). An examination of the discourse features which serve the relative need for involvement vs. detachment (c.f. Brown and Levinson on positive and negative face - Chapter 4, section 4.3.4.1), should help to delimit some of the differences between the four occupational groups.

Sub-cultural variation in narrative has also been studied extensively (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1972; Kalcik, 1975; Heath, 1983; Tannen, 1984). However, the inter-relationship between sex differentiation and occupational influence, has been neglected. If one considers how many sex-typed occupations there are, and that the prestige accorded to an occupation reflects the sex typical incumbent - men in male dominated occupations and women in female dominated occupations (Jacobs and Powell, 1985), there is clearly a need to investigate this relationship. The last section of this present work attempts to draw together the effect of sex and occupation and presents an overview of the significance of variability in narrator style.

### 6.1 Narrator Perspective

In order to tell a story, narrators must necessarily adopt some kind of mental attitude towards the events they are describing. It was mentioned in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1.2.2), that narrators report events either in the role of onlooker or listener external to the action, or of

participant internal to the action. The former viewpoint tends to be characteristic of vicarious narratives, (where the narrator has not experienced the events first hand), while the latter stance is typical of personal narratives (Polanyi, 1982; Nigro and Neisser, 1983). In practice, however, it is recognised that narrator viewpoint can switch during narration, from an "action observed" stance to a "participant re-creation" stance, as the narrator becomes more involved. When narrators change stance in this way, they are changing their footing (Goffman, 1981).

Although point of view is a much discussed area in narrative analysis, it is not always made clear what is meant by a change of perspective. Clearly, the main concern is with the perceptual or psychological vantage point from which the speaker tells the story, and from which he invites listeners to experience it. Therefore, in examining perspective, analysts should consider the centrality of the identity or role which the speaker plays in the narrative; the confidences or collusions he has with the audience; the degrees of objectivity or omniscience he assumes; and the degree of involvement of the speaker in the narrative (signalled by such linguistic features as direct speech, expressive phonology, repetition and so on).

The following discussion compares and contrasts stories from the data in which narrators show a variety of orientations to the storytelling task. The focus is on the linguistic features which give the impression of involvement vs.

objectivisation and particularly on the use of direct speech forms.

An important source of variation in narrative style lies in the potential for different types of reported speech. It was mentioned in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.5), that direct speech not only has the potential for more expressive utterances than indirect speech, it is claimed that it represents the point of view of the original speaker (see Coulmas, 1986). Of the various forms of discourse, indirect discourse is the least involved. Narrator involvement is claimed in forms of direct discourse. However, forms of direct speech in which the narrator re-enacts not only what was said, but the way in which it was said (i.e. token mimicry), are possibly more involved.

It has been shown that narrators can embellish or invent dialogue (Tannen, 1986), and so we must be careful not to suggest that direct speech offers a more accurate representation of events. Rather, it is a case of greater vividness or dramatic force which may or may not be accurate. The ability of the narrator to mimic may suggest authenticity and therefore credibility, but does not guarantee veracity. These direct speech forms include what Polanyi (1982b) calls Double Direct Discourse, and what Tannen(1986) terms Constructed Dialogue (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.5. for explication of these terms).

It should be noted that there is no independent basis for

judging narrator involvement, independent that is of linguistic expression. Linguistic expression is the basis for claiming involvement, and simultaneously, the phenomenon to be analysed. However, the uncertain status of claims about cognitive processes in narrators need not detract from a descriptive statement of variation in direct speech as a feature of narrator style.

In the discussion of story material presented in Chapter 5, it will be remembered that story extracts were presented first and the complete stories appeared in an Appendix to the chapter (section 5.5). It should be noted that there is no appendix to this Chapter since each story used in the context of the following discussion is actually presented in full within the text. The transcription symbols used are the same as those used in Chapter 5 (for a full explanation of their use see Chapter 5, section 5.5).

In order to exemplify differences in narrator perspective, two narrative styles are first contrasted. The narrative style of Mrs S, a Liverpool hairdresser, in her story "The Drunk" can be contrasted with that of a nurse, J, in "Brain Scan". Mrs S produces 36 direct quotes - 22 as the drunk, and 14 as herself. In contrast, there is only one utterance in the nurses narrative which could be counted as a quote (line 31), and this appears in the coda to the story. The effect of these styles is to make Mrs S "more vivid" and nurse J "less vivid" and more distanced emotionally from the action. Mrs S is genuinely acting out the parts as she

recalls and re-creates them, whereas nurse J is simply reporting and describing.

THE DRUNK

Mrs S. and last week .. last week 1  
I'm walking down the road,  
this is at eight thirty in the  
morning ..  
this very nice dressed man ..  
very, who was there with me when  
it happened?

B. Me

Mrs S. walking down the road, very,  
but he was as TIGHT as a lord, PITCH RAISING <f>  
wasn't he?  
But an awful nice man ..  
so as I went past he says,  
"Darling .. PITCH RAISING  
could you tell me the time, 'Darling' - drawled  
could you tell me the time" .. 'could', 'tell' - held  
[laughter] <di> <l> slurring  
I says, "Half past eight" .. <p>  
"Oh" .. <p>  
"Could you tell me now dear <l> <p> 20  
where I can get a cup of coffee,  
ee::hh:: I'm pissed love" ..  
[laughter]  
I says,  
"You are drunk aren't you", PITCH RAISING  
I said,  
"How did you get like that PITCH RAISING  
tell me so early in the morning (Bouncing pitch  
it's very nice" contour) <a>  
[laughter]  
.. so he said,  
"Oh my bloody wife's gonna kill slurring  
me when I get home",  
he said,  
"I've been out all night love".. PITCH RAISING  
So I said  
"Well wh- how are you getting <p>  
home have you got a car?" PITCH RAISING  
he says  
"I have but I don't know where <a> 40  
it is",  
[laughter]  
he says,  
"I tell you what", he says,  
"You've got lovely eyes love".. PITCH RAISING  
[laughter]  
"ee::hh:: you've got lovely eyes", 'eehh' - <f> and  
[laughter] higher pitch level  
slurring

couldn't get away could I?  
[laughter]

A. He had his arms round you  
didn't he?

Mrs S. I said, "Come on now where  
you go- how are you getting  
home?" <p>  
he says,  
"Oh I'll have to get a train  
then .. but don't know where  
I am love"..  
so I says  
"Well I'll, come on I'll put  
you on the road to the station"  
I said  
"Have you got your money with  
you?"..  
he says "why?"..  
"Well" I said "If you haven't  
got your fare"  
he said  
"Why would you give me  
a few bob?" PITCH RAISING  
slurring <f>  
I said, "If you haven't got  
your fare love I would give  
you your fare home, the way  
you are", PITCH DROP  
he says "Would you?" PITCH RAISING  
slurring  
"Well tell you what love"  
he says,  
"I'm quite a rich man .. PITCH DROP <1> 80  
do you believe me?" .. PITCH RAISING  
he was dressed impeccable ..  
he said,  
"Come on love come on I'll  
buy you a fur coat"..  
[laughter]  
he says "Come on now let's  
these go these sho-" PITCH RAISING <f>  
I quite believe he would  
actually, slurring

I. Yeh <a>

Mrs S. he said  
"Don't worry you about money love, PITCH RAISING  
there's never a WOMAN has ever  
offered ME a bloody PENNY in my  
LIFE  
[laughter]  
and YOU who don't PITCH RAISING  
and you'd give me my fare love, (very high pitch  
come on, fur coat I'm telling you, level) <f> 100  
anything in these shops you can  
have" ,  
honest of God ..  
[laughter]  
and he came looking for me  
didn't he?  
Came up the stairs ..[speaker laughs]



and he says, "Where do you work?"      PITCH RAISING  
 I says, "I've got to go now      <p> <a>  
 I've got to go now love I've got  
 to go because I've got to open up  
 for staff you see I've got,  
 I've got keys", ..  
 "I'll punch your boss in the FACE" <f> Bouncing Pitch  
 [laughter]      <l>      Contour  
 he said  
 "If he gets at YOU"      <l>  
 he said,  
 "Ooh" I said  
 "No my boss is lovely but I must      <p>      120  
 open up for staff, you know I've  
 got keys",  
 "I'll come with you",      PITCH RAISING  
 I said "No, I work round there,  
 right dow-",  
 he said, "Oh come on I I':ll::",  
 I said, "I've got to go honestly  
 I'm awful sorry",  
 he says,  
 "Well I want to come with you",      'come', 'with'  
 he says,      held syllables  
 "Come on let me come with you",      'come' - held  
 anyway I ran up there and come      <a>  
 up the stairs he come after me ..  
 and went upstairs looking for me  
 into the sun bedroom and everything,  
 he said to buy me a fur coat  
 [laughter]  
 ...honest of God

BRAIN SCAN

J. I wa- when I was, when I was training      1  
 at Ch- at Charing Cross,  
 I'd been on the ward about two weeks,  
 and there was a lady there ..  
 who was erm ... had a long standing mental  
 illness although she was well at the time,  
 and she came in for a .. a gynaecological  
 operation, and er .. they wanted to do a      <l>  
 brain scan, erm .. as a sort of as as a  
 secondary thing to, what she was in for  
 and er, I had to take her on escort to the  
 main hospital .. erm, we were walking down  
 the corridor ...  
 I think I've told you this ..  
 [laughter in the speaker's voice]  
 and she was fine, as I say she was about  
 two weeks post-operative and so she was  
 up and about and she was free of discharge  
 and, erm the painters were painting,  
 it was a very old building ...

and erm, she tripped over, the cans on the  
floor, and banged her head,  
and the only abnormality on the, brain scan  
[audience laughter begins and continues  
through next utterance]  
was the, was the trauma, superficial trauma  
to the skin, and I I was frightened to go on  
the ward

20

- T. What a good escort... PITCH RAISING <f>  
[laughter]
- J. See I'd only been in general nursing  
two weeks, I thought "This is it"  
[laughter]  
you know, they're going to throw me out  
sort of thing,  
[laughter]  
I didn't know what to do,  
and I dreaded getting a ward report,  
I sort of put it off for weeks and weeks and  
then had to go and it was alright  
[laughter]

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The two narratives quoted above, "The Drunk" and "Brain Scan" show a radically different orientation to the events narrated. The extensive use of direct speech in Mrs S's narrative "The Drunk" contributes to the vivid re-enactment style (as mentioned above, we assume that it is a re-enactment, however, it is possible that at least parts of the narrative have "grown in the telling", and elements may have crept in which serve a dramatic purpose) . In nurse J's "Brain Scan", in contrast, the orientation is oblique, the narrator operating in a reporting rather than a re-enacting mode.

However, it is not merely the fact that Mrs. S. chooses to report the events through dialogue which makes her story vivid and signals that she is involved in the narrative. It is also the fact that she dramatises and acts out the roles of the story characters. She style-shifts or changes footing, alternately taking on the role of the drunken man

and her own character. Mrs. S. characterises the drunk through prosodic effects like slurring her speech, and by acting confused in the manner of someone who is drunk. When she is talking as herself, the style is more controlled and words are enunciated carefully (the linguistic features which accompany these style shifts are discussed in some detail in Section 6.3.4.3).

The alternation between CHP and past tense verb forms is also a heavily used device in "The Drunk". The nurse's story is reported entirely in the past tense. CHP is an internal "evaluation device" (Labov, 1972) and many researchers have suggested that its use in alternation with the past tense animates the storyline since it makes the events appear immediate, as though they were happening at the time of telling (Schiffrin, 1981; Wolfson, 1982 - see Chapter 5, section 5.3.5 on the arguments for and against this analysis of CHP).

In "The Drunk" repetition and reiteration appear throughout the narrative, initially to set the scene and emphasise the gentility of the man even in his inebriated state (lines 2/9; 5/12); to stress the drunkenness of the character (lines 15/16; 45/47); and to underline the main point of the story, which is that the drunk, a total stranger, wanted to buy Mrs. S. a fur coat (lines 84-102). It is noticeable that the major use of this device in "Brain Scan" appears in the coda to the story rather than in the narrative event sequence. Unlike Mrs. S., the nurse does not dramatise the

events to indicate the point of her story, she states it outright when she says "I I was frightened to go on the ward". She emphasises that the experience was an emotional shock which she obviously cannot retell some years later without reexperiencing the feelings she had at the time. This may be one reason why she chooses to report rather than reenact the experience.

It can not be concluded, however, that the nurses' group do not make use of direct speech, CHP or internal evaluation. Another narrative, "Urine Test" told by nurse K, displays frequent use of these devices.

#### URINE TEST

- K. I think erm .. one instance, it was the day I took my finals .. you know and as as, Jen was saying .. oh you, Tina was saying, you have to be so precise don't you I mean they, follow you round and watch .. every procedure that you do.. <l>  
and I remember having to do erm..  
a urine test on this diabetic you see ..
- I. Mmh
- K. and then you're supposed to tell them .. <p>  
why you're doing it, and what are the consequences of the test and all that sort of thing .. and er this was at the Q.E., and we'd got, four bedded wards there .. and er I briefed most of my patients .. PITCH RAISING  
[speaker laughs]
- T. I was going to say you have to <f>
- I. You have to yeh <f>
- K. "Now be good", you know .. <f>  
[laughter] <l>  
and erm .. I remember it was a guy actually that er .. came from the, General Nursing Council .. <p>  
and we went up in the sluice then ..  
and he said,  
"Well if you could go and get a s- PITCH RAISING  
urine sample off Mrs So and So",  
I says "Righty Ho" .. PITCH DROP

- get the bed pan go trotting down into  
 this nice little four bedded ward .. <p>  
 "Come on Mrs So and So, do do your stuff, PITCH RAISING  
 because I've got to take this s- sample up,  
 and get it tested for this guy" ..  
 she sai- she said,  
 "I'm ever so sorry love but I can't PITCH DROP  
 do anything, I don't want to go <p>  
 at the moment",  
 [interviewer laughs]  
 Oh my God, Falling Pitch Contour  
 I mean I really panicked because <f> <a>  
 she was the only diabetic we'd got,  
 [laughter]
- I. Yeh
- K. I thought "What the hell am I going to do?"  
 you know, I said, "Come on you can",  
 and I ran all the taps and she was  
 sitting there ..  
 "I'm sorry, I I'm sorry love I can't PITCH RAISING  
 do anything", <p>  
 I thought "Christ what am I going to do?",  
 I can't go back and say look she can't  
 do it" .. I thought "what am I going to do <p> <a>  
 what am I going to do?" ..  
 and I thought "I know what I'll do"  
 so I just, stood on the ward, I said,  
 "Look girls you'll all have to close PITCH DROP  
 you eyes", <f>  
 down came my drawers  
 [laughter]  
 I sat on the pan .. sat on the pan  
 and did one you see  
 [laughter]  
 (indistinct comment)
- T. I bet there wasn't any sugar in it
- K. Well I knew what the result would be  
 before I tested it,  
 [laughter]  
 they were in stitches
- T. You'd have had a shock if you'd had 2 percent
- K. Too right .. it really er, quite put me out  
 that did you know, I thought my God what am I  
 going to do
- T. That always happens though when you're doing  
 an assessment, you've kind of done these things  
 so many times before
- K. Well I I'm sure you know, being as she couldn't  
 do one he would have accepted that
- I. Yeh
- T. Well of course he would but  
 [laughs]
- K. but erm you just  
 [K joins in with laughter]
- T. You just panic don't you
- K. That's right that's right
- T. Oh dear

In the above narrative, "Urine Test" there are 11 direct speech quotations. The narrator takes 3 parts: the man from the General Nursing Council, herself as nurse in charge and the patient. Of the eleven, there are at least 3 quotations which represent constructed dialogue (Tannen, 1986): -

1. "Now be good" - a general statement which represents what the nurse might have said to her patients.
2. "Righty Ho" - a colloquial reply in a formal context. It is unlikely to be what she actually said to the examiner.
3. "Come on Mrs So and So .." - a naming device which would not have made sense had it been used in the interaction.

There are also 4 quotations which represent the speaker's thoughts at the time of the incident - I thought "What the hell am I going to do?" The fact that the nurse chooses to rework her strategy by representing her own thoughts dramatises the narrative and the repetition builds suspense drawing the audience into the narrative prior to the presentation of the "punchline" - that the nurse provides the sample of urine herself. All these factors point to the nurse having an involved perspective on the story.

The question is, why does nurse K make use of Direct Speech while Nurse J does not? It might seem at first sight that nurse K's misdemeanour is less serious than nurse J's; but this is not really defensible. Testing the wrong urine may not seem to harm the patient directly, but the indirect consequences (faulty diagnosis) are just as serious,

potentially, as negligence in escorting a patient and bringing about unnecessary trauma.

The question is not answerable in a study such as this one, or at least cannot be answered satisfactorily. It may be that use of direct speech is not the outcome of the "seriousness of event" but of a personality constant. In fact, nurse K typically takes an involved perspective on her stories, while nurse J. takes a more objective stance (however, it must not be assumed that this is the stance they would assume in other situations). If that is the case, then one would expect the same narrator to use direct speech consistently, and with comparable frequency.

It is clear that the discourse features which suggest involvement in "The Drunk" and "Urine Test" include:

1. Direct speech
  - a. Constructed dialogue (Tannen, 1986)
  - b. Token Mimicry
  - c. Speaker's thoughts
  - d. Absence of dialogue introducer
2. CHP alternation
3. Repetition and reiteration
4. Expressive phonology (which includes prosody and the category of sound words discussed and exemplified in section 6.3.4.5).
5. Minimal use of external evaluation (Labov, 1982)

Tannen(1983) found similar features of involvement in

narratives told by Greek women.

The nurses, who typically opt for a detached perspective in their stories, use fewer of these features (with the exception of nurse K - see also section 6.4 of this chapter). However, it cannot be concluded from this that the nurses always adopt an observer stance. In a less formal context, it is possible that they would use a higher proportion of the features mentioned above. What is interesting is that they seem to interpret a request for stories in a work-related context differently to the way in which this request is interpreted by the taxi-drivers (see section 6.4.2 for further discussion of the nurses' behaviour).

It is well beyond the scope of this thesis to test this hypothesis further, but future studies might investigate whether use of direct speech and other features of involvement are consistent intra-narrator or not. Conceivably, it may vary not only according to narrator, but also according to the circumstances of narration.

What is within the scope of this thesis, however, is a crude measure of the frequency of direct speech per 1,000 words of narrative. On this basis, the 4 occupational groups can be contrasted.

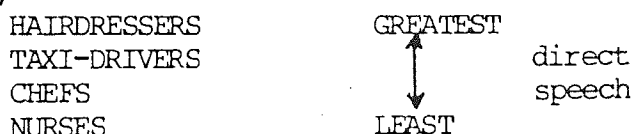


|              | Nurses | Hairdressers | Chefs | Taxi-Drivers |
|--------------|--------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| Frequency DS | 76     | 234          | 87    | 166          |

Table 6-1 - Frequency of direct speech (DS) per 1,000 words of narrative, used by the four occupational groups.

On the basis of the above figures, it can be seen that hairdressers make heaviest use of direct speech, then taxi-drivers, while nurses and chefs prefer indirect discourse.

The hierarchy,



interestingly, relates only indirectly to the analyst's intuitive perception of ranking of liveliness of style. The taxi-drivers and hairdressers were thought to have equally lively narrative styles. However, the greater frequency of use of direct speech by the hairdressers could be a consequence of the greater proportion of token mimicry (idiosyncratic) which characterises their narratives (this preference is examined in Section 6.3.4).

The figures in Table 6-1 do suggest, however, that the frequency of direct speech declines as the degree of specialisation of the occupational group increases. Nurses and chefs receive more specialised training, over a longer period than hairdressers and taxi-drivers. In fact taxi-drivers have no technical training period, but learn "on the job".

Nurses(2-3)  
Chefs(2-3)  
Hairdressers(2)  
Taxi-Drivers(0)

Diagram showing the number of years training(in brackets)required to become qualified in each of the four occupations.

The statement that there is an inverse relationship between frequency of direct speech and length of training period does not of course explain anything. It simply reformulates the common observation that direct speech is characteristic of a vernacular style of narrative.

The research design (formulated for studying narrative in the four occupational groups) does not allow a detailed investigation of the relationship between socio-economic status and use of direct speech. Future research could take account of the need for a detailed study of this relationship by quantifying direct speech in more clearly contrasting socio-economic groups. Despite the fact that the present study can not make any large scale descriptive statements of this nature, it can raise the question of why narrators use direct speech and can also point to the circumstances which favour its use.

In fact, it would be incorrect to assume that socio-economic class is the only, or the most relevant factor predisposing narrators towards direct speech. Personality may be as relevant, or more relevant, since confidence and the ability to project may be necessary prerequisites for the effective exploitation of direct speech in narrative. Hence future

work could also consider factors other than socio-economic status which might be influencing inter-narrator differences.

An interesting aspect of two narratives which were contrasted, "The Drunk" (with heavy use of direct speech) and "Brain Scan" (relying on indirect reporting style) is that there is clearly more group participation (in terms of laughter) in the former. The bursts of laughter that occur can be seen to punctuate direct speech re-enactments, and to reward the narrator for her fine rendering of the drunk's speech manner. The dramatic climax,

"Come on love I'll buy you a fur coat"

receives the loudest laughter. In "Brain Scan", on the other hand, although there is audience appreciation in the form of laughter (following the ironic comment "What a good escort") there is relatively less frequent laughter, and there is less group participation in the narrative.

It must be acknowledged that the comments above on the frequency of laughter are rather subjective and they relate more to the analyst's intuitions than to objective measurement. However, it was pointed out in Chapter 5 (section 5.1) that "appreciation markers" can take several forms (e.g. smiling, laughter, gestures) and they are therefore difficult to quantify, and are not in any case all accessible from audio-recordings. Also, bursts of laughter vary in both length and intensity (dependent on how heartily

people laugh and also on how many people are actually laughing), and these variations, which signal different levels of appreciation of a stimulus, cannot be effectively determined by ear. Without recourse to electronic monitoring of the intensity and duration of laughter (a strategy which would have been impractical for the present work) any measurements must necessarily be rather crude.

The length of a burst of laughter may also be a misguided measure since laughter is accumulative in that when one person in the group laughs the others may join in without perceiving the stimulus. They may do this because they do not want to appear ignorant before others who obviously can perceive the joke. Laughter in response to another person's laughter is quite common, particularly among females (Giles, Bourhis, Gadfield, Davis and Davis, 1976). However, a crude measure of the number of bursts of laughter produced by the audience during the narration of the stories "The Drunk" and "Brain Scan" does relate to the analyst's perceptions. Mrs S's story "The Drunk" resulted in 13 bursts of laughter from the audience, whereas nurse J's story "Brain Scan" produced only 5 bursts of laughter from the audience. This of course may be a function of the relative length of the stories. "The Drunk" with 576 words is approximately three times as long as "Brain Scan". It may also be due to the fact that Mrs. S's story was told to a larger audience (8 people compared with 3 in the nurses group), causing the analyst to retain an impression of greater appreciation through laughter.

Thus, the purpose of direct speech is to enable the narrator to project not just the story itself, but also his/her acting skills in portraying different characters, and the latter function is dependent on a well-established group identity.

It was pointed out in Chapter 2 that taxi-drivers and hairdressers spend a great deal of time in social interaction, in groups, whereas nurses (on duty) seldom interact in groups of more than two or three. They do not have time or opportunity for large group interaction in the professional context. Chefs too tend to work alone, with sole responsibility for trainee chefs and assistants with whom they do not interact socially, as a large group.

The above is then, a partial explanation for the rarity of direct speech among nurses and chefs. Another possible explanation for the rarity of direct speech in these occupations is that the nursing world, and the chefs' world contain technical elements which would be opaque to an outsider. The presence of an outsider (the analyst) in the storytelling session, may have predisposed the chefs and nurses narrating to adopt a more oblique, reporting style. If the narrator has to explain a technical term to an outsider, the flow of event sequences is halted, demanding a more detached point of view. The explanation of "timbal", "garrey" and "Souffle Vesuvius" in the chef's narrative below demonstrates this point.

## SOUFFLE VESUVIUS

- N. Oh yeh it was, one day, because we used to do, at Chadwick Manor they're all very upper class people Lords Ladies Sirs and very rich people of Solihull, and they used to have these little societies stupid societies that didn't mean anything just an excuse for going out and having a meal
- I. Mnh
- N. and er, they used to do very nice they used to spend a lot of money so they'd have a very nice menu .. and one menu for about twenty, it was er, the sweet was "Souffle Vesuvius",  
which is if you know what  
a Baked Alaska is
- I. Mnh
- N. Baked Alaska, well it's similar to that but you build it up into a mountain, and you put a timbal,  
which is like a stainless steel pot in the top and cover it with meringue, and put brandy and kirsch and black cherries in, now you take it to the room and set light to it and it spits,
- I. Oh  
little purple flames you see,
- I. Yeh
- N. well unbeknown to me the pastry chef had put too much brandy in, and I got what's known as a garrey down which is a service table right next to the organiser whose party it was, and as I lit it, and set fire to it, it started spitting and spitting more, and all this black cherry juice started running down and spitting all over this bloke's shirt, putting little burn holes in his shirt, I got a warning for that they put me on a first stage warning for that
- I. Oh no
- Technical Term  
Explanation
- Technical Term  
Explanation
- Technical Term  
Explanation

A number of factors, then appear to influence avoidance of direct speech. Direct speech does not appear when the story telling is small, or when the narrator is only addressing the analyst (as happened in "Souffle Vesuvius"). Nor does

it appear when the presence of the outsider necessitates an explanation of technical terms. A further possible source of influence is the narrator's role in the events narrated. Vicarious narratives appear to preclude direct speech, whereas personal narratives allow direct speech in large quantities. "The Boots Boy" told by a chef, is a good example of a vicarious narrative with no direct speech. (The narrator works in a large kitchen at Liverpool University, but was trained in the Merchant Navy - "The Boots Boy" relates an incident which happened in his time at sea).

#### THE BOOTS BOY

B. ..but erm there was one man who could, demand, payment, off a passenger and that was the guy, who used to.. clean shoes..

I. Oh

B. you used to put your shoes outside your cabin of a night,

I. Yeh

B. an' during the night he would go round and clean the shoes, and before, you arrived at your destination he'd go and knock and say, [makes knocking sound] "Boots", and he'd get paid you see..

PITCH RAISING

I. Oh

B. so I'll tell you a funny instance ... there was an empty cabin you see .. and this steward..wise guy, oh a wise boy you know ... he got his shoes and went out and put them outside the cabin,

I. Oh

B. you see,

I. Yeh

B. and..the Boots would clean his shoes...

I. [laughs]

B so he was made up, so he wasn't going to pay you know what I mean, he he no-one was going to whip his shoes there was no-one in the cabin, but, unbeknownst to him,

I. Mmh

- B. the Boots also knew that there was no-one in the cabin, <f>
- I. [laughs]
- B and he also knew that this fellow was conning him,
- I. [laughter]  
with the shoes see.. so ...  
the night before they docked this fellow got cheeky, and put two shoes outside two pair, that's his, working shoes, and his, go ashore shoes which he was going to go home in
- I. Yeh
- B. so he put them outside this cabin.. and he gets up, first thing the next morning and has a look along the alleyway and there's his shoes all bright and sparkling .. so, he creeps along the alleyway, <p>  
and goes to pick them up like that you see, [laughter in speaker's voice]
- I. Yeh
- B. and what the Boots done he'd cleaned them alright,
- I. Yeh
- B. and he'd put, a four inch nail through the heel of each shoe with a hammer
- I. [laughs]  
and nailed them to the floor .. he couldn't get them out <f>  
(laughter)
- I. Oh no
- B. so of course he couldn't say nothing, High Pitch Level
- I. [laughs]
- I. No [continues laughing]
- B. he couldn't open, [laughter in speaker's voice] nailed his shoes to the floor
- I. No
- B. so he got his own own back on him yeh
- I. So he got his own back,  
Oh that's a good one  
(laughter)

Direct speech is more likely to appear in narrative under the following conditions:

1. Narrator is confident and a good actor
2. Large group is present
3. Narrative is personal, not vicarious
4. Group solidarity is strong



5. Group interaction is frequent
6. Audience shares with narrator background knowledge for interpreting story details

However, identification of the conditions that predispose narrators to produce direct speech does not constitute an explanation for the phenomenon. A full explanation for direct speech cannot be undertaken until research is carried out which is designed to investigate socio-economically contrasting groups; contrasting group sizes; narrator-to-group familiarity; and narrator personality. It is axiomatic that each of these non-linguistic factors must be assessed using methodology which is independent of language. Even when such studies have been carried out, it is not clear that explanation (as opposed to description) of direct speech can be attempted. It seems at least likely that reference will have to be made to cognitive psychology and social psychology, both of which deal with the cognitive processing of speech, but from different points of view.

## 6.2 Sex Differential in Narrative Strategy

### 6.2.1 Introduction

Coser (1960) says,

"A woman who has a good sense of humour is one who laughs (but not too loudly!) when a man makes a witticism or tells a good joke. A man who has a good sense of humour is one who is witty in his remarks and tells good jokes. The man provides; the woman receives."  
(Coser 1960:85)

Coser thus encapsulates the stereotypic view of female humour in mixed-sex groups. In single-sex groups, however, women can be as witty as their male counterparts.

The following comments, it should be emphasised, are sex preferential tendencies, not sex-exclusive tendencies (Bodine, 1975).

The women observed show an ability to take and make jokes against themselves (c.f. Kalcik, 1975). The men observed, on the other hand, often seem to operate on the attack. Their humour is often savage and competitive in the storytelling sessions. This is especially true of large groups of men.

Women's humour tends to show up first person frailties. In their stories, the women observed make fun of their own weaknesses much more often than male narrators do.

The male narrators are better able to hold the floor through to the completion of a story and the transition from one story to the next is often rapid without intervening discussion or elaboration. Their stories are often directed at a target who was usually a member of an "outgroup". Even when women's humour is directed at a target, it does not seem to have the same "point-scoring" quality attributable to men's humour.

Men and women's storytelling techniques differ in two major

ways: topic choice and bonding patterns.

### 6.2.2 Sex Differential in Topic Choice

The following story is told by a Birmingham taxi-driver, Alfie (A), whose storytelling style was encountered in Chapter 5. It concerns an incident involving toilet behaviour. Trevor (T) and X are two of the other drivers.

#### STAFF TOILETS

- A. I I was thinking about the time, that time  
I went into, we use the staff
- X. What time?
- A. toilets at New Street..instead of us having  
to pay, and erm , I I'd had a curry like and  
you know it goes straight through me  
so, you buy the morning pa-  
you buy the morning paper like  
and you have an hour in the bog  
[laughter]
- T. Sharon I'm sorry about this
- A. Well, sorry about that
- X. Cut  
[laughter]
- A. Cut, Take 24..  
[laughter]  
and erm, (indistinct comment)  
I picked up the toilet roll,  
and it I let go and it rolled  
under the door..  
[laughter]  
you know,  
[laughter]  
it rolled (indistinct comment)  
I I hadn't got a T-shirt on  
so I couldn't use that,  
hadn't even got a tail on my shirt,  
and I was in there about ten minutes,  
"Is anybody there?"  
[laughter]  
"Is anybody ", anyway I heard a door click,  
"Scuse me .. Hallo"  
[laughter]  
I said "Do us a favour mate"  
I said, "I've dropped the bog roll and it's  
gone under the door",  
he said "Hold on a bit"

next thing about a dozen bog rolls come over  
the top,  
[laughter]  
says "One's enough, one's enough"  
you could hear him laugh, I never found out  
who it was I heard a laugh like and the door  
clicked and he went out again, like and  
I was in there about quarter of an hour  
waiting  
[laughter]  
and I'd dropped it and I had my hand  
underneath I mean there could have been  
another bloke in there couldn't there,  
he might have pulled me through  
[laughter]  
"Aye aye, somebody's (indistinct remark)  
here play my cards right"  
[laughter]

This particular story flaunts the taboo that toilet  
behaviour is private and is not generally talked about. The  
choice of topic, toilet behaviour, is a clear signal that  
the narrator, Alfie is among friends. His comment "so you  
buy the morning paper and you have an hour in the bog"  
suggests that this kind of behaviour is normal practice.  
Although the other drivers very much appreciate and identify  
with this kind of humour, they do recognise that it could be  
offensive for a woman. This instigates the apologies and  
the witty analogy with a film scene, "Cut, Take 24", a  
strategy which reduces the social embarrassment. The  
dialogue, which goes on without eye-contact and initially  
without a recipient, causes much laughter.

The fact that female narrators can exploit taboo topics is  
illustrated by the story of one of the Birmingham nurses, T  
which concerns a senile patient who has lost control of her

bodily functions.

### SENILITY

- T. ... I mean I was telling you about my first patient, in er, on erm, Richard Lowe when I worked there, Willis my first ward, that's right it was a medical ward and I'd only been there two days and I'd got this poor old soul in a side ward who was, I don't know what was wrong with her now, I can't remember, and I went in there with another student nurse because they said her bed needed changing and she was plastered from top to bottom with shit..  
[laughter]  
absolutely, in her fingernails in her hair and I just couldn't believe pe- I mean obviously the poor girl was, you know sort of, er very poorly and ver-, rather senile too
- J. Tell you lots of those stories

However, although female narrators exploit lavatory behaviour or related topics, reference to these is usually indirect. Further, their "risque" stories frequently centre on misunderstandings. For example, one Liverpool hairdresser relates how she had gone to the ladies toilet and had inadvertently tucked her dress into her underwear. P tells the story.

### PAT'S STORY

- P. I just think well, one day we were dead busy and I ran into the toilet dead quick, I had loads of clients and I came out and my dress was tucked up in my knickers and no-one told me,  
[laughter]  
and I had a pair of stockings on
- I. Oh God

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P. and they were all saying,  
"Don't tell her"  
and I nearly absolutely died,  
you know things like that...

This story provokes a whole cycle of stories which dwell on the same theme. Although the story depends on common knowledge of toilet behaviour, the narrator is not explicit and dwells on the social embarrassment. In Alfie's "Staff Toilets" on the other hand, there is explicit reference to "curry", "straight through you", "an hour in the bog", "toilet roll", "T-shirt ... use that".

The following story shows how a Liverpool hairdresser, RE exploits the topic of sex without being too explicit about what the client (a prostitute) thought RE should do with the tip.

#### THE PROSTITUTE

RE There was one client that we used to have come in, she was a prostitute, and I did her hair one day, know who I mean, Joan  
Y. Yeh  
RE and I done her hair and she said to me, I was just going out with this fellow at the time, and she said to me er, you know she give me a pound tip, she always used to give me a pound tip, and one day the reception was packed and I was taking her money you know.. and she said to me  
"Here are girl, might come in handy some time" and I just thought it was a pound, I said "Oh thanks Joan", until I opened it, it was a Durex wrapped up in a pound note [laughter]  
and the reception was packed, you know  
Oh God,

#### Y. Yeh embarrassed

Male narrators often explicitly refer to sexual activities, and thereby increase their status within the group, and simultaneously group solidarity. As Norrick (1984) has pointed out, talking dirty and exchanging intimacies counts as bonding behaviour because it signals mutual understanding. Men are expected to behave in this manner. Their stories are often accompanied by "knowing laughter" rather than the nervous giggles which accompany similar stories by women. Nervous giggles are an indication of the embarrassment felt by female narrators handling taboo topics - a reaction which reflects social expectation for females as opposed to males.

The topics selected by women in the study include embarrassing situations; practical jokes; mistakes or calamities at work; idiosyncratic behaviour in people; and finally social relationships. Men, on the other hand, dwell on themes such as "getting your own back"; "coming off best"; violence; sex; and like the females - calamities at work.

Female narrators seem to be much more aware that an incident which seemed "funny" to them might not have the same impact on the audience. Many women are probably used to the negative response which many men give to humour portrayed by women. They are conscious that they are not expected to be

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funny and their potential for "loss of face" (Brown and Levinson, 1978) is consequently much greater than a man's. As in Kalcik's (1975) study of women's rap groups, the women recorded in the present study often initially apologised to the interviewer to ward off an indifferent or negative response. The nurse below apologises before she begins two stories.

- P. I was sort of examining one little boy, I mean you might not find it amusing, I did .....
- (and)
- P. I can remember, I mean this is something I did, I mean you might not find it very funny but we did at the time ...

There was no such behaviour from the men. They just assumed that the interviewer would find their stories funny. In section 6.4, the fact that the nurses exhibit this kind of behaviour more than the other groups is related not only to the fact that they are women but also to the fact that they are part of status-hierarchy in which they are surrounded by more highly qualified people than themselves. No such rigid hierarchy operates for the taxi-drivers and hairdressers.

One suggestive trend in the data is that older female narrators handle embarrassing topics with greater skill than younger ones, Mrs S the hairdresser and K the nurse are more mature speakers who provide examples of female exploitation of abusive language. They incidentally make use of direct speech, and come across as confident narrators. A structured study of inter-narrator differences could explore

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the effect of narrator age and personality, as suggested in 6.1 above.

### 6.2.3 Male and Female Bonding Behaviour

It has been observed that women may have their own vernacular, their own kinds of slang, their own verbal rituals and their own ways of bonding (Kramer, 1974). It is suggested here that women do form bonds within the storytelling group, since they appear to be very supportive towards each other in the storytelling sessions.

The women's stories tend to be interspersed with stretches of conversation which qualify or support the previous story and give different individuals a chance to evaluate and comment. In contrast, the men's stories often follow straight on from one another in quick succession with strong competition for the floor. In the male renditions, the tendency was for one man to gain the floor and to tell a story through to its completion. The women often collaborated in initially establishing referents for the story and they either contributed to the tale while it was being told or added something afterwards which clarified or highlighted a different aspect of the story. This was particularly true for the hairdressers, who produce a good deal of between narrative conversation.

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The following story (which was also illustrated in Chapter 5) concerns a client who had come into the salon to have highlights done just because he had fallen madly in love with a girl. D tells the story and B and A collaborate in the final stages.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- D. He came in, and he said that you did his hair last time and he wanted to speak to you..  
you were o- it was your day off it was a Thursday,  
and they asked me to go out and speak to him,  
Julie says "I don't know what he's going on about"  
he wa-, he, he said,  
"Natalie layered one side of my hair for me last time"  
...and I thought Ooh there's something funny going  
on here so I went out to him,
- Z. Bit like that barber who come in  
[laughter]..
- D. and he was a real divvy, he had this three piece suit  
on right..and he was like sitting on the roundabout  
section in ..
- A. Yeh,
- D. reception..and erm, I went up to him  
and I said  
"Hello, erm what were you thinking of having done?"..  
and he said...."WELL",  
and he keeps going like this  
[mimes touching her own clothing]  
he kept, touching me and patting me all the time,  
he says  
(overlapping indistinct comment)  
"and you can see I haven't got very much hair  
it's re::ally:: fi::ne::" he was going,  
"and she kind of layered this one side going BACK",  
[laughter]  
like this..and he he didn't bother that, he wasn't  
interested in what happened to the other side  
and he says, "Well I've fallen head over heels  
in love with this girl and she absolutely ADORES  
highlights so, what do you think about me having  
highlights?"  
[laughter]

and the story continues immediately with

- D. ...and he'd come in just because this girl that he was going out with, we later found out that she was thirty two, she'd got another boyfriend, and he'd got highlights in his hair and his hair was like really slick and smooth and he wanted his hair exactly the same and better,
- B. Was this the one that went down the pub and got drunk?
- D. Yeh, he'd been in the pub all afternoon plucking up courage to come in
- A. and I've done his hair before?
- D. and ask to have his highlights done,  
Yeh, he's got glasses and it's re-, his hair's short there's nothing to it, it's just layered through and cut over his ears, he's a really vain and a real pain
- A. Is he little?
- D. No he's quite tall, tall and thin

The comments by the other two hairdressers elicit some more information relevant to the story and attempt to establish the referent since the initial attempt to do this was not successful. The characterisation of the client is enhanced by the contributions from B and A who assist the narrator D. These comments also serve as a link with the next story in the round, on the theme of "unusual clients". Female narrators in the present study (like those in Kalcik, 1975), often use between narrative conversation to continue a theme.

Another example of female bonding behaviour is provided by the following story also told by the Birmingham hairdressers. The story concerns the popular music group Duran Duran. A man had come into the Birmingham salon to book hairdressing appointments for the group masquerading as Simon Le Bon's (lead singer) brother. The girls had stayed

late at the salon to do the bookings hoping to meet their idols only to realise eventually that it was a practical joke and the group were not going to arrive. E relates the story, B and A collaborate in the final stages.

### DURAN DURAN

D. What about when Duran Duran were supposed to come in  
E. Oh that was funny, we had this fellow come into reception he said "Hello, I'm Simon Le Bon's brother", he's the lead singer out of Duran Duran, and er, he'd got these photographs of Duran Duran hadn't he, he said "Well they want their hair done at 4 O'Clock" this was on a Saturday and our last appointment's half three,  
"they want their hair, one of them wants it blow dried Simon wants it blow dri- erm cut, and the other four of them want the, want it just blow dried,"  
so, Craig said "any volunteers want to stop, for 4 O'Clock do a four a 4 O'Clock now,"  
well about five of us said we'd do it,  
we waited here till half four,  
he said "they're coming in on the, quarter to four train, they'll be here for four O'Clock", we waited, we'd been on, really been taken for mugs sort of thing  
[laughter]

and the story continues immediately with

B. How about that client that made us sit her right on the end because this client, was sat under the lights and she heard that they was coming she wanted to sit right by the door  
[laughter]  
so she could see, so she sat under the lights just sitting by the door, and one of the, we had a college girl then and she wanted to stay to shampoo one of the hair  
E. Yeh but he came up and he went  
"Hi I'm Simon Le Bon's brother"  
D. Le Bon's brother  
E. and Julie didn't know who Simon Le Bon was  
[laughter]  
Z. Who's Simon Le Bon?  
I. So was she trying to look intelligent you know  
[laughter]  
E. He must have been a nutter  
I. Yeh

- E. Because we suddenly realised they were in London that day, and everyone kept saying well they're in London Ooh perhaps they're coming down to Birmingham
- A. They were on live at Razamatazz
- E. That's it they were on in London, on Razamatazz
- Z .Were they?
- E. Yeh and er
- D. What that kids programme?
- E. No it was Saturday Superstore
- A. that was it yeh, Saturday Superstore
- E. Razamatazz .. Razamatazz on the Tuesday
- A. Yeh that was it...it was on live

This is really an example of what Polanyi (1982) calls the "diffuse story" which is told collaboratively, with four speakers, A, E, X and D being required to determine that the group were actually playing live on a programme called Razamatazz.

The women in the corpus told many more diffuse stories and group stories than the men did. The suggestion here is that this is a form of bonding behaviour for women. Women who contribute to each others stories are supporting each other and signalling that they are "on the same wavelength" as the other participants. Their contributions, even in overlap, are not attempts to "top" the comments of the last speaker. Interruptions in the female groups signal an eagerness to be a part of the group and to identify with other women's experiences. It is noticeable that women interrupt more frequently in the all-female groups comprising the present sample, than they do in mixed-sex groups (c.f. Zimmerman and West, 1975 - Chapter 4, section

4.2.1.3). In all-female groups, interruptions are not likely to be viewed as bids for dominance (which men, as the dominant group might view negatively in mixed-sex groups).

Another feature of the women's storytelling which demonstrates bonding, is their use of the "kernel story" or the embedded vignette (Polanyi, 1978), which was discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.1.3). This is an abbreviated or incomplete story which is inserted to make a point relevant to the ongoing discourse. Typical examples are:

"How about that client of Debbie's, the one with the eyes.." (Birmingham Hairdresser)

"What about that, that time when erm, that woman was sat underneath the tinting things.." (Liverpool Hairdresser)

"With the answer phone at Christmas, when we had to record a message.." (Birmingham Nurse)

The kernel is often not expanded beyond the type of statements given above. It is a form of bonding for women since the kernel relies on shared in-group experience for interpretation (hence the author could only postulate the point of such vignettes from the context of discussion).

The kernel is one means by which a narrator can create interpersonal involvement between herself and her listeners, by forcing the audience to interpret the point, rather than by making it explicit. It is also a device which she can use to map pieces of her own experience onto the experience of others.

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The kernel story is not a feature of the male storytelling observed. Men are much more likely to tell the whole story and to continue to the end of their performance despite interruptions. As mentioned in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.3.1), the male ability to ignore hecklers is learned in adolescence (Sacks, 1974; Jefferson, 1978; Goodwin, 1980), and the completion of a story in the face of competition is highly valued. The present work suggests that the comparison and identification of experience is more important and more enjoyable for women than the performance of competitively engineered text.

It is possible that older women can gain the floor more easily than younger ones, dominate and hold it for the length of a story. They may compete in a similar way to men. Perhaps this is because older members of the community generally have more deference awarded them and so they have more power and influence (Brown and Levinson, 1978). A deliberately structured study of single-sex female groups, contrasting older women and younger ones, could further substantiate these tendencies.

The main point to emerge from this section on male versus female bonding in storytelling sessions is that females act supportively rather than competitively in the storytelling groups. In general (with the exception of older female

narrators), females are less competitive towards claiming the floor than men. The female audience not only allows the completion of the story, but permits conversation between stories which comments on, and assists in interpreting stories. In addition, female storytelling is far more often collaborative than is male storytelling, with a number of contributors jointly constructing the story.

Further, it can be said that male bonding in storytelling sessions relies on acceptance of point scoring gained by putting down other people; or ridiculing outsiders and reference to topics of violence, toilet behaviour and sex. Male narrators and participants swear more, using obscene language to add emphasis, and stress their commitment to what they are saying. Some researchers go so far as to argue that strong language is a form of sexual display for males, which is similar to bodily orientation for females (Chapman and Foot, 1976; 1977).

There are other, less predictable linguistic differences between males and females, and these are discussed in the next section.

#### 6.2.4 Sex Differential in Participant Contributions

Male narrators and participants are much more likely to contribute puns and retorts than women, who rely on humour

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which is contextually more relevant.

Thus the Birmingham taxi-driver, Trevor, makes the following retort in the story "Going to Worcester" (Chapter 5, section 5.5) as told by Alfie. Alfie quotes the voice of the passenger.

A. ... "Where are we?"

T. On the verge of a nervous breakdown [laughter]

This retort relies on the ambiguity of the phrase "Where are we?" translating physical terms into psychological terms. T's contribution performs a piece of verbal gymnastics on the preceding utterance.

In the story "Brain Scan" quoted in section 6.2 of this chapter, a nurse makes the following comment in response to a story told by another nurse. The story concerns an incident in which the narrator escorted a patient to another part of the hospital and the patient had an unfortunate accident. The accident resulted in a bang on the head for the patient who had been perfectly healthy before the incident. The nurse escorting the patient had failed to carry out her duty and another nurse remarks;

T. What a good escort [laughter]

The comment does not depend on any ambiguity. It acts as a comparator and encompasses the "point" of the story, that is, what the story is really about. The story is about a

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"traumatic" experience for the nurse escorting the patient since she believed she would lose her job through her incompetence. The comment above reinforces the narrator's own feeling that she was a "bad" escort and did not fulfill her role as a nurse. The utterance is meant to be mildly sarcastic. Unlike the taxi-driver's retort, it does not merely rely on the previous utterance for its interpretation: it relies on the whole context of the story.

The male speakers observed rely much more on conversation which the group would recognise as "clever and witty". For example, retorts like the following appear common.

... "for someone so thin you don't half take up some space, he's the pull through for a pcm pcm".  
(Liverpool taxi-driver)

"Hey, how'd you like a fat lip to match your head?"  
(Birmingham taxi-driver)

Womens' humour then, seems to draw more heavily on the overall context of the story rather than on the previous utterance.

Men and women also differ in the type of token mimicry which they use to create humour. This aspect of the data is discussed in section 6.3.4.

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## 6.3 Sex Differential in Linguistic Structure

### 6.3.1 Introduction

The discussion of linguistic differences between the sexes is complicated by the fact that occupational differences cross-cut these. For this reason, it seems best to focus attention first on linguistic differentiation which is not occupation related (section 6.2.5), and then on linguistic differentiation of male as opposed to female narrators which is occupation related (section 6.2.6). It must be emphasised that linguistic effects which are apparently purely sex-related turn out, on closer inspection, to be occupation-related.

Areas of linguistic differentiation between male and female narrators have already been touched on in sections 6.2.3 and 6.2.4, where bonding and group contributor behaviour were discussed. The point was made that there appears to be a difference in narrative strategy, female narrators being more inclined to collaborative establishment of a story while males offer a solo performance. There is also a greater tendency for narratives in a male storytelling session to follow each other in rapid succession without intervening conversation - a form of competitive floor-claiming. Finally, contributors other than the

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narrator, in male groups use the previous utterance as the stimulus for a witty retort or pun, while females comment on the entire storytelling sequence.

The above can be seen as aspects of the strategy developed by female as opposed to male narrators, which of course involve language. Attention can now be paid to aspects of linguistic structure, as opposed to strategy, which differentiate the sexes.

### 6.3.2 Background

Lakoff (1973, 1975) associates a number of linguistic features with women's speech. These include:-

1. Hedges - e.g. "sort of" and "kind of" and also comments like, "I guess", "It seems like" and so on.
2. (Super) polite forms - e.g. "I'd really appreciate it if ...." or "Would you please open the door, if you don't mind?" and so on.
3. Tag questions - e.g. "John is here, isn't he? in place of "Is John here?"
4. Speaking in Italics - intonational emphasis on words like "so", "very" and so on.
5. Empty Adjectives - e.g. divine, charming, cute, sweet and so on.
6. Hypercorrect Grammar and Pronunciation - women's speech

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approximates closer to Standard English and Received Pronunciation.

7. Lack of a Sense of Humour - women are said to be poor joke tellers and to often fail to get the point of mens' jokes.
8. Direct Quotation - women are supposed to use direct quotations instead of paraphrases.
9. Special Lexicon - For example, women are said to make more colour divisions than men (e.g. magenta, chartreuse).
10. Question Intonation in Declarative Contexts - For example, in response to the question "When will dinner be ready?" women are more likely to give an answer like "Around six O'Clock?" as though seeking approval that the time set is acceptable to the other person.

However, the above list is not an adequate basis for differentiating the sexes, in this study. Some of the listed forms simply do not occur in the data (Super polite forms; Empty adjectives; Lack of Sense of Humour). Other formulations are vague (Speaking in italics; Special lexicon) and are not applicable in any straightforward way. There are also patterns of variation apparent in the data which are not covered by Lakoff's list, but which have relevance to the study of narrative (i.e. Frequency of the Conversational Historical Present as opposed to Past Tense Verb Forms). In any case, those elements which could be of

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relevance require some kind of quantitative treatment if a satisfactory comparison of the sexes is to be made.

Features in the data which are amenable to quantitative treatment include:-

1. Frequency of irregular verb forms
2. Frequency of hedges and tag questions
3. Frequency of direct speech
4. Frequency of the conversational historical present tense (CHP) as opposed to the past tense
5. The consistency of blocking of CHP and past tense  
(See chapter 5, section 5.3.5).

The first three measures are derived from Lakoff's list; four and five specifically apply to narrative.

### 6.3.3 Sex Differential Behaviour in Syntax and Morphology

Quantitative treatment of variables at the phonetic level, presented in Chapter 3, shows that if groups are ranked in terms of standardness, the hierarchy is as follows

|              |           |              |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| NURSES       | GREATER   | Standardness |
| HAIRDRESSERS | ↑         |              |
| TAXI-DRIVERS | ↓<br>LESS |              |

It should be remembered that the chefs' data was not strictly suitable for statistical analysis due to the small

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number of chefs recorded, hence they are not included in the hierarchy above (See Chapter 2, section 2.2 for discussion of this point). However, there are variables other than phonological ones, which might potentially be amenable to quantitative treatment. Examples of these follow.

1. **Multiple Negation**  
e.g. "No he's he doesn't miss nothing" (Liverpool hairdresser)
2. **Non-Standard Never**  
e.g. "Debbie never even did it" (Birmingham hairdresser)
3. **Adverb (morpheme deletion)**  
e.g. "I ran into the toilet dead quick" (Liverpool hairdresser)
4. **Irregular Verb Forms**  
e.g. "I mean if you'd of saw him  
you'd of known he weren't  
an hairdresser because he was big.." (Birmingham hairdresser)  
"I seen these two little red things" (Liverpool hairdresser)  
"I ran up there and come up the stairs" (Liverpool hairdresser)

The problem with the first three of the above four categories is that the number of occurrences is insufficient for comparison of the sexes. This difficulty is one of the major stumbling blocks to quantitative analysis of features of texts other than phonetic ones and is well known in the sociolinguistic literature. However, category four, irregular verb forms, does produce a sufficient number of occurrences for the four occupational groups to be compared. The chef data is included for comparison, although again it must be acknowledged that the small number of chefs recorded

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is a limiting factor of the research design. However, the two men appear to be more similar in their use of the syntactic and phonological features discussed in the following sections than they are in their use of the phonological variables (h), (t) and (ing). Hence data elicited from the chefs can usefully be compared with data elicited from the hairdressers, nurses and taxi-drivers.

However, the method of calculating frequency is not straightforward. Should frequency be calculated per clause, per utterance, per idea unit (cf. Chafe, 1980) or on some other basis? Few studies of the relative frequency of any of these indicators have been carried out on different text types, or in different social groups. In addition, those studies which have attempted to quantify non-standard syntactical features do not single out narrative (e.g. Cheshire, 1978). As indicated in Chapter 2, the narratives produced vary quite considerably in length, and the groups themselves produce differing numbers of narratives. Hence, the basis for calculating frequency in this study is occurrence per 1,000 words. This at least gives a crude measure which allows the narratives of the 4 groups to be compared with each other.

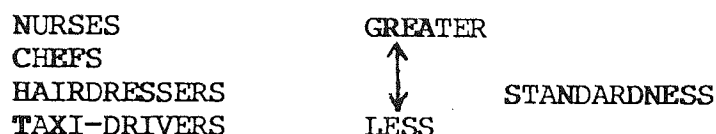
This measure was applied to non-standard verb forms occurring in the data. As a result, the four occupational groups can be ranked in terms of standardness as follows:-



| WOMEN  |              | MEN          |       |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Nurses | Hairdressers | Taxi-Drivers | Chefs |
| 1      | 6            | 7            | 2     |

Table 6-2 Frequency of non-standard verb forms per 1,000 words produced by the four occupational groups.

The figures in Table 6-2 indicate that with regard to non-standard verb usage, the groups are related in the following hierarchy:-



This finding does not point to female narrators using more standard forms than males. Rather, the evidence is that occupational differences are more important than sex differences per se. This point is taken up again in section 6.4 where occupation-related language behaviour is considered more fully.

Three of the features mentioned by Lakoff - Hedges, Tag Questions and Direct Speech - are sensitive indicators of occupation-related language behaviour and these effects are dealt with in section 6.4. However, while direct speech does not appear to relate in any straightforward way to sex, since it is more frequent in taxi-drivers and hairdressers than in nurses and chefs, the use of hedges and tag questions does appear to be sex-related, as the table below

illustrates.

|       |              | Hedges | Tag Questions |
|-------|--------------|--------|---------------|
| WOMEN | Nurses       | 18     | 8             |
|       | Hairdressers | 11     | 6             |
| MEN   | Taxi-Drivers | 6      | 2             |
|       | Chefs        | 3      | 1             |

Table 6-3 - Frequency of hedges and tag questions per 1,000 words produced by the four occupational groups.

Table 6-3 indicates that the nurses and hairdressers use a higher proportion of hedges and tag questions than the taxi-drivers and chefs. However, it cannot be concluded from this crude measurement that, as Lakoff(1975) suggests, women use more of these devices because they are unsure of themselves.

Dubois and Crouch (1975) found that in at least one social context (a professional meeting) 33 tag questions were used by men and none by women. Dubois and Crouch claim that although their sample was small, the fact that men did, and women did not use tag questions in at least one social situation makes the claim that such questions signify lack of confidence and an avoidance of commitment "open to serious doubt". Other researchers have suggested that the use of hedges and tag questions is a function not so much of sex as of social role, and that the speech of people who occupy the more "powerless" roles in social groups is more likely to contain such features (Key, 1972; Crosby and Nyquist, 1977; O'Barr and Atkins, 1980).

However, as Holmes(1986) points out, many of these studies

are flawed in that they compare men and women's use of hedges and tag questions in mixed-sex contexts. It has been shown that in such interactions, women rarely produce the same quantity of speech as men. Therefore, she suggests there should be some control for the differential opportunities of the sexes for producing these forms (for example, O'Barr and Atkins(1980) calculated the ratio of "women's language features" per answer in a courtroom setting). This is unnecessary in the present study which examines the use of hedges and tag questions in single-sex groups.

Another shortcoming of previous studies is that they tend to sum hedges and tag questions, without taking note of the differential functions which they can serve in conversation. The discussion below examines the distribution of two features which occur frequently in the data - tag questions and the hedge "you know" - by function and by sex of speaker.

Holmes(1983, 1984) distinguished several forms and functions of the tag question which she broadly categorised as MODAL - expressing a degree of uncertainty about the validity of the proposition being asserted - or AFFECTIVE - expressing the speaker's solidarity or positive attitude towards the addressee. She suggests that affective tags can also be used as forms of politeness or to soften the force of a critical remark. The following examples are taken from the present data (classification is aided by examination of the

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linguistic context in which the tag appears).

1. MODAL - e.g. I don't think the nurses these days do have to climb in through the window, do they?
2. AFFECTIVE -
  - a. Solidarity
    - e.g. It's heavy nursing, really in hospital, isn't it?
  - b. Softening
    - e.g. Mind you, you can be a bit of a sod for playing practical jokes, can't you?

In the New Zealand data she examined, Holmes(1983, 1984) found that the men used significantly more modal tags, while the women preferred affective, facilitative tags.

The groups in the present data produce differing numbers of tag questions (this is complicated by the fact that there are different numbers of speakers in each group). Therefore the table below gives the percentages of tags by function and sex of speaker, as a guide to the proportion of tags which serve a particular function for men and women in the data.

| Function of Tag                                 | % of tag questions |      |
|---|--------------------|------|
|   | Female             | Male |
| MODAL Meaning -<br>Degree of uncertainty        | 29                 | 72   |
| AFFECTIVE Meaning -<br>Facilitative, Solidarity | 65                 | 17   |
| Softening                                       | 6                  | 11   |

Table 6-4 - The Percentage Distribution of Tag Questions by Function and by Sex of Speaker.

It is clear that the majority of tags used by men are modal,

while the majority used by women are affective. These findings which agree with those of Holmes (1983, 1984), and dispute those of Lakoff (1975), are also consistent with the findings of other studies that women tend to play a more facilitative role in conversation (Hirschman, 1974; Fishman, 1978, 1980).

Holmes (1986) also examines the distribution of the hedge "you know" which is similar to the tag question in its addressee-oriented function (and is dissimilar to hedges like "sort of, kind of" which are content-oriented). She distinguishes between forms of "you know" in which the speaker expresses certainty and those in which he/she expresses uncertainty. The forms are as follows (examples are from the present sample):

1. **SPEAKER CERTAIN**

a. **Conjoint Knowledge** - "you know" introduces information which the speaker considers is "incontestable mutual knowledge".

e.g. Linda was saying "tell me like",  
you know she wears stockings,  
"my suspenders fall down"...

In this category, "you know" generally precedes the relevant proposition and is characterised by a falling intonation pattern.

b. **Emphatic** - "you know" is used to emphasise or intensify the speaker's assertion. In contrast with category a. above, there is no assumption that the listener already knows the information being imparted. This use of "you know" can be paraphrased as "let me assure you".

e.g. **Oh** they're very good you know in in that situation.

"You know" typically occurs with falling intonation following the proposition (but may occur medially).

**c. Attributive** - in this category, "you know"

expresses the speaker's confidence that the listener knows, as a result of past experience, the kind of thing that is being talked about.

It can be paraphrased as "I'm sure you know the kind of thing I mean" (in fact it often appears in conversation as "you know what I mean", as in the example below from a taxi-driver

referring to a very scruffy passenger).

e.g. **Well I wouldn't have took him down the dogs home in Meredith Street, you know what I mean**

In Holmes' data and in the present study, this use of "you know" is invariably utterance final with a falling intonation. It is invariably preceded and followed by a pause, although the preceding pause may be very short.

## 2. SPEAKER UNCERTAIN

**a. Appealing** - "you know" may be a plea for reassurance or validation, for example, when the speaker recounts an embarrassing experience,

e.g. **I I can remember to this day just going you know red with embarrassment**

or it can be a plea for reassurance or agreement

in the context of a critical remark,  
e.g. **I don't like being out there when he's**

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out there you know you have to watch  
your pockets

Instances of "you know" in this category may be utterance medial or final, but they are typically spoken with a rising intonation pattern. This category is the one that Lakoff(1975) seems to be referring to when she says women use hedges because they are unsure of themselves.

**b. Linguistic Imprecision** - in which the speaker signals uncertainty in how to linguistically encode the proposition. Holmes proposes three sections in this category:-

**I - Signalling Lexical Imprecision** - in which the speaker appears to be searching for the right word or phrase.  
e.g. I think you do remember it and,  
you know you don't sort of, and  
you you know you don't sort of  
get sloppy about it

These instances of "you know" are typically spoken with falling intonation and are often preceded by another verbal filler like "erm, sort of". They occur between obligatory clause constituents.

**II - Introducing Qualifying Information** - here the speaker signals the need for more precision.  
e.g. and he's got one of these permanent  
straps on his foot you know, bad leg  
and a stick  
In this case, "you know" precedes an optional clause constituent and it is characterised by a falling intonation

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contour.

III- Indicating a False Start - in which the speaker shows a need to restructure his/her message, and marks this by a change of syntactic direction.

e.g. they don't allow for the fact that the patients are individuals and you've got to you know, a friend of mine failed her C assessment because she washed the outside leg from where she was standing and all that load of rubbish

These instances of "you know" may occur with falling or rising intonation.

Although the categorisations above are not entirely separate, in that some instances of "you know" may fall into more than one category (although the context generally disambiguates the major use), they provide a broad framework for the analysis of instances of the hedge in the present work. The table below shows the percentage use of "you know" by function and sex of speaker.



| Function                         | % of occurrences |      |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------|
|                                  | Female           | Male |
| 1. SPEAKER CERTAIN               |                  |      |
| a. Conjoint knowledge signal     | 15               | 14   |
| b. Emphatic                      | 16               | 18   |
| c. Attributive                   | 26               | 41   |
| Totals for speaker certainty     | 56               | 73   |
| 2. SPEAKER UNCERTAIN             |                  |      |
| a. Appealing                     | 22               | 10   |
| b. Linguistic imprecision signal |                  |      |
| I Lexical                        | 7                | 4    |
| II Qualifying                    | 7                | 7    |
| III False Start                  | 7                | 6    |
| Totals for speaker uncertainty   | 44               | 27   |

Table 6-5 - The percentage distribution of the hedge "you know" by function and by sex of speaker.

The above results do not replicate those of Holmes(1986), who found that women use "you know" more often to express speaker certainty while men use it more often to express uncertainty. Table 6-5 indicates that 73% of the instances of "you know" occurring in the male data express certainty, whereas this applies to only 56% of instances of the hedge occurring in the female data. However, it is revealing that women still use "you know" more often to express certainty than uncertainty.

The results seem to point to the Attributive function of "you know" as the major use for both the men and the women. However, "you know" is also frequently used by women as an appeal of some kind. In fact, the Appealing function apart, there is little difference between the sexes in the Linguistic Imprecision category.

The high proportion of attributive hedges in the male data suggests that in the context of the all-male interactions, the hedge "you know" often serves as a mark of solidarity or camaraderie. In fact, Holmes(1986) found that men used "you know" more often in single-sex contexts than in mixed-sex contexts. She suggests that men in interacting with their own sex may recount more "self-revealing anecdotes", and may be more willing to contribute to the development of the conversation in a greater variety of ways.

The author would disagree with Lakoff's(1975) assertion that "you know", when used by women is a sign of non-assertiveness or lack of confidence. Females in the sample use "you know" attributively and as an appeal for sympathy or understanding. They use it for the purpose of identifying with other women and encouraging other women to identify with them. In the present sample at least, "you know" signals linguistic imprecision very infrequently. In this, the women's use of "you know" is similar to their use of the tag question.

The present research suggests that in single-sex groups, the tag question and the Appealing function of "you know" operate for females in a similar way to the way "you know" in the Attributive category functions for males. Both mark solidarity and are signals of intimacy. They are essentially interactive pragmatic devices which draw the addressee into the conversation and may even operate as

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positive politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1978) by "generously attributing relevant knowledge to the addressee". However, through these devices, females more often make appeals to the emotional experiences of other females, whereas men make more references to specific in-group knowledge of the situational or contextual kind. These findings are consistent with the assertion that women's behaviour is interactional and the focus of talk is often the redefinition of their own experiences, while men are more competitive and prefer talk about action (Hirschman, 1973; Kalcik, 1975; Maltz and Borker, 1982).

The final two syntactic/morphological features observed - the use of CHP as opposed to past tense verb forms and the consistency of verb tense blocking - do not appear to be sex related. In fact, the ratio **HP : Past Tense** for the four groups is as follows:-

| Ratio        | CHP : Past |
|--------------|------------|
| Nurses       | 1 : 8      |
| Hairdressers | 1 : 3      |
| Taxi-Drivers | 1 : 3      |
| Chefs        | 1 : 4      |

Hairdressers and taxi-drivers show a similar ratio which is dissimilar to that of nurses and chefs. Also as section 6.4.3 illustrates, taxi-drivers show the most consistent verb tense blocking behaviour of the four occupational groups, whereas nurses are the least consistent group. Hence the use of CHP and past tense verb forms appears to be an occupation-related effect.

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#### 6.3.4 Sex Differential Behaviour in Phonology

The discussion of sex-specific language behaviour has so far focussed on syntax and morphology. Turning now to phonology, Lakoff's list contains three elements which are essentially phonological and/or prosodic: Speaking in Italics (which includes, it is assumed, the kinds of prosodic features involved in differentiating Direct Speech, which are discussed in 5.3.1); Direct Quotation (termed Direct or Re-enacted Speech in this study, and described in 5.3.1) and Question Intonation in Declarative Contexts.

It has already been mentioned (section 6.3.3) that the use of Direct Speech does not appear to be sex-related in this study. It appears more frequently in the speech of hairdressers and taxi-drivers than in the speech of nurses and chefs (this point is discussed further in section 6.4.2).

As regards Question Intonation, the present writer does not accept the notion that rising contour is equatable with question intonation. Questions can be realised using alternative phonetic devices: for example, pitch raising, maintaining a falling contour. There is no single intonation contour which is associated uniquely with questions. In any case, in the regional varieties examined here, (Liverpool and Birmingham vernacular speech) a rising intonation pattern does not necessarily signal a question. On the basis of informal observation, it seems likely that

it has more than one function: non-assertiveness, acknowledgements of previous occurrence of information (i.e. low informativity) or even non-finality. The issue of the meaning of intonational contours is problematic within intonational studies of RP, and even more problematic within regional varieties other than RP (Johns-Lewis, 1986a; Local, 1986). An investigation of this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis. Hence Lakoff's last category is not at issue here. However, there are some phonological effects in the data which mark an absolute difference between the sexes: token mimicry, prosodic characterisation, and expressive phonology.

#### 6.3.4.1 Token Mimicry

As we saw in Chapter 5, token mimicry involves narrators enacting in direct speech the role of a character in the narrative. It was illustrated that narrators do not attempt exact reproduction of the character role, rather they select specific segmental and/or prosodic features which put the audience in mind of the character in question. Three types of token mimicry were identified: regional/social, ethnic and idiosyncratic.

#### 6.3.4.2 Regional/Social and Ethnic Shifts

Regional/social mimicry appears to be facilitated primarily by the adoption of segmental tokens. In the extract from "Posh Clients" it was demonstrated that the speaker's

natural speech style shifts phonetically when she is enacting the role of the posh client.

### POSH CLIENTS

|                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| H. The thing is though   |                          |
| they complain about,     | 'complain', 'day'        |
| I had in a posh lady     | (eɪ) - [aɪ]              |
| the other day            |                          |
| and she was going,       | 'going' - (ɪŋ) - [ɪŋ]    |
| "I'm not me::an::"       | PITCH RAISING [nasality] |
| she said,                |                          |
| "but I used to go to     | PITCH RAISING <st>       |
| Rackhams to have my hair | 'have', 'hair' (h) - [h] |
| cut" she said,           | 'cut' (ʌ) - [ə] <a>      |
| "and its coming          | 'coming' (ɪŋ) - [ɪŋ]     |
| to ten pounds a cut"     | 'cut' (ʌ) - [ə]          |

In enacting the posh client, the hairdresser uses a cluster of features which are not characteristic of her own speech: the [h] variant of (h), the [ə] (as opposed to [ɒ]) variant of (ʌ), and the [ɪŋ] variant of (ɪŋ).

In the above extract, the narrator converges socially upwards, in segmental terms, towards the more RP-like accent of the posh lady.

An unpredicted pattern in the data is that female narrators do not mimic segmentally by adopting features which would represent downward convergence on the social scale. In other words, they do not mimic accents which are lower on the social scale than their own. In the 66 narratives produced by the 20 female narrators, there is only one exception to this, where a nurse (S.) adopts a Liverpool

accent when she takes on the role of a St. Johns Ambulance man.

ST. JOHNS AMBULANCE

S. I'm I'm married to a surgeon  
I. Are you  
S. and we were going off to North Wales  
one day and we got so far as  
Waterloo in Liverpool and  
there was an accident  
so we stopped  
and my husband said  
"I better just go and see  
if there's anything I can do"  
so he went along and  
there was this poor woman lying there  
with obviously a fractured leg  
so, and he was just going to  
bend down and have a look  
at her and a man said to him  
"Out of the way mate  
I'm St. Johns Ambulance"  
[laughter]

'out' (t) - [t<sup>r</sup>] PITCH  
'mate' (t) - [t<sup>s</sup>] DROP

The nurse who tells this story uses a high percentage of standard variants of (h), (t) and (ɪŋ) (She is speaker 1 on Table 13, Chapter 3 (which gives the raw scores) and she produces 81% [h], 97% [t] and 94% [ɪŋ]). The style shift involves only two segmental tokens, [t<sup>s</sup>] and [t<sup>r</sup>] which are not characteristic of her own speech, and these are sufficient to characterise the St. Johns Ambulance man segmentally. The pitch drop on the Direct Speech utterance also assists in the characterisation.

In contrast to the marked avoidance of downward social convergence by female narrators, male narrators make

segmental adjustments upwards (e.g. in A's story "Going to Worcester", quoted in Chapter 5, section 5.5.2, where Alfie adopts a more-RP-like voice when he is playing the role of the inebriated client); and downwards. A fairly broad Liverpudlian speaker produces token mimicry of a friend whom he considers to have an even broader accent than his own.

|                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| P. and he was dead common |                         |
| wasn't he, he used to go  | (t) - [t <sup>h</sup> ] |
| really you know er        |                         |
| "Alright"                 | (t) - [t <sup>s</sup> ] |

Therefore women appear to be reluctant to adopt features of accents which have low prestige (or indeed even any broad regional accents) whereas men are not (as illustrated by the Liverpool chef in his extract "Inky the Printer" - Chapter 5, sections 5.3.2.1, and 5.5 ).

In addition to regional shifts, male narrators also adopt segmental (and prosodic) features to portray different ethnic accents (as illustrated in Chapter 5, section 5.3.2.2, with "The Chinese Man" , where lack of consonant closure, the use of a flap/tap for (r), and forte articulations characterise the voice of the Chinese passenger). In the narrative below, a Liverpool taxi-driver S uses token mimicry to depict some Irish passengers.



## THE IRISH CENTRE

- S. It still happens actually,  
not so much now, you know Irish  
Irishmen
- I. Yeh
- S. especially a few years ago when  
they used to come over from Ireland  
just for work..and they used to come  
over and go the Irish Centre in  
Mount Pleasant
- I. Yeh
- S. which has been there a long time..  
and you'd pick them up off the boat,  
four or five of them and you'd  
they'd say  
"The Irish Centre please",

PITCH RAISING  
(bouncing pitch contour)  
"Irish" (aɪ) - [ɔɪ]

and you'd get them up there  
I think it used to be about  
eight bob, er this was the  
old money, you'd get up there  
and you'd say eight bob and  
they'd give you four eight bobs  
you know instead of the one like

The first utterance of "the Irish Centre" (line 8), is pronounced with level pitch and the first syllable of "Irish" receives the RP variant [aɪ]. In contrast, the same utterance when attributed to the Irish passengers has a bouncing pitch contour and the diphthong (aɪ) has a more rounded centralised back first element than is characteristic of Liverpudlian speech. The vowel in fact converges on the variant [ɔɪ]. As Wells (1982) points out, English speakers tend to hold a stereotype of Irish speakers where there is little or no opposition between (aɪ) and (ɔɪ) (Price vs. Choice) (although as Wells notes, the situation is rather more complicated than a simple two-way opposition). Hence, an English person might imagine an

Irish person saying "noice time" in place of "nice time".  
This would account for the segmental shift observed above.

In contrast to the obvious eagerness with which male narrators portray different ethnic populations, female narrators show a marked avoidance of this kind of behaviour. In fact, females in the sample simply did not mimic ethnic accents even when the opportunity to do so was provided by the narrative. For example, a Liverpool nurse L, tells the following story involving a misunderstanding which can be attributed to the main characters having "strong accents".

#### IRISH SISTERS

L. I can remember one of the funny things that happened to me though when when I was went in to do my theatre training.. we had two Irish sisters and they were really, had a strong Irish accent and sometimes it was difficult to s- hear what they said really and when you're gowned and masked you know and you've got just you're eyes showing, and they were in charge of the theatre and they were really everyone was terrified of them.. and I was in theatre and there was a male nurse who was in at the same time.. and erm..one of the consultants who was operating he was a diabetic and he used to perspire you know excep- exceptionally really.. so every now and again you have to mop his forehead you see... so she said to this nurse "Mop Mr. McMasters brow", so he didn't hear what she said but all he heard was mop, and in theatre you have a mop and bucket [laughter] because you're always mopping up, he went running out and he came back in

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with the mop and bucket,  
[laughter]  
they didn't think it was a bit funny

There is little direct speech in this story and even the small amount used (Line 21) is not presented in the form of mimicry of the Irish accent. The narrator uses her own voice throughout.

It has been demonstrated so far, that female narrators (unlike male narrators) in the sample do not mimic accents which represent a downward convergence on the social scale, nor do they mimic ethnic accents. This marked preference of the sexes might be explained with reference to the following points:-

- 1) It is well documented in the sociolinguistic literature, that women tend to use more prestigious pronunciation patterns than men, particularly in more formal situations (Labov, 1966; Trudgill, 1972; 1974). This behaviour has been attributed to various sources: women are more status conscious than men (Trudgill, 1974); non-standard linguistic features imply masculinity and toughness (Labov, 1968); there are more rewards accruing to women who speak RP than to men who adopt the same speech strategy (Elyan, Smith, Giles and Bourhis, 1978). Hence women's reluctance to use token mimicry in narrative to imitate accents which have low prestige could be a continuation of the impetus

which causes them to converge towards RP in other situations. Related to this point is the fact that token mimicry sometimes necessitates behaviour which breaks aspects of the female sex-role stereotype (e.g. shouting, non-standard speech) which may also be why it is not favoured by female narrators.

- 2) In Chapter 5 (section 5.3.2.4) factors of the social context which favour the occurrence of token mimicry were outlined. One of the conditions stated that to perform successfully, narrators must "feel confident" in using mimicked tokens before the audience. It was also pointed out earlier in the discussion of sex differences in humour (section 6.2.1) that women often receive a negative response to their attempts to be humorous. This leads to the hypothesis that regional or ethnic mimicry (which is often humorous) will receive a more positive response when it is used by a man. Therefore, women may be less confident than men in using regional or ethnic tokens because a negative response is something they are conditioned to expect. This lack of confidence also means that a woman's potential for failure in mimicry is consequently greater than a man's.
- 3) It was pointed out in Chapter 5 (section 5.3.7) that men rely more heavily than women on conversation which can be seen to be clever or witty by the group, and that this form of interaction reinforces and maintains groups

bonds. It is therefore possible that male speakers view regional/ethnic token mimicry as a form of clever artistry which can be used as a means of gaining status within the group as well as a means of increasing group solidarity. Token mimicry may have no such claim on female groups which rely on humorous conversation which is more contextually relevant and where group bonds are more loosely maintained by a system of women contributing to each others stories.

These explanations, though feasible, are somewhat tentative. A deeper insight into the reasons underlying this differential behaviour of the sexes can be gained from looking at the kind of mimicry which women do favour: idiosyncratic token mimicry.

#### 6.3.4.3 Idiosyncratic Effects

While female narrators do not favour regional shifts or ethnic shifts, prosodic features which assist idiosyncratic portrayals appear in abundance (as illustrated in Chapter 5 by the story "Highlights", in which the narrator uses heightened stress, pitch raising, segmental lengthening, and changes of rhythm and tempo to characterise the client's voice - the transcription symbols used in the following sections to indicate the features listed above, are fully

explained in the Appendix to Chapter 5, section 5.5)

In Chapter 5, it was pointed out that idiosyncratic token mimicry (unlike regional and ethnic token mimicry) is not intended to put the audience in mind of a particular reference group, rather it depicts the idiosyncratic behaviour of one individual who is usually known by the storytelling group. It was also illustrated that whereas regional and ethnic mimicry appear to be characterised primarily by segmental shifts, idiosyncratic mimicry is facilitated primarily by the adoption of a range of prosodic features (although phonetic shifts may accrue).

The following extract from a collaborative effort in narrative, by four Birmingham hairdressers, shows not only pitch raising to differentiate direct speech, but also other prosodic effects - segmental lengthening in "sure" and "trade" (the latter in a creaky voice); a bouncing pitch contour (which is not characteristic of the narrator's style) in "I won't lose any friends".

#### JOANNE'S LADY

- H. There's that Joanne's lady =  
All. Oh God = (loud chorus of voices)  
H. I won't lose any friends =  
X. Oohh = (sharp intake of breath)  
A. Yeh that one =  
D. She hasn't been in for ages has she =  
A. She's a real pain she is ..  
Yeh she comes in she sits there  
and she goes er, she goes

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|   |   |
|---|---|
| "You don't <u>MIND</u> doing my hair<br>do you?"        | PITCH RAISING<br>'mind' - emphatic<br>stress  |
| and you go<br>"No no course not",                       |   |
| "Only I won't lose any friends<br>because of it will I, | PITCH RAISING<br>(high pitch level)<br>Bouncing Pitch Contour<br>'friends' - emphatic<br>stress |
| are you su::re::?"<br>[laughter]                        | PITCH RAISING<br>(∨) - elongation   |
| H. Really mental  |   |
| A. "Oh but I used to be in the<br>tra::de:: you see"    | PITCH RAISING<br>(i) - elongation<br>'trade' - creaky voice                                     |

In the above narrative, prosodic effects assist in portraying the client as emotional, irrational and a potential suicide case.

Segmental lengthening, pitch raising and heightened stress are not the only prosodic features utilised in idiosyncratic mimicry ( comprehensive list of the prosodic features used in Token Mimicry can be found in section 6.3.4.4). Mrs S a Liverpool hairdresser, utilises a range of prosodic features in the following story which relates her experience on encountering a drunk on her way to work (this story was first encountered in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.5); blurred consonant transition, drawled and held syllables, forte/piano articulations; and these assist in distinguishing her own role from that of "The Drunk".

#### THE DRUNK

Mrs S. and last week..last week  
I'm walking down the road,  
this is at eight thirty in the  
morning..

1

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this very nice dressed man..  
very, who was there with me when  
it happened?

- B. Me
- Mrs S. walking down the road, very,  
but he was as TIGHT as a lord,  
wasn't he? PITCH RAISING <f>
- But an awful nice man..  
so as I went past he says,  
"Darling..  
could you tell me the time,  
could you tell me the time".. PITCH RAISING  
[laughter] 'darling' - drawled  
<di> <l> 'could', 'tell' - held  
slurring
- I says, "Half past eight".. <p>  
"Oh".. <p> 20  
[laughter]
- "Could you tell me now dear  
where I can get a cup of coffee,  
ee::hh:: I'm pissed love".. <l> <p>  
[laughter] (i) - elongation
- I says,  
"You are drunk aren't you" PITCH RAISING  
I said,  
"How did you get like that PITCH RAISING  
tell me so early in the morning (Bouncing pitch  
its very nice" contour) <a>  
[laughter]
- ..so he said,  
"Oh my bloody wife's gonna kill slurring  
me when I get home"  
he said,  
"I've been out all night love".. PITCH RAISING  
so I said,  
"Well wh- how are you getting <p>  
home have you got a car?" PITCH RAISING 40  
he says  
"I have but I don't know where slurring <a>  
it is"..  
[laughter]
- he says,  
"I tell you what", he says,  
"You've got lovely eyes love.. PITCH RAISING  
[laughter] ee::hh:: you've got lovely eyes", (i) - elongation  
[laughter] ('eehh' - higher  
couldn't get away could I? pitch level & <f>)  
[laughter] slurring
- A. He had his arms round you  
didn't he?
- Mrs S. I said, "Come on now where <p>  
you go- how are you getting  
home?"  
he says,  
"Oh I'll have to get a train PITCH RAISING  
then..but don't know where slurring 60

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I am love"..  
so I says,  
"Well I'll, come on I'll put you on the road to the station" <p>  
I said  
"Have you got your money with you?"..  
PITCH RAISING  
he says "Why?"..  
<p>  
"Well" I said "If you haven't got your fare",  
he said,  
"Why would you give me a few bob?" PITCH RAISING  
slurring <f>  
I said, "If you haven't got your fare love I would give you your fare home, the way you are", PITCH DROP  
he says "Would you?" PITCH RAISING  
"well tell you what love" slurring  
he says 80  
"I'm quite a rich man.. <l> PITCH DROP  
do you believe me?".. PITCH RAISING  
he was dressed impeccable..  
he said,  
"Come on love, come on I'll slurring  
buy you a fur coat"..  
<a>  
[laughter]  
he says "Come on now lets PITCH RAISING <f>  
these go these sho-" slurring  
I quite believe he would  
actually,  
I. Yeh  
Mrs S. he said  
"Don't worry you about money love, PITCH RAISING  
there's never a WOMAN has ever  
offered ME a bloody PENNY in my  
LIFE  
[laughter]  
and YOU who don't PITCH RAISING  
and you'd give me my fare love, (very high pitch 100  
come on, fur coat I'm telling you, level) <f>  
anything in these shops you can  
have",  
honest of God..  
[laughter]  
and he came looking for me  
didn't he?  
came up the stairs..[speaker laughs]  
and he says "Where do you work?" PITCH RAISING  
I says "I've got to go now,  
I've got to go now love, I've got <p> <a>  
to go because I've got to open up  
for staff you see I've got, I've  
got keys",  
"I'll punch your boss in the FACE" <f> (Bouncing  
[laughter] <l> Pitch Contour)

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he said  
 "If he gets at YOU"  
 he said,  
 "Ooh" I said 120  
 "No my boss is lovely but I must <p>  
 open up for staff, you know I've  
 got keys",  
 "I'll come with you" PITCH RAISING  
 I said "No, I work round there,  
 right dow-"  
 he said "Oh come on I I'::ll::" (a<sup>˘</sup>) - elongation  
 I said "I've got to go honestly  
 I'm awful sorry",  
 he says  
 "Well I want to come with you", 'come', 'with' -  
 he says held syllables  
 "Come on let me come with you", 'come' - held  
 anyway I ran up there and come <a>  
 up the stairs he come after me..  
 and went upstairs looking for me  
 into the sun bedroom and everything,  
 he said to buy me a fur coat..  
 [laughter]  
 ...honest of God 140

The story illustrates that whereas Mrs S's speech is characterised by normal/piano articulations, faster overall tempo, more precise enunciation of syllables and more rhythmic utterances, the drunk's voice is depicted through piano/ forte, lento/allegro articulations, syllables are drawled or held (which gives the appearance of speaking with deliberation), the speech is slurred, and there is more emphatic stress. Mrs S uses more variation in pitch levels, pitch range and loudness levels for the speech of the drunk, and these assist his changes of character as he progresses from being confused (lines 1-44); to being amorous (lines 45-50); to generosity (lines 79-103); and aggression (lines 115-120).

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This kind of extensive use of prosodic effects to demonstrate a personality dimension was not a feature of the male data. For example, Alfie's story "Going to Worcester" (Chapter 5, section 5.5), like the story above ("The Drunk"), depicts a fairly wealthy, genteel customer who is rather drunk. However, although Alfie does use features like slurring (e.g. "What a wonderful idea" - 267, line 1) to depict the man, characterisation is not primarily achieved through prosodic effects. It is achieved through a combination of features on several linguistic levels; lexico-syntactic marking, segmental convergence towards RP; pitch level stepping and slurring. In contrast, Mrs S characterises the man's "intoxicated state" rather than his "gentility". She does not noticeably accommodate her speech towards RP when she speaks as the drunk (even when he makes the statement, "I'm quite a rich man") nor does she indicate by lexico-syntactic marking that the man is genteel. In fact, Mrs S indicates his gentility mainly by external statements on the story ("this very nice dressed man"; "he was dressed impeccable") rather than through direct speech.

"The Drunk" and "Going to Worcester" represent two rather different approaches to portraying the same type of character: a female approach which relies heavily on prosodic effects like slurring, drawled and held syllables, and variations in pitch and loudness; and a male approach which relies more on segmental features (shifting the speech

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towards RP), lexico-syntactic features, and to a minor degree on prosodic features.

So far, it has been illustrated that men in the sample show a preference for regional/social and ethnic mimicry, but avoid idiosyncratic mimicry; and women favour idiosyncratic portrayals but are reluctant to imitate low prestige regional and ethnic accents. It has also been demonstrated that regional/social and ethnic characters are primarily depicted through the use of segmental phonetic shifts, whereas idiosyncratic mimicry is facilitated by prosodic shifts.

It was suggested earlier (section 6.3.4.2) that the differential preference of the sexes for certain types of token mimicry might be explained in three ways -

- 1) the female tendency to adopt more prestigious pronunciation patterns than men;
- 2) confidence and the expected response of the sexes to mimicry;
- 3) the relevance of token mimicry to shared group concerns.

Although suggestions one and three are plausible, women's willingness to attempt idiosyncratic token mimicry suggests that they do have confidence and can be successful in this speech form. In fact, considering that the groups are same-sex, women should not expect such a negative response

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to their attempts at humour. However, their avoidance of regional/ethnic mimicry suggests not only that they are still "prestige and female-role" conscious but also that idiosyncratic behaviour is a topic which females enjoy and which they can relate to (as evidenced by the many stories which dwell on this theme).

To expand the first suggestion, the fact that women narrators favour mimicry which is carried primarily by the prosodic features of speech could have important implications. It could mean that the segmental characteristics of speech which women use in "token mimicry" are constrained by the same forces that persuade women to approximate to a prestige norm to a greater extent. In other words, suppression of the vernacular is so thoroughly carried out that imitation of vernacular forms becomes extremely difficult.

The research findings also imply that women imitate the prosodic effects of speech with more ease than they do segmental features (although this conclusion cannot be confirmed beyond the present sample). If it is true that prosodic effects are imitated with greater facility than segmental effects, this suggests that prosodic features carry a type of information which is not suppressed by females. Prosodic effects might therefore indicate affect, feelings, moods, attitudes, state of mind or even

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semi-permanent characteristics such as "quickness of mind"; whereas segmental information is more clearly tied to **social group membership**.

In Chapter 5 (section 5.3.2.5) token mimicry was characterised as an irony aimed at style. In other words, it is means by which the speaker can say one thing and mean something else by role-playing. The fact that in role-playing, the speaker does not claim authorship (Goffman, 1981) for what he is saying, gives him license to play the figure in any way that he chooses, manipulating the expressive content of the speech to transmit an indirect message of his own (as mentioned in chapter 5, section 5.3.2.5., he does this through an alien author). In this way, if he is challenged, the speaker can deny that he meant what the listeners interpreted him to say. Hence it might be assumed from this that token mimicry would give a speaker license to do things which he would be less likely to attempt when speaking as himself for fear of reprisal, for example, criticise or use profanities.

This is an interesting point which provides one means of understanding why women prefer idiosyncratic mimicry. The author would suggest that females prefer idiosyncratic mimicry primarily because it is an acceptable form of criticism. As mentioned in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.1.3), one of the things that girls learn to do in adolescence, is to

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criticise others in acceptable ways. However, the kind of criticism involved in ethnic mimicry and in certain types of regional mimicry is too strong and hostile a form for women. Idiosyncratic mimicry provides a more subtle means by which a women can criticise a contemporary and yet leave herself an opening if the criticism proves unacceptable to the audience.

The author believes that idiosyncratic mimicry as a form of female criticism in the single-sex group is a widespread phenomenon (the author has subsequently heard it used in many all-female groups in a variety of settings), and is particularly likely to occur in the workplace where it can be used to diffuse female anger or feelings of inadequacy caused by perceived sexual or other discrimination (particularly for older women). Future research which elicits token mimicry from men and women of different ages, occupations and in other social contexts is required before more specific claims can be made.

It might be rewarding for researchers to actively seek out women who do imitate regional and ethnic accents, to discover any common characteristics. The one woman in the sample who does attempt such a shift ("St. Johns Ambulance") is a more mature speaker. It may be that older females with more power to dominate an interaction (and therefore more confidence) are more likely to imitate low prestige accents.

Does mimicry give the speaker license to use speech forms which are inconsistent with his/her own sex role? For example, another avenue of research would be to ask whether women are more likely to use profanities or strong language when they take on the role of another person. There is insufficient data in the present sample to test this hypothesis since the women swear very infrequently. However, since the use of profanities may contribute to the establishment of dominant and submissive roles in a relationship (Selnow, 1985), this may be an important means by which speakers can manipulate their footing (Goffman, 1981) relative to other speakers in a dialogue.

As Goffman(1974) has pointed out, mimicry clearly deserves a more central place in the linguistic literature. Further sub-cultural, and cross-cultural work on this phenomenon would be worthwhile.

The stories presented in Chapters 5 and 6 ("Highlights", "Joanne's Lady"; "The Drunk") illustrate a variety of prosodic features which can be used in idiosyncratic token mimicry. It is now possible to list these in a more succinct form.

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#### 6.3.4.4 Prosodic Effects of Token Mimicry

- 1) an extension of the narrator's normal pitch range (e.g. "Highlights), or the use of a pitch contour which is not characteristic of the narrator's own voice ("The Drunk").
- 2) sudden or gradual increases or decreases in loudness levels (forte/piano/crescendo/diminuendo articulations - "The Drunk")
- 3) the use of segmental lengthening with an emphatic function such as "well" and "really" ("Highlights"). This is often accompanied by heightened stress.
- 4) changes of tempo - allegro/lento articulations.
- 5) related to tempo, there may be changes in the way in which syllables are enunciated. They can be clipped, drawled or held. Also consonant transitions may be blurred so that the speech appears to be slurred. (These features obviously contributed to the mimicry of "The Drunk").
- 6) A particular voice quality which is used to portray the character. For example effeminacy in a man may be signalled by a combination of falsetto register, extended pitch range, lexical choice and tags (although the latter features are not prosodic - c.f. "Highlights" ). This also includes voice qualifiers like "breathy" ("Highlights") and "creak" ("Joanne's Lady").

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Although phonetic shifts are the primary characterisers in regional/social and ethnic token mimicry, prosodic effects may also accrue as illustrated by "Posh Clients", "Inky the Printer" and "The Chinese Man". These stories illustrate two further prosodic effects.

- 7) an intonation pattern which is not characteristic of the speaker's own regional or non-regional accent. The Liverpool chef utilised this technique in imitating a Lancashire accent (See "Inky the Printer", Chapter 5, section 5.3.2.1).
- 8) precise articulation of utterances which may accrue when a regional speaker shifts their speech towards RP (a feature of "Posh Clients", Chapter 5, section 5.3.2.1); or lax articulation which may accrue when English narrators adopt an ethnic accent (e.g. "The Chinese Man", Chapter 5, section 5.3.2.2).

It is possible that other non-prosodic features are equally important. Gestures and facial expressions obviously contribute to token mimicry (e.g. Mrs S adopted a befuddled facial expression in her guise as "The Drunk"). However, it is impossible to assess the effect of these without recourse to video techniques (a time consuming avenue of research which could not be followed in the present work). Successful token mimicry is obviously achieved through a

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combination of features.

#### 6.3.4.5 Expressive Phonology

In Chapter 5, section 5.3.4 was devoted to the use of expressive phonology in narratives. The features used include utterances such as "zap", "bonk", "smack", "waah", and these display highly consistent phonological characteristics: they are monosyllabic; have a (C)V(C) structure; and are spoken fortissimo (i.e. with increased loudness). Their function is to underline and elaborate the nature of a physical event, they often occur around the climax of a narrative, and are frequently accompanied by a physical gesture.

In the narrative data analysed, female narrators do not use expressive phonology (with the exception of one older Liverpool hairdresser Mrs S. who uses expressive phonology in one of her narratives ). Since physical violence is a far more common theme in male narratives than in female ones, it is possible that the explanation for this sex difference lies in the link between expressive phonology and portrayals of violence. However, expressive phonology does not always accompany violence. It can also indicate surprise and unanimity of opinion (as in the story "Sylvia's Knickers"), although it serves this function less frequently in the data.

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It is probable therefore, that female narrators do not use this kind of expressive phonology for the same reason that they avoid swearing and abusive language - it discards aspects of the expected female role (Thorne and Henley, 1975). Women are not expected to be violent or aggressive. However, for men, expressive phonology is not only acceptable, it often functions as a linguistic signal of solidarity, in the same way as "jargon, colloquialisms, slang, taboo topics, and obscene language" (Norrick, 1984). The fact that the only expressive phonology used by a female comes from one of the more mature narrators may be a function of the fact that older speakers can more easily flout cultural expectations because of the greater deference which society awards them (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

It was mentioned earlier (section 6.3.1) that features which initially appear to be sex-related turn out, on closer observation to be occupation-related. As the following sections show, this applies to the use of a number of linguistic features.

#### 6.4 Occupation Related Effects

It has already been demonstrated in Chapter 3, and in section 6.2.5.3 that the four groups differ in terms of degree of standardness, the hierarchy

NURSES  
HAIRDRESSERS  
TAXI-DRIVERS  
CHEFS

reflecting, as was suggested, length of training, degree of specialisation and proximity to the essentials of a profession. (It has been pointed out in section 6.3.3 that although data from the chefs could not be statistically analysed due to the small number of chefs recorded, it is possible to make comparisons between the chefs and the other groups in their use of syntactic and discoursal features).

Five linguistic effects are discussed in this section:

1. Direct Speech
2. Hedges
3. Tag Questions
4. Conversational Historical Present (CHP)  
vs. Past Tense Use
5. Verb Tense Blocking

All four of these phenomena are quantifiable. However, only the first three can be measured in terms of their occurrence per 1,000 words. The fifth - the consistency of blocking of the CHP and past tenses - is measured as a percentage (i.e. the percentage of narratives which exhibit blocking behaviour out of the total number of narratives elicited from each occupational group).

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### 6.4.1 Direct Speech

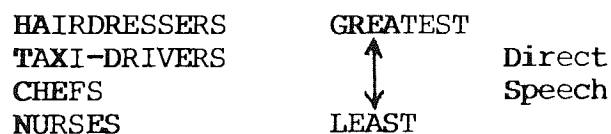
At the beginning of this chapter, it was noted that direct speech is a mark of narrator involvement and that its use often coincides with a vivid and lively narrative style.

The table below illustrates the use of direct speech by the four occupational groups.

|               | Nurses | Hairdressers | Taxi-Drivers | Chefs |
|---------------|--------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Direct Speech | 76     | 234          | 166          | 87    |

Table 6-6 - Frequency of direct speech per 1,000 words of narrative produced by the four occupational groups.

Table 6-6 makes it clear that there is a trend towards greater use of Direct Speech by the less specialised occupational groups (i.e. less specialised in terms of training). The hierarchy for the use of Direct Speech is



The fact that nurses and chefs in this study use considerably less direct speech than hairdressers and taxi-drivers is merely an observation of the relationship between direct speech and a vernacular speech style (as stated in Section 6.1). It does not constitute an explanation for the phenomenon. However, one of the consequences of a more in-depth training regime, is that recipients often operate under a greater number of constraints in their working environment. As pointed out in Chapter 2 (section 2.4), nurses and chefs are subject to

many more rules and regulations in their job than hairdressers and taxi-drivers. Hence the greater use of direct speech by the latter occupations may have been influenced by the comparative flexibility of their working atmosphere (thus conditioning them to expect greater freedom of expression at work than nurses and chefs). This explanation also gains currency from the fact that the nurses - the group who are subject to the greatest number of working constraints - use the lowest proportion of direct speech of the four groups. Further research might contrast the speech behaviour of occupational groups who are clearly operating under very different sets of working constraints (although job-status might be an influential factor which would have to be controlled for, i.e. by choosing occupations from one status/class sector of society).

It was mentioned in section 6.1 of this chapter that direct speech is more likely to occur when a large group of speakers are interacting, what might be called "the theatre effect". It must be noted that since the nurses and chefs were interviewed in small groups compared to the hairdressers and taxi-drivers, this may have been a contributing factor. The smaller group sizes for nurses and chefs probably made the groups slightly more self-conscious and may have inhibited any timid group members from "acting out" their stories (however, it is unlikely that "timid" narrators would be more likely to produce fully performed narratives in large groups, since it is possible that they would feel even less confident in this situation).

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One unexpected feature of the data, is that the hairdressers emerge as the most prolific users of direct speech. As mentioned in Section 6.1, this relates only indirectly to the analyst's intuitive perception of the taxi-drivers' and hairdressers' narrative styles, which were thought to be equally lively. One significant aspect of the greater use of this device by the hairdressers is that they tend, more than the other groups, to perform extensive characterisation in narrative through direct speech. Much of the direct speech used appears in the form of idiosyncratic mimicry - a type of direct speech which, it has been demonstrated is specifically designed to portray non-conformist aspects of character behaviour and personality through imitation of the character's manner of speaking. In contrast to regional and ethnic mimicry which extends over only a few utterances at a time in the data, idiosyncratic mimicry is rather more lengthy and often filters through the whole narrative (the reasons for this are not clear, however it may be that regional and ethnic shifts require more verbal agility than idiosyncratic shifts and hence they cannot be sustained for long periods). The hairdressers' preference for this kind of mimicry seems to be related to a major theme which underlies many of their stories - "unusual client behaviour". Hence the extensive use of direct speech by the hairdressers in this situation appears to be influenced by their predilection for narratives which focus on people and their behavioural characteristics.



It may be that the hairdressers are more likely to use idiosyncratic mimicry in a storytelling/work-related situation where the topic of "client behaviour" naturally becomes prominent. Studies extending the present work to include more occupational groups and social contexts might dispute or confirm the assertion that "a person's occupation is one of the factors which predisposes them towards certain topics of conversation and these in turn influence the type and proportion of linguistic features which they use". A considerable amount of research (which controls for sex, age, class, occupation and so on) must be done before the influence of occupation on speech behaviour can be more fully understood.

#### 6.4.2 Hedges and Tag Questions

It has already been illustrated that female narrators use a higher proportion of hedges and tag questions than male narrators (Section 6.3.3). However, it also appears that the four occupational groups use these features to differing extents, as the table below shows.

|               | Nurses | Hairdressers | Taxi-Drivers | Chefs |
|---------------|--------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Hedges        | 18     | 11           | 6            | 3     |
| Tag Questions | 8      | 6            | 2            | 1     |

Table 6-7 - Frequency of hedges and tags used per 1,000 words of narrative produced by the four occupational groups.

Table 6-7 indicates that the nurses use a higher proportion of hedges and tag questions per 1,000 narrative words, than any of the other groups. Since the frequency of use of both

hedges and tag questions decreases from nurses to chefs, one might suppose that this reflects a gradual increase in confidence, with the men being more confident narrators than the women (Lakoff, 1973; 1975).

However, it was noted in Section 6.3.3. that hedges and tag questions do not always, as Lakoff(1973, 1975) suggests signal a lack of confidence on the part of the speaker. They can serve a number of different functions, some representing speaker certainty or confidence and others representing speaker uncertainty. The table below shows the percentage distribution of tag questions by function and by occupation (as mentioned in section 6.3.3, percentages make comparison simpler). The categories used for analysis are those devised by Holmes(1986). They are explained fully in Section 6.3.3. (In the table below, H/D = Hairdressers; T/D = Taxi-drivers)

| Function of Tag                                 | % of Tag Questions |     |     |       |
|---|--------------------|-----|-----|-------|
|   | Nurses             | H/D | T/D | Chefs |
| MODAL meaning -<br>Degree of uncertainty        | 26                 | 30  | 75  | 80    |
| AFFECTIVE meaning -<br>Facilitative, Solidarity | 65                 | 66  | 25  | 0     |
| Softening                                       | 9                  | 4   | 0   | 20    |

Table 6-8 - The percentage distribution of tag questions by function and by occupation of speaker.

Table 6-8 reveals that only 26% of the nurses tags register uncertainty, while 65% are facilitative and are used to signal a positive attitude towards the addressee. In fact, the taxi-drivers and chefs use tags much more often to

express uncertainty than to express solidarity (although the lack of this tag-type in the chef data is possibly a function of the fact that their interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in interaction with an interviewer who was not a chef).

It was also shown in section 6.3.3 that hedges need not always express speaker uncertainty. The use of the addressee-oriented hedge "you know" by the four occupations is examined below (the categories used for analysis which are explained in section 6.3.3, are those suggested by Holmes, 1986). Figures are presented as percentages of the total counts of "you know" used by each group in the data.

| Function                       | % of occurrences |     |     |       |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-----|-----|-------|
|                                | Nurses           | H/D | T/D | Chefs |
| I Speaker Certain              |                  |     |     |       |
| 1. Conjoint knowledge          | 8                | 24  | 14  | 14    |
| 2. Emphatic                    | 18               | 14  | 8   | 26    |
| 3. Attributive                 | 31               | 26  | 43  | 39    |
| Totals for speaker certainty   | 57               | 64  | 65  | 79    |
| II Speaker Uncertain           |                  |     |     |       |
| 1. Appealing                   | 17               | 19  | 14  | 6     |
| 2. Linguistic imprecision      |                  |     |     |       |
| a. Lexical                     | 14               | 7   | 5   | 3     |
| b. Qualifying                  | 6                | 5   | 8   | 7     |
| c. False start                 | 6                | 5   | 8   | 5     |
| Totals for speaker uncertainty | 43               | 36  | 35  | 21    |

Table 6-9 - The percentage distribution of "you know" by function and by occupation of speaker.

Table 6-9 indicates that speakers in all four occupational groups use "you know" more often to express certainty (particularly in the attributive category), than to express uncertainty. Although the nurses do use "you know" more frequently to signal lexical imprecision i.e. searching for the right word or phrase, there is little evidence to show

that their use of "you know" signals that they lack confidence.

Although the research has demonstrated that the nurses are capable of asserting themselves in the narrator mode and are often witty and entertaining in their humorous stories, the author (and others who have listened to the tapes) retained an impression that the nurses were less confident narrators than any of the other three occupational groups. This may have been due to the fact that they told fewer narratives in comparison with the hairdressers and taxi-drivers (the nurses told 24; hairdressers told 42 and the taxi-drivers, 54). The author found it considerably more difficult to initiate a storytelling session with the nurses and there are clearly sections in the initial part of the transcript where the interviewer is searching for a point of contact. This may of course have been because the nurses were nervous of being recorded, although they talked much more freely in the second half of the transcript, where most of the narratives appear.

In retrospect, it is possible that the interviewer was operating a stylistic strategy of camaraderie whereas the nurses opted for one of distance (Lakoff, 1979). This may have initially resulted in a situation of "complementary schismogenesis" (Bateson, 1972) of which the author was unaware at the time. In other words, as the author increased her efforts to elicit talk from the nurses, they became more introverted. It could be said that the nurses

employed a "subject of experiment" frame, whereas the hairdressers and taxi-drivers employed a "storytelling" frame (Tannen, 1979).

It cannot be assumed that this is the only style employed by the nurses. Further research is required which extends the present research to other social contexts before any firm claims can be made. However, it is interesting that nurses interpret a request for stories in a work context differently to the way it is interpreted by hairdressers and taxi-drivers in a similar context.

It has been suggested in section 6.3.3 that the use of hedges and tag questions may reflect a person's social role (Key, 1972; Dubois and Crouch, 1975; and O'Barr and Atkins, 1980). The nurses use the highest proportions of these forms and in fact, they do seem to have the most "powerless" social role of the four occupational groups. As pointed out in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4.1), the nurses are part of a rigid hierarchy where rules and regulations control almost everything they do. They have low status in the hospital hierarchy and are not allowed responsibility for the more important decisions of patient care which is the prerogative of doctors. They are encouraged to be silent and submissive. Hence their use of hedges and tag questions in an occupation-related situation might be influenced by the many behavioural constraints which form part of their relatively "powerless" occupational role.

It might be expected that chefs would use the next highest proportion of hedges and tag questions, since they work under greater pressure than hairdressers and taxi-drivers. However, the figures show that chefs produce the fewest number of these features of the four groups. In fact, although chefs are subject to certain behavioural constraints, the head chef (both chefs interviewed held this rank) wields a considerable amount of power in relation to junior staff. He also has responsibility for making the important decisions which ensure a smooth-running kitchen and he is awarded high status in the kitchen hierarchy. Therefore he has a relatively "powerful" occupational role compared to nurses, hairdressers and taxi-drivers, despite the constraints. This could explain the figures above, however, it must be acknowledged that the sample of chefs is too small for any firm conclusions to be made.

Although hairdressers work in a more relaxed environment than nurses, they do work under pressure and their behaviour is monitored by managers and employers (who are often men). Hairdressing is not a high status job and the monetary rewards are small. Hence although hairdressers probably have more freedom than nurses in the work situation, they are still in a relatively "powerless" role compared to taxi-drivers and chefs. As might be expected they use fewer hedges and tags than nurses but more than the other two groups. Taxi-drivers on the other hand, work for themselves and are not subject to the vagaries of an employer. However, taxi-driving is a low status occupation which does

not carry the responsibility or certainty of wage which is a part of being a chef. Hence taxi-drivers fall between hairdressers and chefs on the scale.

The suggestion here is that the differential use of hedges and tag questions cannot be explained by sex per se, but that one's social role and the power/status attached to it may predispose one to be more sensitive to certain behavioural constraints in the situation.

It has not been proved that the use of hedges and tag-questions reflects lack of confidence and assertiveness. However, if it is true that society encourages the majority of women into low-status, powerless occupations (like hairdressing and nursing) where they are ultimately responsible to the authority of others, it is not surprising that their speech is characterised by such features. Alternatively, it could be that these features more frequently signal solidarity, in which case it might be expected that speakers who use them more frequently feel a greater need to signal communion of interests and common feeling. Future research might prove that this is characteristic of people in powerless social roles who as a result, may be subject to more discrimination and injustice.

If the type of markers which Lakoff (1973; 1975) associates with women merely reflect women's subordinate status in society, then women who occupy high-status positions should be expected to use these forms more infrequently. A

structured sociolinguistic study of women who occupy "powerful" social roles (for example, female politicians, barristers, entrepreneurs) might reveal that they use fewer of these features. Such a study would clarify whether the source of variation was sex or occupation related. Even more valuable, would be research designed to look at the effects on speech of people changing occupations from powerless to more powerful roles and vice versa. Definitive answers to questions such as these are beyond the scope of the present work. However, the research does illustrate some of the questions which need to be asked and points the way forward for work on a similar theme.

#### **6.4.3 Conversational Historic Present (CHP) vs. Past Tense**

Wolfson(1982) found that CHP (and CHP/Past alternation) occurs more frequently in narrative when participants share one or more of the following attributes: sex, age, intimacy, ethnic group and occupation. She says that a power assymetry between participants reduces the probability of CHP being used since "those holding the higher position appear to have nonreciprocal performance rights."

The narrators in the present sample do share the above attributes and interact in equal status groups. It was therefore expected that the incidence of CHP/Past alternation would be high. The table below shows the frequency of use of CHP and the Past Tense in the narrative



data.

|            | Nurses | Hairdressers | Taxi-Drivers | Chefs |
|------------|--------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| CHP        | 11     | 22           | 24           | 12    |
| Past Tense | 83     | 64           | 62           | 43    |

Table 6-10 - Frequency of CHP and Past tense verb forms per 1,000 words of narrative used by the four occupational groups.

These figures provide the following ratios for Past Tense vs. CHP use.

|              | Past | : CHP |
|--------------|------|-------|
| Nurses       | 8    | 1     |
| Hairdressers | 3    | 1     |
| Taxi-Drivers | 3    | 1     |
| Chefs        | 4    | 1     |

It is obvious from the tables above that the groups use the CHP/Past alternation to differing extents. The hairdressers and taxi-drivers (the less specialised groups) not only use a greater proportion of CHP, but from the ratios given, it appears that they also alternate more between CHP and the Past tense (since their ratios are closer to 1:1)

However, a ratio of 1:1 for HP and Past Tenses could mean that half of all the narratives elicited are told in the past tense and half are told in the CHP, with no switching of tenses within the narrative. Hence, the assumption that the less specialised groups switch tenses more often can only be justified by looking at the blocking behaviour of these tenses within the narratives (blocking behaviour was discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.3.5). The table below gives the percentage of narratives produced by each group

which show blocking behaviour. In this context, blocking behaviour is taken to mean at least one switch from a block of utterances spoken in the Past Tense to a block of utterances spoken in the CHP Tense or vice versa.

Narratives told totally in the Past Tense or totally in the CHP are not counted as instances of blocking behaviour.

|            |        |              |              |       |
|------------|--------|--------------|--------------|-------|
|            | Nurses | Hairdressers | Taxi-Drivers | Chefs |
| % Blocking | 10     | 43           | 70           | 25    |

Table 6-11 - The percentage of narratives - out of the total number produced by each occupational group - which show verb tense (CHP vs. Past) blocking behaviour.

It is clear that the taxi-drivers and the hairdressers show highly consistent blocking behaviour, whereas the chefs and particularly the nurses exhibit this behaviour in few of their narratives. It must be acknowledged that the figures obtained for the nurses could be a reflection of their greater approximation to standardness. It could also be possible that the nurses (who expressed a wish not to tell tales of professional incompetence), felt that their credibility as experts was somehow at issue. They may have felt that a larger style repertoire would be disadvantageous in that it might interfere with their professional image.

It may be that with a larger sample, the nurses and chefs would have produced the CHP in sufficient quantities to exhibit the kind of uniform blocking characteristic of the other two groups. However, it does appear that the less

specialised occupational groups - hairdressers and taxi-drivers - switch tenses more often than the more specialised groups - nurses and chefs.

It was initially thought, following Schiffrin(1981), that the hairdressers and taxi-drivers' greater use of CHP was evidence of their lively, involved narrative style, in comparison with the nurses and chefs, who opt more for reporting rather than dramatising their narratives. It might be concluded from this that there is some evidence here to support a correlation between the use of CHP and a person's occupation. However, Wolfson(1982) finds no such direct correlation between the background of a speaker and the use of CHP. She suggests that the occurrence of CHP alternation depends less on group membership per se than on a speaker's assessment of the norm for interaction in particular situations. This includes an assessment of what his audience will find appropriate. Factors which she says interact with the assessment of audience appropriateness are - story topic; the speech situation; the extent of the time lapse between the story events and the moment of narration; and whether or not the story contains details of action/interaction.

Wolfson(1982) suggests that the only thing which narratives with a low CHP alternation shared is that in their performed stories, the speaker was almost never the central character.

All speakers told narratives in which they were the focus, but these rarely took the form of performed stories. Speakers who used a high proportion of CHP alternation were almost always the central figures in their own narratives.

As Romaine(1984) points out in a review of Wolfson(1982), these findings clearly point to CHP as a feature of what Goffman(1981) terms face or self-presentation.

Romaine(1984) suggests that Wolfson could have refined her analysis by examining whether the use of CHP varies with what Goffman(1981) calls "production format" (the different combinations of speaker and hearer roles possible in discourse which are discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.3.2).

It is well beyond the scope of this thesis, which focuses on sub-cultural variation in storytelling, to provide an exhaustive examination of the use of CHP. However, as Romaine(1984) suggests, it would be interesting to discover whether narrators use CHP more frequently when the speaker roles of animator, author, and principle (Goffman, 1981) coincide than when they report the actions of others. The present study (following the work of Johnstone(1986) and with Romaine's comment in mind) examines one aspect of this, i.e. whether CHP is used more often to introduce the dialogue of "self" or the dialogue of "others".

In Chapter 5 (section 5.3.6.) we examined Johnstone's(1986)

work on authority stories. Johnstone discovered that in stories which contained interactions between authorities and non-authorities, the speech of the former was invariably introduced by CHP. This implies that in terms of speaker role, CHP is used more frequently to introduce dialogue for which the narrator does not claim authorship. The table below illustrates the proportions of CHP, Ø (no introducer) and past tenses which introduce self-imputed dialogue (i.e. when the speaker is animator, author and principle) and self-dissociated dialogue (i.e. when the speaker is only animator, not author or principle) in the data. The figures for "self" were calculated as a percentage of the total number of quotes attributed to "self" in the sample. Similarly, the figures for "other" were assessed as a percentage of the total number of quotes attributed to others. Percentages provide a simpler comparison.

|      | % of Introducers |       |
|------|------------------|-------|
|      | Self             | Other |
| CHP  | 19               | 24    |
| Ø    | 7                | 13    |
| Past | 74               | 63    |

Table 6-12 - The percentage distribution of dialogue introducers as a function of speaker role.

Table 6-12 indicates that in the present data at least, CHP and Ø are used more frequently to introduce the speech of others, than they are to introduce dialogue in which the speaker roles of animator, author and principal coincide. This may indicate, following Johnstone(1986), that in the present sample the talk of others is often more crucial to

the story point (as Johnstone finds that CHP and 0 are more often used to introduce the speech of the character whose presence makes the story tellable). This would provide further evidence for CHP as an evaluative device. However, the results are inconclusive since they may merely reflect the fact that the nurses, for whom CHP alternation is low, are rarely the central figures in their performed narratives. The nurses do tell stories in which they are the central character, but these are invariably not performed and they rarely contain CHP alternation. Further research on data which shows a consistently high proportion of tense blocking is required before any firm claims can be made. However, the cumulative evidence suggests that CHP alternation is one contributory factor to a more involved and lively narrative style.

One factor which may have affected the nurses and chefs behaviour in tense blocking is that they often had to step outside of the narrative to explain "technical terms" to the analyst who was not a member of their occupation (this point was mentioned in Section 6.1). The flow of their narratives was therefore sometimes halted by an explanation of a professional term which was invariably given in the Present Tense. This may have inhibited narrator involvement and their use of the CHP tense.

The taxi-drivers' highly consistent blocking behaviour is

evidence of the fact that storytelling is a much favoured daily ritual with the drivers, and they characteristically take an involved perspective on their stories. They create involvement through the use of constructed dialogue, sound effects, puns and gestures and in many respects their stories resemble what Heath(1983) would call "talking junk" (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.1.2), that is, exaggerating the facts in order to make a good story.

It is interesting that the taxi-drivers are the only group who use the term "classic", to refer to stories which epitomise the kind of experiences they have encountered with fare-evaders (c.f. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1978 - discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.2.1.1). In using this term, they mean that the story is not only a good example of the way that they have been outwitted by "runners" or "bilkers", but also that it is still funny to them even though they may have heard the tale many times before. These tales are told frequently by the taxi-drivers as a means of reconstructing their experiences and to gain sympathy or exoneration from the other drivers, who have all been in similar situations. They are generally elaborate, highly creative tales, interspersed with jokes and witty repartee on the part of the audience. They are particularly characteristic of the taxi-drivers' vivid and involved style of narration. Their use parallels the use of the "classic" parable in conversation (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1975; 1978),

although they are not strictly preformulated (in the sense of being handed down over generations) and they tend to occur in story rounds while parables tend to occur singly, embedded in conversation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1974).

### 6.5 Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the factors influencing narrator perspective. It was illustrated that the perspective which a narrator adopts in storytelling - observer or participant - is reflected linguistically in the type and proportion of direct speech forms he/she uses. Token mimicry and constructed dialogue (Tannen, 1986) are found essentially to be pragmatic devices which require a greater degree of narrator and audience involvement than forms of indirect discourse. They are found to co-occur with other features of involvement like CHP alternation, repetition and reiteration, sound effects and other features of internal evaluation (Labov, 1972). The different types of perspective have been exemplified on the data, and attention has been drawn to the close relationship between the use of direct speech and a "participant" stance, and similarly to the use of indirect discourse in an "observer" stance.

It was also pointed out that there is a tendency for the frequency of direct speech to decrease as the specialisation of the occupational group increases - hairdressers and



taxi-drivers making extensive use of direct speech (reflected in a vivid and lively narrative style), and nurses and chefs preferring indirect discourse (reflected in a more detached narrative style). It was acknowledged, however, that this pattern could not be explained by group socio-economic status per se, since narrator personality and story topic were also shown to interact in determining narrative output. However, several social contextual features were shown to be conducive to the direct speech form - high narrator confidence and good acting ability; large storytelling groups; narratives which are personal rather than vicarious; strong group solidarity reinforced by frequent interaction of group members; and finally an audience who share the narrator's background story knowledge.

Sex differences in narrative strategy and structure were also shown to occur in the data. Two main sex differences in narrative strategy were isolated - topic choice and bonding behaviour. Males were found to be more successful in handling taboo topics like toilet behaviour and sex, while female reference to risqué subjects was more indirect, their focus being social embarrassment - topic focus agreeing with cultural expectations for men and women. In addition it was illustrated that women tend to make fun of their own weaknesses in humour whereas men more often operate on the attack, this behaviour evidenced in popular

male themes like "getting your own back" and "coming off best". Stories were also set out to demonstrate bonding behaviour, the main findings being that men compete and women co-operate - women tending towards collaborative establishment of a story and men towards a solo performance. It was suggested that male bonding in storytelling relies on the acceptance of point scoring gained by ridiculing or putting down other people, by reference to taboo topics and by the use of "strong" or "clever" language. Female bonding in storytelling seems to rely on a less competitive and much more supportive system of contributions to each other's stories. The observation that women more frequently used the kernel story (Kalcik, 1975) as a form of bonding, while men preferred more lengthy story performances, reaffirmed the co-operation/competition nature of female/male storytelling. Humorous language was also shown to take different forms according to its use by a man or a woman - men relying more on "clever" conversation like puns, retorts and witty one liners, this behaviour being related to their wish to gain prestige of the covert sort, while women's humour was seen to rely more heavily on the wider context of their relationships with each other, a pattern which reflects the greater diffuseness of the female group.

One important trend hinted at in the data was that older female narrators may be able to handle risqué topics, use abusive or clever language and compete in a similar way to

men. It was suggested that the cultural expectations for females may be offset by the greater power and influence which often accompanies age and experience (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

Male and female preferences were also found to occur structurally in the use of hedges and tag questions, with women using more of these forms than men. However, the analysis of these forms by function and by sex of speaker revealed that women more frequently use these forms to express certainty rather than uncertainty (c.f. Lakoff, 1973, 1975). It was suggested, that tag questions in particular are used to facilitate conversation and function as an expression of solidarity among women. The addressee-oriented hedge "you know" is found to have a similar function for men. It was proposed that these findings reflect the interactional and facilitative behaviour of women in conversation and the greater importance of the group for men.

Absolute differences between the sexes were illustrated in the use of certain phonological effects - token mimicry and expressive phonology. In token mimicry, it was demonstrated that women do not mimic segmental features of non-standard, low-prestige accents (either regional or ethnic) whereas men do. However, women were found to favour idiosyncratic mimicry whereas male narrators avoided this speech form.

Reasons for this contrastive behaviour were forwarded, including the suggestion being that womens' reluctance to imitate low-status accents parallels their adoption of the prestige speech norm in other situations, and that their use of idiosyncratic mimicry (and mens' avoidance of it) reflects the opposition between male and female group concerns. However, the main suggestion was that idiosyncratic mimicry, as a subtle, self-dissociated form of talk, frequently provides an acceptable means by which women can criticise or ridicule others and thereby reduce subliminal feelings of anger or inadequacy induced by a situation of powerlessness.

Extraction of token mimicry forms from the data illustrated that regional and ethnic mimicry are carried primarily by the segmental features of speech whereas idiosyncratic mimicry is facilitated mainly by prosodic features. It was pointed out that women's preference for idiosyncratic mimicry therefore implies that they copy the prosodic effects of speech more easily than they do the segmental effects and that this could indicate that prosodic features carry a type of information which is not suppressed by females i.e. attitude, emotion, state of mind, whereas segmental information may be more closely tied to social group membership.

A number of prosodic effects of token mimicry were

identified. It was illustrated that the mimic can show variation in his/her normal pitch range, pitch level, loudness level, intonation contour, tempo, enunciation, and voice quality; and may also use paralinguistic features like "creak" and "breath".

Men and women were also found to differ in their use of expressive phonology, men being the sole users of this speech form. A link between expressive phonology and violence (a much more common theme in male narratives) was observed in the data, and hence it was suggested that female topic focus and social expectations for the female role oppose the use of this acoustic intensifier.

Following the discussion of sex differences, five syntactic/morphological occupation-related effects were identified - Direct Speech; Hedges and Tag Questions (these also being sex-related); Historical Present (HP) vs. Past Tense use; and Verb Tense Blocking. It was suggested that the rarity of direct speech among the nurses and chefs (a feature also discussed within narrator perspective) may be a consequence of the greater number of occupational constraints under which they work. It was argued that hairdressers and taxi-drivers are subject to fewer rules, regulations, and responsibilities at work and that this encourages their "performed" style of narrative. It was also demonstrated that the hairdressers made the most

extensive use of direct speech of the four groups. This behaviour was linked to one particular topic focus - unusual client behaviour.

Differential use of hedges and tag questions (initially found to be sex-related) was also found to be occupation-related - the more highly constrained and therefore more "powerless" occupations (nursing and hairdressing) using a higher proportion of these features. It was suggested therefore, that the use of hedges and tag questions cannot be explained by sex per se, but that one's social role and the power/status it carries may be just as influential in a speaker's choice of these forms. This observation was reinforced by the finding that the use of the CHP and tense switching, features characteristic of a lively narrative style, were more abundant in the speech of the less specialised occupational groups - hairdressers and taxi-drivers. However, it was noted that the results may have been influenced by the fact that the nurses used a very low proportion of CHP alternation. Tense switches from past to CHP were found to have an evaluative function in narrative. In such switches, CHP often marked the actions or speech of the central character. It was demonstrated that narrators used CHP more often to introduce the speech of narrative characters, for which they do not claim authorship (Goffman, 1981). This was taken to suggest that such characters may more frequently play a central role in

the humorous narratives. However, it was noted that further research is necessary on the use of CHP as an evaluative device for any firm claims to be made.

This chapter has demonstrated that there is considerable variability in the narratives produced by the four occupational groups under the three main headings investigated - narrator perspective, sex, and occupation. However, these are not the only parameters on which narrative ability varies. Questions remaining unanswered, especially under the heading of narrative variability, are articulated in Chapter 7, section 7.3, where suggestions for further research are made.

## Chapter Seven

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 7.0 Quantitative Analysis

This thesis commences with a structured sociolinguistic study which contrasts and compares four occupational groups - nurses, hairdressers, taxi-drivers and chefs (chosen to incorporate the two main variables of sex and training) - in their use of 3 phonetic variables - (*h*), (*t*) and (*ing*). The analysis is based on narrative data elicited from a population of 34 subjects (20 females and 14 males), drawn from two cities - Liverpool and Birmingham (See chapter 2 for a discussion of elicitation techniques). The results of this analysis which incorporate a differential use of variants relating to sex, occupation and location, may be summarised as follows:

1. Chi-squared tests carried out to detect inter-narrator variability show that for each linguistic variable, the sexes (in both cities) exhibit highly significant variation in their choice of linguistic variants (for (*h*) and (*t*) -  $p < 0.001$  and for (*ing*) -  $p < 0.005$ ). In addition, raw counts of the variants illustrate that women consistently use a higher proportion of the standard forms - [*h*], [*t*] and [*ɪŋg*] - than men (hairdressers - 25% [*h*]; 89% [*t*]; 17% [*ɪŋg*]; taxi-drivers - 5% [*h*]; 80% [*t*]; 10% [*ɪŋg*]). The results



therefore agree with the findings of previous sociolinguistic studies which document women as using more standard phonetic variants than men (Trudgill, 1974a).

2. Chi-squared values also indicate that the occupations - nurses, hairdressers and taxi-drivers - exert significantly different choices over (*h*), (*t*) and (*ing*) ( $p < 0.001$ ) (as pointed out in Chapter 3, the chef data is qualitatively rather than statistically analysed due to the small number of chefs recorded). Also the proportion of standard variants used is found to increase as the specialisation of the occupational group increases. Nurses, the most highly trained group, use the highest percentage of standard variants (68% [*h*]; 96% [*t*]; 81% [*ing*]); and taxi-drivers, the least specialised group, use the lowest percentage of standard forms (5% [*h*]; 80% [*t*]; 10% [*ing*]). Hence, in each city, the proportion of standard variants used decreases from nurses to hairdressers to taxi-drivers, while the proportion of non-standard variants increases in this direction.
3. The effect of location on each variable is more complex. Chi-squared tests indicate that overall, there are significant differences between Liverpool and Birmingham speakers in their use of (*h*), (*t*) and (*ing*) ( $p < 0.001$ ). Birmingham speakers show greater values for non-standard variants of (*h*). However, scores for the (*t*) variable

are complicated by the fact that Liverpool speakers have the extra non-standard variant [t<sup>s</sup>] in their repertoire which makes them appear less standard than Birmingham speakers. If it had been possible to exclude [t<sup>s</sup>] from the analysis, it would emerge that speakers in both cities are very similar in their use of the other variants of (t). Also, nurses are the only group who vary significantly in their choice of variants of (ing), Birmingham nurses using a higher proportion of the non-standard [ɪn]. Hairdressers and taxi-drivers in both cities are remarkably alike in their use of (ing). Hence, in this case, statistical tests obscure the fact that occupational group members in each city are linguistically similar, only differing significantly in the extent to which they use variants of (h).

While the quantitative approach demonstrates that there is a considerable degree of intra-sex and intra-profession consistency in choice of linguistic variants, it lacks explanatory power. There is an obvious need for qualitative scrutiny of the narrative data in order to show when, in relation to narrative structure, these sex and occupational differences are most evident and what reasons underly such linguistic choices. In addition, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches should be able to highlight many more features of the narrative data than can be covered by a singular approach. The same narrative data was therefore subjected to an in-depth qualitative examination.

## 7.1 Qualitative Analysis

It must be made clear that although the analysis of the conversational narratives illustrates a range of shared features (some of which appear in other studies of narrative), as well as sex and occupational differences in narrative style, the conclusions are intended to relate to the present data base - humorous narratives. Extension of these findings to other types of narrative and to non-narrative data necessitates further research.

The main conclusions to be drawn from the qualitative analysis of the humorous narratives can be summarised as follows:

1. Systematic examination of the 143 narratives demonstrates that they have a number of features in common -
  - i. they display humour.
  - ii. they exploit themes of violence, sexual exploits and other taboos. They also dwell on norm violations and involve embarrassing incidents showing personal faults and failures.
  - iii. they share structural characteristics, the classical structure being - scene setting, storyline development, establishment of "point", resolution/climax and coda (optional).

iv. they exploit recurrent linguistic devices

(differentiators): direct speech, token mimicry, verb tense blocking, expressive phonology, constellation effects, linguistic ambiguity, repetition and reiteration.

2. Investigation of the form and content of story humour strongly suggests that to be successfully funny, a narrator must be able to dominate other members of the storytelling group (this finding is also supported by the behaviour of older female narrators in the group - see conclusion 21). However, it is found that while themes such as violence and sex clearly allow narrators ascendancy, paradoxically group domination is also possible via self-ridicule and the display of personal deficiencies. Narrators who present humour in this way are actually displaying self-confidence vis-a-vis group acceptance.

3. Humour is linguistically realised in the data primarily through linguistic ambiguity and token mimicry. It is found that although jokes and puns do occur, they are infrequent forms (being mainly the prerogative of the taxi-drivers) and that humour in narrative relies more on double entendre (i.e. the potential of an utterance for more than one interpretation), drawing heavily on the groups' shared knowledge. Therefore the humour is often group specific, content reflecting group preoccupations and concerns - taxi-drivers relate

stories about sex, violence and "runners" or "bilkers" (fare-avoiders); nurses describe mishaps in the ward; chefs relate tales of disaster in the kitchen; and hairdressers describe unusual or eccentric clients.

4. Close observation of the samples of narrative elicited indicates that humour serves a variety of functions in the context of the storytelling rounds, the major functions being -
  - i. the reinforcement and maintenance of group boundaries.
  - ii. the assuagement of covert aggression through attack or superiority.
  - iii. the need for and procurement of group approval.
  - iv. the removal of attention and diffusion of tension.

These functions are not specific to narrative discourse but appear to parallel the general functions of humour specified by previous studies (Giles, Bourhis, Gadfield, Davis and Davis, 1976).

5. It has also been possible to draw attention to those features of the social context which encourage humorous interaction. In the present study, humour appears to be promoted by:
  - i. a relaxed, informal setting - as evidenced by stories elicited from the taxi-drivers who were recorded in a restaurant.

- ii. a large storytelling group (more than three members) - humour appeared to be exploited to a greater extent by the hairdressers and taxi-drivers who were recorded in groups of five people or more.
- iii. a group where storyteller/recipient relationships are such that members share sufficient background knowledge to interpret story humour. In addition humour appears to be facilitated by single-status and single-sex storytelling groups. Coser(1960) points out that humour in a status hierarchy is always directed downwards (See chapter 5, section 5.1.2 for a discussion of this point) which means that low-status members in a multi-status group may only make fun of people who are of equal or lower status than themselves. Members of the single-status groups examined in the present study direct humour both upwards and downwards ( although the nurses did not actually direct their humour at any high-status members of the nursing profession which implies that the hierarchy is a pervasive influence on their linguistic choices even when the higher echelons are absent (See conclusion 33 in relation to this point). As regards sex, women have been criticised for their lack of sense of humour in mixed-sex groups (Lakoff, 1973, 1975). In the single-sex groups comprising the present study, it has been demonstrated that they can be as witty and entertaining as their male counterparts.

6. In addition to the features shared by the 34 narrators,

the analysis clearly testifies to considerable inter- and intra-narrator variation in narrator perspective, sex and occupation. Such variation leads the present study to reject the notion of "criterial story features" (see chapter 4 for discussion of these) as specified by previous studies of narrative (Labov and Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972; Polanyi, 1978; 1982) and to propose that storyteller/recipient relationships are more crucial to story acceptance than structural well-formedness. The contention of this work is that although narratives may share structural characteristics (as described in 1. iii. above), there can be no "absolute" story features (defining narrative as a genre) whilst narrators display such clear variation in narrative strategy, structure and style.

7. Comparison of the research with previous studies of narrative (Labov and Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972; Polanyi, 1978; 1982) strongly suggests that certain typical features like token mimicry (a feature which has not been isolated prior to this study) and linguistic ambiguity may be peculiar to humorous narrative interaction (though it is not proven that they are specific to narrative), and that other effects like direct speech and expressive phonology occur in high proportions in this type of narrative discourse. It is suggested that this is due to their considerable potential for encouraging audience laughter.

8. In addition, it is demonstrated that the humorous narratives have particularly arresting or dramatic climaxes ( which serve to provoke audience arousal, the escape from which is usually laughter, Ransohoff, 1977). Expressive phonology and historic present are found to cluster around the peak of the story. Repetition of crucial story sequences has the effect of consolidating the story theme, whilst reiteration prolongs the build up to the climax, heightening audience expectation and appreciation.
  
9. Verb tenses are found to occur in blocks, past tense alternating with conversational historical present (CHP). The use of CHP in the narratives is restricted to the complicating events whose time reference is discernible from the co-text or context. It rarely occurs in scene setting (Labov's (1972) orientation), abstracts, codas, or external evaluation clauses, where the past tense is preferred. Time adverbial phrases with a past tense reference also provide a favourable context for the use of CHP. In addition, tense does not switch between main and subordinate "when" clauses. CHP is abundant in the sequence leading up to the establishment of story "point", where narrators often switch between CHP and past as they become more involved in the narration. These findings agree with previous studies on the use of CHP (Schiffrin, 1981; Wolfson, 1982).



10. Also, a measure of the frequency of CHP (per 1,000 words of narrative) indicates that the less specialised occupational groups - hairdressers and taxi-drivers (who are also perceived by the analyst as having a livelier narrative style) - use a much higher proportion of this linguistic feature (T/D = 24 ; H/D = 22; compared with Chefs = 12; Nurses = 11). In addition, the hairdressers and taxi-drivers also switch tenses more often, showing much more consistent tense blocking behaviour in their narratives ( % of narratives showing blocking is: T/D = 70% ; H/D = 53% ; Nurses = 25% ; Chefs = 25%). Since the CHP is also found to coincide with other features of narrator involvement, like direct speech and expressive phonology, the research therefore agrees with Schiffrin's (1981) assessment that the use of the CHP is characteristic of a more lively, involved narrative style. It also accepts the idea that tense switching may contribute to dramatising the story events (Wolfson, 1979).

11. An examination of the use of CHP and the past tense as dialogue introducers reveals that switches into CHP often have an evaluative function in narrative. This concords with Schiffrin(1981). The function of CHP in such switches is to mark information which is crucial to an understanding of the story point. It is found that CHP frequently introduces the speech of a character whose talk is more crucial to the story point. However,

the study disagrees with the work of Johnstone(1986) who says that in authority stories, it is always the authority's speech which is marked by CHP while the non-authority gets the past tense. The present work demonstrates that the non-authority's speech can be marked by CHP, since it is sometimes the presence of the non-authority and not the authority which makes the story tellable. The research concludes that a differential use of past tense and CHP to introduce the speech of story characters does not mark status per se, but the footing (Goffman, 1981) of the various figures in the story world - footing which may be subject to negotiation.

12. It has been demonstrated that both direct speech and token mimicry are important in distinguishing narrator and character roles and in marking role shift. It is found that the frequency of direct speech often increases around the climactic moments of the narrative, its introduction being signalled by a change in pitch level, loudness level, voice quality, or a shift in tempo. Direct speech is also invariably preceded by a pause (these features often occur in combination, especially in token mimicry - see conclusion 23).

13. The analysis clearly demonstrates that a narrator's perspective in storytelling - observer or participant - is reflected linguistically in the type and proportion of direct speech forms he/she employs. It is found that

an involved viewpoint and a lively, performed style of presentation coincide in narratives characterised by a high proportion of direct speech forms (particularly in narratives which contain token mimicry and constructed dialogue - Tannen, 1986), CHP alternation, frequent repetition and reiteration, expressive phonology, and a preference for internal evaluation. In contrast, indirect discourse, external evaluation and a reported style distinguish narratives told from a detached point of view.

14. In addition, a measure of the frequency of direct speech (per 1,000 words of narrative) illustrates that the less specialised groups - hairdressers and taxi-drivers - use a much higher proportion of direct speech forms than the nurses and chefs (H/D - 234; T/D - 166; Chefs - 87; Nurses - 76). The rarity of direct speech among the nurses and chefs cannot be explained by group socio-economic status per se (since narrator personality and topic also influence the use of this speech form) but is attributed primarily to the lack of a well-established occupational group identity, a consequence of the pressurised work schedules which prevent frequent group interaction.

15. Several social-contextual features appear to be conducive to the direct speech form. In the data, direct speech is more likely to occur when:

- i. the narrator is confident and a good actor.
  - ii. the storytelling group is large.
  - iii. the narrative is personal, not vicarious.
  - iv. group solidarity is strong.
  - v. group interaction is frequent.
  - vi. the audience shares with the narrator the background knowledge for interpreting the story details.
16. The research finds that sex-preferential tendencies are apparent in male and female humour, topic choice agreeing with cultural expectations for the sexes. Men handle taboo topics like toilet behaviour and sex explicitly and successfully, whereas women refer indirectly to risqué subjects and focus primarily on the social embarrassment. Female topics in the data include - embarrassing situations; practical jokes; mistakes or calamities at work; idiosyncratic behaviour in people; social relationships. Male topics or themes include - getting your own back; coming off best; violence; sex; and like women, calamities in the workplace.
17. Topic choice also indicates a preference by the sexes for distinct narrative strategies, men being much more inclined towards competitive "point-scoring" in storytelling as evidenced by recurrent male themes like "coming off best", "getting your own back" and explicit references to sex and violence. In contrast, women are more easily able to make fun of themselves and often

satirise their own inadequacies, dwelling on embarrassing situations and their own faults and failures. This agrees with the work of Kalcik(1975) on women's rap groups.

18. Another major sex difference in narrative strategy is evident in male and female bonding behaviour, the main finding of the research being that men compete and women co-operate. Women tend towards collaborative establishment of a story with a number of speakers contributing, whereas men tend to give a solo performance. In addition, womens' stories are interspersed with general conversation which allows individuals to comment and elaborate on points made in the narrative. In contrast, mens' stories tend to follow on quickly from each other, men being much more inclined to hold the floor through to completion of the narrative. The research therefore reaffirms the findings of previous work on male/female behaviour (Hirschman, 1973; Kalcik, 1975; Zimmerman and West, 1975; West and Zimmerman, 1977; Fishman, 1978; Maltz and Borker, 1982, Tannen, 1982; 1984).

19. The finding that the kernel story is also a bonding device characteristically used by females is consistent with the work of Kalcik (1975). The research suggests that the kernel story is an important means by which women can signal unanimity of experience and thereby identify with each other.

In this, the author would agree with Kalcik's suggestion that females use of the kernel story parallels the use of the parable in conversation, as explicated by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1975, 1975).

20. The research therefore concludes that male bonding in the storytelling sessions relies on the acceptance of point scoring gained by putting down or ridiculing other people and reference to topics like violence and sex, whereas female bonding relies on a mutual support system of contributing to each others stories. Women empathise with each other in storytelling by focussing on topics which reflect cultural constraints on the female role - weaknesses, faults and failures and social embarrassment.

21. An interesting age-related pattern observed in the data is that older female narrators appear to be more successful in their attempts at humour and they seem to compete for, and hold the floor in a similar way to men (although this can not be confirmed since only three women over 35 were recorded). They are also less afraid to discuss taboos or use explicit language and they make extensive use of direct speech. However, this unsubstantiated observation does reaffirm the suggestion that humour relies on group domination, since older women should be more able to dominate in female groups by virtue of the deference which age awards them (Brown and Levinson, 1978). This could explain womens' lack of

success at humour in mixed-sex groups, where men are naturally the dominant group.

22. Sex differences are also apparent in participant contributions to the narrative. It is found that speakers other than the narrator, in male groups, use the previous utterance as the stimulus for a witty retort or pun, whereas humorous interjections by females comment on the entire storytelling sequence. Men appear to rely much more on conversation which can be seen to be clever or witty by the group.

23. The use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to the data has facilitated the isolation and description of the effect called **Token Mimicry** (which is not open to statistical analysis). Token mimicry is a shift in speech style by the narrator, sustained over a few words or utterances at a time, and designed to imitate the speech of an absent referee (someone usually known to the storytelling group). It is found that imitation is not exact, rather specific segmental and/or prosodic tokens are selected precisely for their image potential and for their ability to signal more than normal linguistic contrasts (i.e. to indicate attitudes, prejudices, sense of humour, emotion and so on). Consequently the effects mimicked are often highly stigmatised features of the target's speech (that is,

those which would not be copied in normal convergence towards another person's speech).

24. Three distinct types of token mimicry, pinpointing different targets, are evident in the narrative data:
- i. regional/social - which portrays a particular English regional or social class accent.
  - ii. ethnic - which depicts the accents of foreigners speaking English.
  - iii. idiosyncratic - which is intended to demonstrate a personality dimension. Unlike regional/social and ethnic mimicry which focus on reference groups (e.g, Liverpudlians, Chinese, Irishmen), idiosyncratic portrayals focus on the personality characteristics of one individual whose behaviour is different from the norms and expectations of the storytelling group.
25. Investigation of the phonetic variants utilised in token mimicry reveals that they do not occur in large numbers. Also since narrators often mimic by selecting tokens from several linguistic levels simultaneously (prosodic, phonetic, lexical, discursal), it is impossible to make any straightforward correlations between token mimicry and the type of tokens which speakers adopt. However, what is clear from the data is that regional/social and ethnic mimicry are carried primarily by the segmental features of speech



(although prosodic shifts may accrue) while idiosyncratic mimicry is carried primarily by the prosodic features of speech (although phonetic shifts may accrue).

26. The analysis also indicates that token mimicry is more likely to occur

i. when the person being imitated is so salient to the narrator that they must take account of his/her characteristics.

ii. when the narrator has a particular purpose in mind, for example, humour or ridicule.

iii. when the speaker is sufficiently knowledgeable about the tokens of speech which will put the audience in mind of the absent referee.

iv. when conditions of the social context and audience/narrator relationships are such that the speaker will feel confident in using those tokens in front of audience members.

27. A major finding of the research is that men and women show a preference for different types of token mimicry - women for idiosyncratic, and men for regional and ethnic. What is clear is that female narrators in the sample do not mimic accents which are lower on the social scale than their own (out of the 66 narratives produced by the 20 female narrators only one woman attempts such a shift, involving only two

linguistic tokens), nor do they mimic ethnic accents. Men, however, converge socially upwards and downwards, showing no reluctance to imitate low prestige regional or ethnic accents, although they do avoid idiosyncratic mimicry. The evidence suggests that women's reluctance to imitate low prestige accents could be a continuation of the impetus which causes them to converge towards RP in other situations, socialisation and cultural expectations being strong enough to make stigmatised speech, both psychologically and hence linguistically, a very difficult choice. It is also probable that idiosyncratic mimicry has more relevance to the all-female groups, since people's behaviour provides a major currency for talk (see conclusion 34 for a related point).

28. Of the four occupational groups using mimicry, only hairdressers and taxi-drivers show a preference for one particular type - hairdressers preferring idiosyncratic and taxi-drivers ethnic (particularly the Liverpool men). A topic-focus of unusual client behaviour might explain the hairdressers extensive use of prosodic characterisation, while the taxi-drivers' proximity to the docks (Liverpool) and the major railway stations (both cities) could explain why they imitate foreigners. What is clear, is that nurses use this speech form very rarely (although it cannot be concluded that they would not use this speech form in a more informal setting).

29. Women's preference for idiosyncratic mimicry (carried primarily by the prosodic features of speech) implies that they imitate prosodic effects with more ease than they do segmental features. This suggests that prosodic features carry a type of information which is not suppressed by females and may therefore indicate affect, feelings or attitudes, whereas segmental information may be more clearly tied to social group membership.
30. Several prosodic effects which narrators use in token mimicry have been isolated. It is clear that narrators may show variation in their normal pitch range; pitch level; loudness level; intonation contour; tempo; enunciation; and voice quality (using voice qualifiers like "creak" and "breath"). However, it is also clear that successful token mimicry relies on a constellation effect and that narrators often select tokens from several different linguistic levels at the same time.
31. Token mimicry is characterised as an irony aimed at style, i.e. a means by which a speaker can say one thing and mean another by taking on a role (which is frequently stereotypical). It invariably involves a change of footing (Goffman, 1981) and is the functional equivalent of interpersonal code-switching (Gumperz, 1982). The narrator signals metaphorical information about the target of mimicry through an alien author

(Goffman, 1981) who manipulates the expressive content of the speech to signal meaning other than what was originally intended by the author of the words. The overall goal of mimicry which takes place in the target's absence is rapport (Lakoff, 1979). It functions to strengthen and reinforce groups bonds by lauding the positive characteristics of the in-group.

32. Subsidiary functions of token mimicry include the alleviation of covert aggression through attack or superiority and self-aggrandizement (Labov, 1972). It is obvious that token mimicry (as used in the data) rarely compliments the absent referee since narrators often imitate highly stigmatised, socially undesirable features of the person's speech. Also, the targets of mimicry are often people who threaten the status of the narrator in some way (e.g. higher status clients) or do him some wrong (e.g. fare-avoiders). Entertaining an audience with a scathing caricature of the wrong doer allows the narrator to diminish negative feelings since if the imitation is successful, he receives group approval and increases his own group status. The functions of token mimicry parallel the functions of humour described in conclusion 4 above.
33. In addition to involving a change in footing (Goffman, 1981), the research indicates that mimicry can only be achieved if the narrator places himself and the target on unequal footings, invariably awarding himself the

higher-level footing (indicated by making the target look foolish by comparison). This is particularly true of stories which contain subliminal aggression, as described in conclusion 32 above. It is suggested that this averts a potential "loss of face" (Brown and Levinson, 1978) for the narrator who has suffered at the hands of the target. It enables him to defend his own position and simultaneously award himself positive characteristics with which he knows his audience will identify (Burke, 1969).

34. The research also suggests that token mimicry, as a self-dissociated form of discourse (Goffman, 1981) gives the speaker license to do things with speech that he would be less likely to attempt when the speaker roles of animator, author and principle coincide (Goffman, 1981). It certainly provides a means by which females can criticise others. The evidence intimates that the main reason why women prefer idiosyncratic mimicry is that its subtlety (in comparison with regional/ethnic mimicry which can be strong and is often overtly hostile towards the target) makes it an acceptable form of criticism for women to use. It enables women to transmit an indirect message which negatively evaluates the target and yet leave themselves the possibility of denying that they meant any such thing in the face of a challenge. These findings are consistent with previous work which indicates that one of the things which girls learn in their peer groups, is how to criticise others

in acceptable ways (Maltz and Borker, 1982).

35. Another feature of the narrative data, expressive phonology (including utterances like "waah", "bop", "smack", "wham"), exhibits highly consistent phonological characteristics - it is monosyllabic; has a (C)V(C) (or (C)(C)V(C)) structure; and is frequently spoken fortissimo. It is an acoustic device which adds dramatic intensity to a physical narrative event (often at the climax of the narrative) and it is often accompanied by a physical gesture.
36. Sex differences are apparent in the use of expressive phonology, men being the sole users of this speech form (its use being particularly favoured by the taxi-drivers). The link in the data between this type of expressive phonology and portrayals of violence (a much more common theme in male narratives) suggests that female topic focus and cultural expectations for the female role make this acoustic intensifier an unsuitable (and perhaps irrelevant) speech form for women.
37. Raw counts of the proportions of hedges and tag questions appearing in the narrative data (per 1,000 words of narrative) indicate that their use varies according to the narrator sex and occupation. Women use a greater number of these forms than men and the hierarchy for the occupations from greatest to least use

is - nurses, hairdressers, taxi-drivers and chefs.

38. Examination of the use of hedges and tag questions by function as well as by sex and by occupation of speaker reveals that women more often use these forms to indicate certainty, rather than uncertainty. This agrees with the findings of Holmes(1986) and contradicts those of Lakoff (1973, 1975). The tag question is found to function as an expression of solidarity for females and as a conversation facilitator and/or an expression of positive politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1978). It is suggested that the addressee-oriented hedge "you know" functions in a similar way for males.
39. Investigation of the constraints under which the informants work indicates that it is in fact the relatively more "powerless" occupational roles (nursing and hairdressing - more powerless than the male-dominated professions in terms of bestowed freedom, authority and status) who favour the use of hedges and tag questions. The nurses who are subject to the greatest number of working constraints of the four groups use a very high proportion of these features. The research therefore supports the view that the use of these speech forms reflects a person's social role rather than sex per se (O'Barr and Atkins, 1980).
40. A very significant factor to emerge from the research is that although "length and specialisation of training"

distinguishes the four groups, with nurses and chefs requiring more specialised knowledge than hairdressers and taxi-drivers, a socially more significant factor is authority structures or hierarchical relationships.

When the whole speech behaviour of the nurses (trained within the rigid hierarchy of the nursing profession) is considered, it becomes clear that they use a combination of speech markers which realise a noticeably more detached, less lively style of narrative than that characteristic of the other three occupational groups - nurses use the highest proportion of standard phonetic variants (and it has been pointed out that standard speech may be inappropriate and a social disadvantage for humorous discourse - see Chapter 1, section 1.4.4), and of hedges and tag questions; they use very little CHP, direct speech, token mimicry and expressive phonology (all of which have been shown to contribute to a lively style of narrative). In addition, they often tell stories from an observer perspective and are intuitively perceived (by the analyst) as less confident narrators (although it must be acknowledged that this may partly be due to their apparent sensitivity to the recording situation, a sensitivity which diminished considerably as the talk progressed).

In contrast, the taxi-drivers who have a very distinctive, and vivid storytelling style (and considerable freedom from responsibility and authority



in their job) favour non-standard phonetic and syntactic forms, direct speech, token mimicry and expressive phonology in high proportions; witty conversation; "point-scoring" humour; and an involved perspective on their narratives. The cumulative effect of these devices is that they come across as confident narrators. Also many of the taxi-drivers stories contain aspects of what Heath(1983) terms "talking junk" - embellishing and exaggerating the events for the sake of making a good story. These features are particularly characteristic of the stories which the drivers term "classics" - stories which have been related many times before but retain their effectiveness in the retelling (c.f. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1978). The fact that many of their stories have achieved "classic" status suggests not only that the drivers are particularly adept storytellers, but that storytelling is an important daily ritual for drivers, which provides a means of sharing and reconstructing experience.

The combined evidence therefore suggests that the incumbents of a low-status position in a highly structured occupational hierarchy (who are subjected to a great deal of authority) are more likely to use standard speech and a more detached storytelling perspective in work-related situations than speakers in more flexible occupations. A relaxed working environment permits frequent interaction between group members and therefore encourages storytelling as a daily

ritual thus contributing to a performed style of narrative. To extend this argument, the research suggests that womens' speech patterns may be reinforced by the low authority occupations into which society encourages them and may not just be influenced by sex per se.

41. The research concludes that the use of a combination of techniques - quantitative and qualitative - is an effective and searching method of analysis, being able to highlight a wider range of features of the data than a quantitative approach alone (including features which cannot be statistically analysed, like the phonetic marking of token mimicry).

## 7.2 Implication for a Linguistic Theory

The analysis indicates that the humorous narratives have a number of features in common. In terms of universality, it is clear that all of the narrators in the sample display an ability to tell humorous stories. They can also form and move images through the story world, changing footing (Goffman, 1981) to project persona other than their own. However, the study also shows beyond any doubt that the forms and functions of these stories vary quite considerably at both the inter-group level and the inter-individual level.

It was mentioned in Chapter 4 (section ), that

traditional narrative analysis has tended to concentrate on the distinction between stories and non-stories (Labov and Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972; Polanyi, 1978; 1979; 1981; 1982; Tannen, 1979; 1982) - stories being defined by their temporal sequence, entertainment value and "point".

However, the present study indicates that in humorous storytelling, narrators often embellish and exaggerate real life situations for dramatic effect (c.f. Heath, 1983) and that the chronological ordering of events is not essential for audience appreciation. The research also shows that humour is group specific (both for sex and occupation) and hence what counts as entertainment value varies from one group to the next. In fact, the stories in the sample which are greatly appreciated (in terms of audience response and group participation) are those which have considerable relevance to shared group preoccupations and which rely heavily on the groups' shared knowledge for their interpretation. In such stories, the "point" is often covertly, rather than overtly signalled which implies that story point is also group dependent and cannot be discerned through the observation of linguistic evaluation devices alone.

This study therefore finds that what counts as a story (and the assessment of story "point") varies according to narrator/recipient characteristics (sex, occupation, age and so on) and relationships. Temporal sequence, and "truth value" often become irrelevant for the group who share a common oral narrative tradition. The study suggests,

following Dell Hymes(1979) that one aspect of what it means to be a part of an occupational group is to share the narrative tradition of that profession. It also suggests that narrative analysis cannot stop at the level of linguistic features. It must enter into the domain of speaker and hearer identity and characteristics. One could say that "linguistics" is not about linguistic features (in the sense of Chomsky, 1957, 1965), but about the totality of the communicative act. Linguistic theory should be moving towards the study of what Hymes (1971) calls "communicative competence".

The research also shows that there are rules i.e. limits, of mimicry which vary from one sub-cultural group to another, and from one category of speaker to another. The occupations portray different types of characters, as do the sexes. However, it is clear that women must be more careful to portray characters which are within the prescribed norms for the female sex-role. The research therefore provides evidence that as Goffman (1975) suggests, the study of mimicry should attain a more central place in the linguistic literature.

In conclusion, the observations in the present study emphasise the importance of incorporating sociolinguistic descriptions into the structural analysis of narrative, and of considering the communicative context of an interaction.

### 7.3 Suggestion for Future Research

A very interesting finding of the current work is that the hierarchical structuring within an occupational group is socially more significant (in terms of linguistic choice) than the length of specialised training which occupational members receive. It would be valuable therefore to conduct a study comparing narratives elicited from men and women who work within a well-defined occupational hierarchy in a low-authority capacity (e.g. male and female nurses) with the speech of high-authority members of the same or a similar profession (e.g. male and female doctors), also extending the present research to incorporate more informal social contexts (i.e. not work-related).

This kind of research could give further insight into sex differences in linguistic behaviour, since if it emerges that position in the hierarchy is reflected in speech behaviour, this might imply that womens' speech is a consequence not so much of sex per se but of the low-authority occupations into which society encourages them. Also recommended therefore is a structured sociolinguistic study of women who occupy "powerful" social roles (e.g. women politicians, barristers, entrepreneurs) to see if their speech contains similar proportions of the so-called "uncertainty" markers which characterise womens' speech (Lakoff, 1973, 1975). However, it would be even more valuable to study the linguistic choices of individuals moving occupations from powerless to more powerful roles and

vice versa.

Further investigation into the phenomenon of token mimicry would obviously be fruitful. The current work could be extended to discover whether this feature occurs in other discourse types and social contexts as well as investigating how its use varies with narrator socio-economic status, age, sex, and personality. Future studies might investigate whether the phonetic and prosodic features utilised in mimicry relate either to individual narrator style or to the type of character being portrayed. In fact, researchers could actively seek out speakers who do imitate regional, ethnic and idiosyncratic accents and try to discern their common characteristics. It is also essential to discover how much license mimicry gives speakers, as a self-dissociated form of talk. Research designed to investigate how much of women's speech men adopt when they are mimicking females, and similarly what features women adopt in portraying men would be useful. One could also examine whether women are more likely to use profanities or strong language in the guise of another persona. Such studies could have important implications for the study of sex differences in language.

It has been demonstrated that there is some evidence in the data to indicate that mature female speakers may be more successful in humorous storytelling than younger women. A deliberately structured study of single-sex female groups, contrasting older and younger women, could further

substantiate the suggestions made that older women gain the floor more easily, dominate it and hold it for the length of a narrative in a similar way to men.

Finally, it is recommended that the linguistic study of humour in the present study be extended to incorporate other discourse types and other socio-economic groups. The success of this will depend partly on the development of techniques to measure audience appreciation of a humorous stimulus.

In addition, the considerable individual variability in narrative strategy, structure and style observed in the data necessitates extending the study of variability to other types of narrative discourse, both story and non-story e.g. reports and generic narratives.

The findings of such studies could enhance the descriptions of narrative which are available at this point. In addition, quantitative sociolinguistic techniques, which have for so long been geared towards statistical analysis, can be enhanced by qualitative analysis of variables, showing that individuals not only use linguistic variants to different extents, but that they also use them for different purposes.

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