Sarah Gorby, Yiddish folksinger: a case study of dialect shift

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1.0. Introduction

It is a commonly observable fact, at least in heterogeneous, socially and/or geographically mobile societies, that an adult's speech may change over time. Here I am not speaking of cases where the individual can be said to have switched languages or to have suffered some form of aphasia. Rather, I am thinking of the case, say, of the Englishman who has moved to Hawaii or the working-class individual who, by virtue of education or marriage, has moved into the middle class, where both eventually cease to 'sound like' the other members of their original speech community.

Common though this may be, such 'dialect shift' has not, to my knowledge, received the attention it deserves, and the processes and mechanisms underlying the phenomenon have not been closely investigated. However, it turns out to be amenable to study, as a special case of stylistic variation. That is, dialect shift may be construed as a change in the pattern of stylistic variation over time, for each relevant variable, where normal factors affecting such variation are controlled.

In this paper, I shall attempt to shed light on dialect shift by reporting on a longitudinal case study of stylistic variation within a single individual, where situational factors are held constant. In particular, I shall examine the distribution and the changes in this distribution over time of the variants of five vowel variables in the singing of a professional Yiddish folksinger, Sarah Gorby, recorded over a period of nearly 40 years, where each variable has two variants, one representing Standard Yiddish, the other her original regional dialect.

1.1. Stylistic variation: the relevant factors

First, however, a brief discussion of stylistic variation is in order. The phenomenon of linguistic variation in general has been studied in depth by socio-
linguists in an effort to determine, among other things, what is responsible for a speaker’s choosing one variant over another. As is well known, such factors as age, sex, class, geographic origin, and ethnicity have been shown to be clearly relevant. Holding all these factors constant, however, does not eliminate variation, as is equally well known. That is, variation is found also within a relatively homogeneous population, or even in a single individual, and the factors relevant to such ‘stylistic variation’, as it is called, are less well understood. To date, basically two types of factors have been proposed, one a class of social factors, the other a cognitive factor.

The class of social factors proposed as relevant to stylistic variation relates to the speaker’s producing his/her speech as a function of some other individual or group. Following Giles and Smith’s (1979) ‘accommodation theory’ and Bell’s (1984) ‘audience-design’, the relevant other is the audience: speakers form their utterances as a function of their models of their interlocutors, generally but not necessarily in order to sound more like them. Following Le Page et al. (1974), the immediately relevant other is the group with which the speaker wishes to be identified; since it is presumably the audience which is supposed to do the desired identifying, this account may be seen as a special case of the first two. All may be seen as following from Grice’s (1975) Maxim of Manner: the presumption that speakers are forming their utterances in a way that is appropriate to the speech situation. In fact, Trudgill (1983) suggests that accommodation theory be discussed in terms of the notion of ‘appropriateness’, which, as will be seen below, is the relevant notion for Yiddish performers. All may be roughly seen as ‘social pressure’ and I shall refer to them collectively as the social factor.

The cognitive factor claimed to be relevant to stylistic variation is the ‘attention’ variable, proposed in Labov (1972). That is, speakers produce a higher rate of prestige variants over stigmatized ones when they are paying more attention to their speech than when they are paying less attention. However, as is often the case with cognitive factors, attention is hard to identify objectively and quantify: Labov proposes a correlation with genre: speakers pay more attention in formal, nonspontaneous speech events like reading a passage aloud than in informal, spontaneous speech events like natural conversation. The problem is, of course, that attention may vary within a single genre, presumably within a single speech event. Thus, Labov’s attention variable, while intuitively appealing, has not proved very useful: how does one independently assess the attention level of a speaker at each point in the discourse in some objective, replicable fashion?

Note that the social factor and the cognitive factor are really not in explanatory competition: the social factor serves to predict the speaker’s choice of a prestige, or ‘target’, variant, while the cognitive factor is designed to predict the relative frequency of that target variant in a particular speech situation. In fact, in what follows, I shall try to show that both are relevant to stylistic variation and, therefore, to dialect shift. Briefly, it will be seen that (the speaker’s model of) the audience, including what the audience finds appropriate, will play a role, though certainly not a deterministic one, in the selection of one of the variants as the target, but that the speaker’s attention capabilities will play a role in determining in which classes of lexical items the target variant will tend to occur, in many cases with a resultant determination of the actual frequency of the target variant.

In addition, however, we shall see that, at least in the case studied here, a third factor must be taken into account: the individual factor. That is, the target selected on the basis of social pressure may be in conflict with another target selected on the basis of some idiosyncratic goal, and the actual output will reflect the interplay of these two factors, modulo the speaker’s attention capabilities.

1.2. Yiddish

While a good deal of work has been carried out in Yiddish dialectology, there has been very little research on stylistic variation among Yiddish speakers, especially intra-Yiddish variation, as noted by Fishman (1981: 741ff.). First, however, a brief overview of Yiddish dialects and their standing is in order.

The dialect under investigation in this study is the variety of Yiddish that was spoken in Kishinev, the birthplace of the singer. Kishinev, the ‘capital of Bessarabia’, was part of Czarist Russia until 1918, when it was ceded to Romania. Following World War II, it became part of the Soviet Union and is currently the capital of the Moldavian S.S.R.

1.2.1. Eastern Yiddish dialect areas. Prewar Eastern Europe is traditionally divided into three major Yiddish dialect areas: Northeastern (NEY), including Lithuania; Central (CY), including Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary; and Southeastern (SEY), including Rumania and the Ukraine, down to Odessa on the Black Sea. Southeastern Yiddish is further subdivided along an east-west line into the (sub)dialect areas of Volynian (VoY) in the north and Bessarabian-Podolian (BeY) in the south (see Herzog 1969; M. Weinreich 1980; U. Weinreich 1954; inter alia).

In addition, since the mid-1920s, there have been two ‘standard’ dialects, Standard Yiddish (StY) and Theater Yiddish (ThY). The former was presumably intended originally to affect only the written language but eventually it affected the spoken language as well. The latter was designed for use in acting and singing.
1.2.2. **Dialect differences.** The three major regional dialects and the two standards differ, on the phonological level, primarily in the vowel system. Five correspondences are shown in Table 1. (Upper case is not relevant to phonetic value: \(\text{YE} = [\text{ey}]\), \(J = [\text{i}]\), \(U = [\text{u}]\), and so forth. I am using it simply to indicate that the vowel in question is a variant differing from StY.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Five vowel variables in Yiddish</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>StY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to these five vowel variables, we see that (1) NEY and StY are identical; (2) the /EY/ variant of /e/, the /I/ variant of /u/, and the /U/ variant of /o/ are common to all dialects except NEY and StY; (3) BesY has a unique raising of /a/ to /O/; (4) monophthongization of /ay/ is common to CY and some dialects of SEY but that they differ in the length of the monophthongized vowel; and (5) the VoY area is not homogeneous with respect to the monophthongization of /ay/, ThY being identical to those subdialects of VoY which retain the diphthong. It is these five vowel variables, which differ in BesY from StY, that are the object of investigation here.

It should be noted that the variation in all five cases is lexically governed for historical reasons. That is, none represent ongoing sound changes. Thus a word that entered the language after the change ceased to operate does not show the regional variant. In a different vein, a native word with one of these standard vowels will not have the regional variant if it did not have the crucial vowel at the time of the change. This is particularly relevant, for example, for the /notations/variable, where the change involved an earlier /a/; StY /o/ in fact reflects a later merger of this with other vowels (see U. Weinreich 1954; M. Weinreich 1980).

Examples of tokens containing the BesY variants (and of tokens disallowing them) are shown in (1). (All unstarred examples in the paper are drawn from the corpus.)

1.2.3. **Language attitudes.** As is clear from the social factor, language attitudes crucially affect both stylistic variation and dialect shift. Thus it behooves us to consider the attitudes of the Yiddish speech community toward the various regional and standard dialects and toward the variables studied here.

1.2.3.1. The importance of the standard dialects. The existence of a standard dialect is relevant in a sociolinguistic study only insofar as it is relevant to the members of the speech community. In the case of Yiddish, it is a perhaps remarkable fact that, despite the absence of a common governmental or territorial authority, StY became very widely adopted in a relatively short time in the secular public domain, as well as in the private speech of many members of the intelligentsia, following its proclamation in Vilna in the 1920s. The exact mechanisms of this spread have not been well studied, but they need to relate to the cotemporaneous standardization of Russian in the Soviet Union, to the high respect for academic authority typically felt by the Yiddish speech community, to the particularly prestigious position of Vilna academicians in the eyes of the whole community, to the acceptance of prescriptive grammar perhaps arising from and reinforced by the formal study of Hebrew and German among the more learned, and to linguistic insecurity...
with respect to Yiddish, considered for centuries by many to be a corrupt form of German, a 'zhargon', as Sholem Aleichem and others called it (see the articles in Fishman 1981b).

Whatever the reasons, StY became quite widespread in the secular public domain, with one exception, the theater. The theater, however, was not immune to standardization; it simply chose a different standard. Prilutski (1927) addresses the issue by suggesting a uniform dialect for the stage, presumably arrived at by the democratic process of incorporating the variants that most speakers use and winding up sounding just like VoY. His 'teater-yidish' (ThY) was indeed very successful and became the dialect of the stage, losing ground only to StY. Thus, Gutmans (1958: 65), reporting on the Yiddish spoken on a Yiddish radio station in New York, notes (with relief) at the outset that he heard 'no outright provincialisms like tOte-mOme' [my translation]; tOte-mOme is the unambigiously BesY version of tate-mane 'papa-mama, parents'. In the same vein, in the Yiddish State Theatre in Moscow, one is simply not allowed to perform in a regional dialect (Emil Gorevits, personal communication).

1.2.3.2. The relative standing of the regional dialects. Best known within the speech community as a whole are NEY, especially those features of it shared by StY, and CY, popularly called 'Litvak Yiddish' and 'Galitshianer Yiddish', respectively. CY is highly stigmatized, though spoken by a very large percentage of the community. As might be expected from its similarity to StY, NEY is a prestige dialect (at least with respect to its vowels).

As for SEY, its two subs dialects are viewed very differently from each other. VoY is as unstigmatized as a nonstandard dialect can be, no doubt due to its adoption as ThY (or vice versa). For many speakers, however, especially CY speakers, VoY/ThY seems not to be recognized as a regional dialect but rather as a 'cleaned-up' CY, a variety of CY that has lost its most stigmatized variants.

BesY, on the other hand, is very stigmatized for those who know of it. Its distinctive feature, or 'marker', the /a'O/ variable, is highly salient, as can be seen in its popular pejorative name, tOte-mOme loshn 'papa-mama language'. Similarly, a phrase traditionally used to parody BesY speakers is der tOte, di mOme, di kOte, di kOts 'the papa, the mama, the bride, the cat'. On the other hand, the /ay'A/variable, while also stigmatized, is not unique to BesY, since it occurs equally in some VoY dialects and also is considered by most speakers (and linguists) as not significantly different from CY /ay'A:/.

One might think that a regional variant would derive its entire prestige/stigma from the standing of the speakers that use it, it being difficult to see what else could be relevant. From this point of view, we would infer that the BesY variant of /a'O/ is perhaps the most stigmatized, since it is the marker of a stigmatized dialect/group. The BesY variant of /ay'A/ might be a close second here, not so much for its association with BesY but for its possible confusion with CY /ay'A:/, a marker of an equally stigmatized but more salient dialect/group. On the other hand, we would expect that the BesY variants of /e 'EY/, /u 'I/, and /o 'U/ would be far less stigmatized since they are so widespread geographically and since they occur in ThY. Furthermore, given that there is no group that has one of these three without the other two, we would also expect them to have an equal standing in terms of prestige/stigma. However, according to Fishman (1981a), this is not the case, the BesY variant of /u 'I/, along with those of /a'O/ and /ay'A/, having a lower standing than those of /o 'U/ or /e 'EY/. We shall return to this below.

1.2.3.3. Relevance of language attitudes. The relevance of these language attitudes to the present study is twofold. First, we must infer that Sarah Gorby was aware of the stigmatization of nonstandard dialects in general and of BesY in particular, given the strength of that stigmatization in the circles in which she moved. Thus, in accordance with a social-factor account of stylistic variation and dialect shift, we would expect to find a relative increase in the frequency of the standard variants, particularly for those vowels whose nonstandard variants do not occur in ThY, /a'O/ and /ay'A/.

At the same time, from the mere fact that Gorby did not switch dialects, being perhaps the only professional singer since the Second World War to sing consistently in BesY, we must infer that she consciously intended to keep the dialect, that she intended to 'sound' Bessarabian. Of course, we cannot infer her reasons for this effort at dialect maintenance, but we must infer that this was her intention. Thus, in accordance with this individual factor, we should expect no relative increase in standard variants, particularly not in /a'O/, the BesY marker.

Therefore, we find a potential conflict between the social and the individual factor. We shall find that the social factor is indeed powerful but not always overpowering and that, when it conflicts with the individual factor, its effect is greatest when attention is lowest.

2.0. The corpus

The corpus for this study consists of those tokens relevant to stylistic variation in the five vowel variables discussed above that were found in about 12
hours of singing (about 140 renditions of over 100 songs), recorded by Sarah
Gorby between 1940 and 1979 (see Appendix 1 for samples of the data).
Not part of the corpus, but of interest in the study, are four notebooks of
Gorby's in which she wrote the texts of about half of these songs (plus several
hundred others) in transliterated Yiddish and about a dozen Yiddish letters
written by Gorby (in Hebrew script) to friends abroad. I shall discuss first the
recordings and then the token-sets.

2.1. The recordings

The bulk of the recordings were presumably intended for public consump-
tion. These consist of about 25 songs recorded in New York during the
1940s, six long-playing albums plus a few singles recorded during the 1950s
and 1960s in Paris, Buenos Aires, and Tel-Aviv, and two albums recorded in
Paris and Buenos Aires in the 1970s. Most of the 1940s records and both of
the 1970s records were privately recorded but subsequently commercially
distributed.

In addition, there are, all from the 1970s, one 30-minute tape of songs
recorded in a studio but never distributed, one short tape of songs recorded
at home during a singing lesson with a student, and a tape which Gorby made
while practicing alone at home.

As no linguistic differences were found which could be correlated with the
country in which the recordings were made, whether they were intended for
public consumption or not, or whether they were recorded in a studio or at
home, all the recordings have been included, with the exception of one
rendition of one song, discussed in Appendix 2. For the purposes of the
quantitative analysis, all recordings from the 1940s were grouped into one
time period, those from the 1950s and 1960s into a second, and those from
the 1970s into a third.

Given the unconventionality of using singing as data, a brief discussion of
it is in order. Compared to an ideal corpus taken from naturally occurring
speech, the use of recorded songs may be attacked on a number of grounds,
among them their lack of originality, their lack of spontaneity, and the possible
confounding effect of rhyme. Clearly, however, it is no less original or
spontaneous than other, more conventional, types of data: written texts pro-
duced by scribes, oral readings of passages and word lists, etc.

Furthermore, although a songwriter prescribes lexical and syntactic
choices, lexico-phonological choices of the sort at issue here cannot be
prescribed, matters of rhyme aside. Some singers, certainly, may attempt to
modify their phonology in accordance with what they believe the song-
writer had in mind, or should have had in mind. However, without an extra-
ordinary talent for mimicry, even such singers cannot necessarily duplicate
the intended phonology; see Trudgill (1983: ch. 8) for a study of the at-
ttempt by British pop singers to affect various varieties of American English
phonology. In any event, this is an individual choice, and other singers may
make no such attempt.

With the exception of one song (see Appendix 2), Gorby made no observ-
able modification of her phonology on the basis of the songwriter's dialect or
intention or, in the case of true folk songs, on the basis of the region from
which the song comes. For example, six rhymes in the corpus depend on the
CY variant of /ey'AY/, for example zayn 'be', shteyn 'stone'; she maintains
the StY (and BesY) /ey/ and breaks all six rhymes.

In fact, far from modifying her own speech to accommodate a song,
Gorby modifies the songs at will, making lexical and syntactic changes in
every song for which I have been able to find the original/standard text.
Furthermore, over 25 of the approximately 100 songs were recorded more
than once; no two renditions of the same song are the same linguistically, all
differing phonologically, and many lexically and in other ways as well.
Finally, at least two songs, recorded twice each, are in fact original in that the
lyrics were written by the singer, and they are phonologically indistinguish-
able from the rest of the corpus.

Therefore, while the texts are not, on the whole, original with the singer or
spontaneous, the renditions must reflect her phonology to a certain degree,
much more so in fact than a careful scribe's productions might reflect his
syntax, lexicon, or phonology.

On the other hand, the problem presented by rhyme is perhaps the easiest
to overcome. One need only omit from consideration those words which are
part of a rhyming pair. I have chosen not to, however, for one important
reason: Gorby clearly gives relatively little value to rhyme and breaks rhymes
rampantly. For example, for one variable, /a'O/, there are 69 rhyming pairs
(or triples) in the corpus for which at least one member can possibly occur
with the BesY variant. Their treatment is shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhyme maintained (%)</th>
<th>Rhyme broken (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a,a</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>a,O;O,a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 (21%)</td>
<td>30 (43%)</td>
<td>45 (57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Briefly, when a rhyme is maintained, it is twice as likely to have the BesY
variant as the StY one; no rhyme is maintained at the expense of introducing
a variant that is neither BesY nor StY; and a rhyme is more likely to be
broken (usually when one member phonologically or lexically disfavors/disallows the BesY variant) than to be maintained with SY variants.

Examples of broken rhymes involving each of the five variables are presented in (3):

(3) a. /e' EY/:: avek 'away':: tEYg 'days' [INEDIT]
    shpEYt 'late':: magnet 'magnet' [LONDISC]
b. /u1/:: bluwm 'flowers':: klymen 'come' [LID]
    rly 'rest':: tuwn 'do' [CREACIONES]
c. /o1U/:: hon 'rooster':: Uwn (sep. verbal prefix) [ARTON]
    mekhItUnem 'inlaws':: sonem 'enemies' [S78]
d. /a'O/:: shtraln 'radiate':: f0ln 'fall' [RECITAL]
    lOng 'long':: bank 'sorrow' [Ghetto]
e. /ay'A/:: rayt 'rides':: vAt 'far':: vont 'far' [ARTON]
    lAt 'suffers':: vont 'far' [CHANSIONS]

2.2. The tokens

The recordings were transcribed by me and the transcriptions were checked by a NEY/SY speaker, herself a retired Yiddish folksinger. Next all items containing the relevant vowels were collected and coded for a number of linguistic and extralinguistic factor groups. Among the linguistic were phonological environment, grammatical category, language of origin, proto-vowel in the case of /e' EY/ and /o1U/, and relative word frequency. Among the extralinguistic were record, decade of recording, country of recording, song type, and tempo. A total of 2276 tokens for /e' EY/, 2100 tokens for /u1/, 1885 tokens for /o1U/, 1230 tokens for /a'O/, and 1190 tokens for /ay'A/ were accordingly collected and coded.

Finally, it was decided to limit the corpus to only those lexical items that occurred at least once with a BesY variant. Thus eliminated were not only those lexical items in which no speaker could have a BesY variant, for example, those lexical items which phonologically or historically disallow it, but also those in which other speakers do have or might have a BesY variant but in which Gorby does not in the corpus. This reduced the number of tokens to 450 for /e' EY/, 1731 for /u1/, 938 for /o1U/, 578 for /a'O/, and 746 for /ay'A/.

The rationale for this decision is as follows. What we are investigating here is the change over time, if any, of the distribution of BesY variants in Gorby's singing. If some lexical item is fairly frequent in the corpus but simply never shows the BesY variant, then a high number of occurrences of that item in a particular time period would distort the figures for that time period. For example, tsurik 'back' occurs 25 times, never showing the BesY variant of /u1/, in spite of the fact that other BesY speakers may say /tsirik/; the actual distribution in time happens to be very uneven, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. BesY variant of /u1/ in tsurik 'back'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1940s</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BesY variant:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus we see that the inclusion of /tsurik/ in the corpus would be very misleading in that it would suggest a drop in the frequency of the BesY variant of /u1/ in the third time period when in fact we simply have a rise in the frequency of a lexical item which, for the singer, categorically disallows it.

It should be noted here that those lexical items that occur categorically with the regional variant were included in the corpus, the rationale being that Gorby had to be aware of their regional status, given that she heard their standard pronunciation in the speech and singing of others and that modern Yiddish orthography represents the standard variants of all vowels (except in the case of Semitic borrowings, where neither the standard nor the regional pronunciation is typically represented).

2.3. The singer: biographical data

Sarah Gorby was born around the turn of the century in Kishinev, then part of Czarist Russia, the second of seven children in a merchant-clan family. Her parents had emigrated to Kishinev from Poland at the time of their marriage; a grandmother and uncle also lived in the predominantly Russian-speaking household. Gorby left Kishinev at the age of 17 (about 1917) to study music in Jassy (Rumania), where she married a Rumanian/Yiddish speaker. Shortly thereafter, she moved to Rome and finally settled in Paris in the 1920s, returning to Jassy every summer until the late 1930s to visit her husband. In 1940, they had emigrated to Haiti and Gorby came to the US. Around 1949, Gorby returned to Paris; her husband died in Haiti in the early 1950s. Although spending several months each year in Mexico, South America, South Africa, and/or Israel, she remained a resident of Paris until her death in 1980 at about the age of 80.

As for Gorby's language background, we find the multilingualism not uncommon for a person of her time, place, and class, albeit to a rather extreme
degree. Her dominant language was Russian; in addition to that and Yiddish, she spoke French, Rumanian, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and English, all fluently but with a strong Russian accent. She had no Russian accent in Yiddish.

After music, language was reportedly her greatest interest. During her summer trips to Jassy in the 1920s–1930s, she would hire local university professors as private language tutors, and she studied Hebrew on her last trips to Israel in the late 1970s. Furthermore, and very salient to a number of her acquaintances, she was a prodigious language mixer, code-switching freely among whatever languages she and her interlocutors knew.

Finally, she seems to have had a definite affection for regional dialects in general: in addition to speaking, as well as singing, BesY to the end of her life, she spoke Argentinian Spanish even with her Castilian concierge in Paris, and, at least in singing, her Russian was markedly Southern Ukrainian (A. Plotnitski, personal communication).

3.0. Initial (naive) hypotheses

The general hypothesis that originally motivated this study — and which in fact was partially supported by the results — is that the social factor is such that, over time, we should find changes in the distribution and frequency of the variants of the five variables in question in Gorby’s singing indicating dialect attrition, in spite of her clear intention to maintain the regional dialect.

Early on, a number of more specific hypotheses suggested themselves. First, it was expected that certain changes would be found in the phonological and lexical distribution of the variants:

(4) a. Initial hypothesis 1: Loss of phonological conditioning. Over time, the phonological environments disallowing the BesY variants of /a/ and /ay/ should cease to be relevant:

1. Unstressed /a/ → /O/, as in
   tsadikem → *tsodikem ‘righteous ones’
   (compare tsedek – ts’dek ‘righteous one’)
   kaptarunem → *kapotsunem ‘paupers’
   (compare kapstan k’opten ‘pauper’)

2. Stressed /a/ → /O/ unconditionally, as in
   bakn → *bokn ‘bake’
   nakht → *nakht ‘night’
   mashke → *mashke ‘booze’
   barg → *borg ‘mountain’
   aza → *azA ‘such a’

b. Initial hypothesis 2: Loss of lexical conditioning. Over time, the lexical constraints on the occurrence of the BesY variants should cease to operate:

1. Late borrowings with one of the five StY/ BesY sounds should be given ‘BesY’ variants, as in
   magnet → *magnEyt ‘magnet’
   kibuts → *kibIts ‘kibbutz’
   parol → *parul ‘watchword’
   sobres → *sobres ‘Jews born in Israel’
   haymat → *haymat ‘homeland’

2. Words whose original vowel did not participate in the change should be given ‘BesY’ variants, as in
   nemen → *nemen ‘take’ (compare nemen ‘nemen ‘names’)
   nokh → *nokh ‘still’ (compare nokh ‘nokh ‘after’)

c. Initial hypothesis 3: Phonological hypercorrection. Over time, STY/ BesY vowels merge with phonetically indistinguishable BesY variants of other vowels, are construed as such, and are ‘mis-standardized’ to other STY vowels:

1. STY/BesY /ey/ (→ *Eyt) → /e/, as in
   STY/BesY eyder (→ *Eyt) → *eder ‘before’ (compare yeder ‘every’)

2. STY/BesY /i/ (→ *I) → /i/, as in
   STY/BesY zingen (→ *I) → *zungen ‘sing’ (compare gezungen ‘gezungen ‘sung’)

3. STY/BesY /u/ (→ *U) → /U/, as in
   STY/BesY branen (→ *brunem) → *brunem ‘well’ (compare pronem ‘pronem ‘face’)

4. STY/BesY /o/ (→ *O) → /a/, as in
   STY/BesY hot (→ *hot) → *hat ‘has’ (compare gehat ‘gehat ‘had’)

5. STY/BesY /a/ (→ *A) → /ay/, as in
   STY/BesY lakht (→ *lakht) → *laykht ‘laughs’ (compare laykht ‘lakht ‘easy’)

Underlying such hypotheses was a belief that an effect of dialect shift would be to make of the singer a sort of semispeaker, that is, like one who never fully acquired the requisite competence, as in language death (Dorian 1981). These hypotheses thus predict a qualitative attrition of the BesY system. Consider, for example, the well-documented superabundance of post-vocalic /t/ in the formal speech of r-less New York City speakers (Labov...
In addition to such qualitative attrition, one would expect quantitative attrition, as in (5):

(5) Initial hypothesis 4: Quantitative attrition of BesY variants. Over time, the relative frequency of the BesY variants, at least of /u/, /a/ and /ay/, should drop and that of the StY variants should rise.

4.0. Results

4.1. Qualitative attrition: hypotheses 1 and 2

Analysis of the data clearly disconfirms the first two hypotheses for all five variables. That is, there is no instance of the BesY variants of /a/ or /ay/ in previously disallowed phonological environments and no instance of an extension of any of the BesY variants to previously disallowed lexical items. Consider, for example, the lexical items nokh 'still' and nokh 'after'. For historical reasons, only the latter contains the /o/ variable, as shown in (6):

(6) tOte (nokh)nUkh [h]avdUle vayn, a bisele nokh(*nUkh) papa after Havdalah wine, a little-D. still

Papa, after Havdalah wine, a little more ... [RECITAL]

In the corpus, there are 82 occurrences of nokh, as shown in Table 4. Here we see that the homonyms are kept strictly distinct; the one meaning 'still', which should disallow the BesY variant, in fact disallows it, while the one meaning 'after', which should allow the BesY variant, in fact shows it. (There is, however, a drop in its frequency, which, as will be seen below, is typical for this lexical class.) Analogous situations obtain for other homonym sets, such as hobn 'have', 1st and 3rd plural, present indicative, and 'have', infinitive, where the infinitive has the /o/ variable and the present tense forms do not.

This suggests that lexicophonological competence, complex though it may be, is quite robust, at least for this individual, and that it is not necessarily affected by dialect shift. If the same is true for other speakers as well, perhaps this indicates an important difference between purely phonological phenomena, such as Labov's // variable, and lexicophonological phenomena: phonological phenomena care only about phonological environments, whence the rampant 'hypercorrection' when a phonological rule is adjusted, whereas

Table 4. Occurrences of nokh with BesY variant of /o/ variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1940s</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'still'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u/ variant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'after'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u/ variant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

lexico-phonological phenomena are by definition limited to the original lexical forms.

4.2. Qualitative attrition: hypothesis 3

With respect to the hypothesized phonological hypercorrection, I believe that this, too, is disconfirmed, but the situation is, on the surface at least, not so clear. That is, we find no general patterns of phonological hypercorrection. What we do find are three particular morphemes that are treated in a puzzling way, at least at first blush.

The first is the morpheme wu 'where', which should vary between /wu/ /w/. In the corpus, however, we find no instance of /wu/; instead we find */wu/ varying with /w/ distributed as shown in Table 5. Given that there is no other case of an /o/ /o/ alternation, this seems quite strange. However, the German cognate of wu is wo /wo/ 'where', which suggests strongly that Gorby eschewed lexicophonological variation altogether and reconstructed */wo/ as the (suppletive) StY form under the influence of German. (An alternative hypothesis, that she misconstrued StY /wu/ as a second nonstandard form */wu/, varying with a StY */wo/, is less compelling since we find no occurrence of the intermediate */wu/ and since such a triple alternation does not appear to have been hypothesized for any other word.)

The second puzzling case is that of nor 'only, but', which is presumably invariant in all Yiddish dialects. In the corpus, however, we find an alternation with */nur/, albeit rarely, as seen in Table 6. Here, one may infer that Gorby misconstrued the word class of nor, thinking it contained the /o/ variable. However, as we shall see below, her BesY variant for the /o/ variable was one of the most robust, leading us to wonder why there are so few occurrences of */nur/ (or, rather, */nUr/). A more compelling explanation lies once again in German interference: the German cognate is nur 'only, but'. However, in contrast to the situation for wu, where the numbers are much
higher, I am here reluctant to hypothesize that she misconstrued the German form as a Yiddish form; rather we may simply have two speech errors.

The third case, that of the verb prefix tse-, is potentially far more interesting, in that it may be very revealing of certain of the mechanisms involved in dialect shift.

Yiddish has (like German) verbal prefixes of two types, separable and inseparable. The inseparable are always prefixed to the verb, regardless of the verbal form, whereas the separable are prefixed to infinitives and participles but detach from and follow infected and imperative forms. All separable prefixes are stressed, regardless of position; inseparable prefixes are never stressed. The prefixes relevant here are separable tsw-, exemplified in detached position in (7) and in prefixed position in (8), and inseparable tse-, exemplified in (9):

(7) a. ... uwn tswlye miykh tsw... and cuddle-imp.sg. me PRF...
    c. ... and cuddle up with me... [CREACIONES]

(8) a. go we in-love two, tswgetswlyete azoy.

b. khasiydem ... veln zikh tslyganvenen diy zilberne lefl.

Chassidim will REFL PRF-steal the silver spoons

Chassidim ... will steal the silver spoons.' [S78]

(9) a. ... ver ikh mwnter uwn tsehwlye ziykh azoy.

'... I get cheerful and carouse REFL so

... I get cheerful and carry on so.' [LONDISC]

b. f1rt a yiyd kn erets- yisroyl mit tserisene [h]oyzn.

goes a Jew to land- Israel with torn pants

'A Jew is traveling to Palestine with torn pants.' [S78]

Technically, there should be no confusion here: the vowel of the inseparable tse-, /s/, is presumably not homophonous with the BesY variant of the vowel of the separable tsw, /l/. In fact, however, /s/ is often indistinguishable from unstressed /l/, /l/, at least to the naked ear. In any event, of the 29 occurrences of inseparable tse- in the corpus, 10 are pronounced /tsw(w)/, exemplified in 10:

(10) a. ... a liyd velxhe ... tswrwyst miyr mayn harts.

    a song which tears me my heart [CHANSONS]

b. ... fun a folk tswzwytn un tsuwshprytn,

    of a people scattered and dispersed [RECITAL]

At first blush, this situation is puzzling for several reasons. First, given that it looks like true phonological hypercorrection, how is it that only one morpheme is affected, no other instance of /s/ or of /l/ being hypercorrected to /l/? This leads us to suspect that it is in fact not phonological hypercorrection but rather a lexical error, that is, that Gorby misinformed that the inseparable prefix /tse-/ is a regional variant, */tsI-/, the standard of which is /tsu-/,

that is, that separable tsw- and inseparable tse- are phonologically identical except for stress.

In fact, quantitative analysis suggests that this is exactly correct, that, for some reason, Gorby took /tse-/ to be /tsI-/ a regional variant, and posited a SIY */tsI-. For the analysis, all occurrences of tsw- and tse- were counted, including, in addition to the separable and inseparable prefixes, the preposition tsw 'to' and the adverb tsw 'too'. The three morphemes tsw were coded in the usual way; the inseparable prefix tse- was coded as having the BesY /l/ variant when it is pronounced /tse-/ or rather when it is not pronounced with a back vowel, and as having the SIY /u/ variant when it is pronounced with a back vowel, as /tsu(w)/. It turns out that the two prefixes behave identically in each time period, differently from the adverb and preposition, which behave identically to each other. Furthermore, the position of the separable prefix -cliticized to the verb or following it - is not statistically significant. The percentages are shown in Table 7 and the VARBRUL probabilities in Table 8.
that German had a back vowel for each cognate prefix, that would be a plausible reason. But the German cognate of inseparable tse- is zer-, pronounced /tsər-/ and thus German interference cannot be the cause.

It turns out, however, that there is a very clear external reason for Gorby’s behavior, and one that has interesting implications for how speakers acquire a new dialect, in particular, for how they determine exactly what a standard dialect is: for reasons which are not obvious, NEY speakers pronounce the inseparable prefix tse- as /tsu-/ identical to the separable tsu- except for stress. For reasons which are equally mysterious to me, this NEY feature is not salient, much less stigmatized; it is not even discussed in the general Yiddish dialect literature.12

On the basis of this fact, one might conceivably conclude that Gorby simply adopted a NEY regional feature, perhaps to be ‘colorful’; however, she adopted no other NEY regional features; for example, no substitution of /sh/ for /s/ and vice versa (U. Weinreich 1952), no substitution of /EY/ for /oy/ (Jofen 1953; M. Weinreich 1980). Thus such a conclusion would raise as many questions as it would answer.

A second, and far more plausible, conclusion can, however, be drawn. Consider the following: Gorby obviously knew of the existence of STY and used it increasingly, although always in variation with BesY, as we shall see in the next section. But how did she come to know what STY sounds like? Unlike the situation with national languages, she clearly did not accomplish this in school or by privately engaging university professors. She likewise could not have depended wholly on the written language, since older books and most newspapers do not follow standard spelling conventions. So then how would she, or any speaker in such a situation, determine what the standard dialect is?

The obvious recourse is to emulate standard speakers. Choosing the speakers to emulate, however, is not the simplest task; as noted above, STY is no one’s native dialect. While the STY variants of the five vowels studied here correspond to NEY, STY differs from NEY in a number of other respects, as mentioned in note 4. Since most, if not all, ‘STY’ speakers in fact show variation between their regional dialect and STY, one cannot simply take a given speaker’s speech production in toto as a model for STY. Rather, at least in this case, it appears that one hypothesizes which features of a ‘standard’ speaker’s speech are in fact standard and thus emulable.

It is then reasonable to infer that Gorby determined that, while NEY/STY speakers were not to be taken as models with respect to gender, case, siblants, auxiliary verbs, or /oy/EY/, they were, in contrast, trustworthy with respect to the five vowels studied here, /EY/, /U/, /O/, /O/, and /a’A/, in fact uniquely trustworthy for all but the first. Now, given (1) the similarity, if not homophony, of /tse-/ and /tsl-/, (2) the unique trustworthiness of

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**Table 7. Nonback vowel variants of tsu, tse- and percentages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>1940s</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nonback variant</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonback variant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separable prefix</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonback variant</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inseparable prefix</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonback variant</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8. Nonback variants of tsu, tse- probabilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Position of sep. prefix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940s: 0.92</td>
<td>preposition: 0.31</td>
<td>prefixed: 0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle: 0.29</td>
<td>adverb: 0.36</td>
<td>following: 0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s: 0.19</td>
<td>separable prefix: 0.60</td>
<td>inseparable prefix: 0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
<td>[n.s.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 9. Nonback variants of tsu- collapsed, probabilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Position of sep. prefix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940s: 0.92</td>
<td>prep. + adv.: 0.29</td>
<td>prefixed: 0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle: 0.29</td>
<td>all prefixes: 0.71</td>
<td>following: 0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s: 0.19</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NEY/S/Y speakers with respect to /u'1/, and (3) the fact that these same NEY/S/Y speakers frequently or always pronounced tse- as /tsu-/, it is reasonable for Gorby to have construed /tse-/ as */tsi-/, a nonstandard variant of a reconstructed S/Y */tsu-/, that is, to have mistakenly inferred that both the inseparable and the separable prefixes are standardly (tsu-/, differing only by stress.

4.3. Quantitative attrition: hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis, concerning overall frequency, is only partially confirmed by the figures as a whole. They are presented in Table 10. First, recall

Table 10. BesY variants, by time periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variant</th>
<th>1940s</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/e'EY/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/EY/ variant</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% probability</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significance: [n.s.]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u'1/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/I/ variant</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>1731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% probability</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significance: p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/o'U/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/U/ variant</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% probability</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significance: p &lt; 0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/a'O/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/O/ variant</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% probability</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significance: [n.s.]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ay'A/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/A/ variant</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% probability</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significance: p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fishman's (1981a: 741) observation that, in formal situations, BesY speakers tend to produce relatively more S/Y variants of /u'T/, /a'O/, and /ay'A/ but not of /e'EY/ or /o'U/. If we assume that the forces at work in the synchronic situation of stylistic variation that he is discussing are the same as those in the diachronic situation of dialect shift at issue here, then the figures in Table 10 almost conform to his observation. That is, the two variables which are predicted to maintain the BesY variant, /e'EY/ and /o'U/, do in fact maintain it. At the same time, they do not behave identically, the latter showing constant, though apparently stable, variation, the former showing virtually no variation. This suggests that the differential behavior of the variables that Fishman noted is perhaps even more persuasive than he suspects.

Now let us consider the three variables whose BesY variants, following Fishman, should show a relative drop in frequency, /u'T/, /a'O/, and /ay'A/. Two of them, /u'T/ and /ay'A/, do show such a drop, although the latter drops more sharply than the former; in fact the latter seems well along in its shift to S/Y by the initial period for which we have data. However, Fishman's prediction is clearly not borne out in the case of /a'O/, which shows no decrease whatsoever of the BesY variant. The following question then arises: given Fishman's prediction, why does Gorby maintain the BesY variant of /a'O/?

Let us reflect a bit on the overall picture. As seen above, we are dealing here with someone who clearly intends to maintain her BesY phonology, who clearly intends to 'sound Bessarabian'. This is presumably not the case with Fishman's speakers. Thus, Fishman's speakers may be said to select target variants on the basis of the social factor, whereas Gorby may be said to select target variants, for some variables at least, on the basis of the individual factor. Now maintenance of the BesY variant of /a'O/, the marker of BesY, is a necessary condition for 'sounding Bessarabian'; in fact, for people who know very little about BesY, it is possibly both a necessary and a sufficient condition. Thus, while BesY speakers subject only to the social factor would choose the S/Y variant of the /a'O/ variable as their sole target, Gorby can be assumed to be choosing the BesY variant, in accordance with the individual factor.

The following questions then arise: (1) can one then be immune to the effects of the social factor? If not, can one be subject to both the social factor and the individual factor simultaneously? If so, how do they interact? (2) How do we explain the attrition of the BesY variant for /u'T/ and /ay'A/? While not markers of BesY, they are still part of it and thus should have been maintained by Gorby following the individual factor.

With respect to /ay'A/, an explanation is perhaps available. First, the BesY variant of /ay'A/ is most unstable in general, showing enormous variation from speaker to speaker and word to word (M. Herzog, personal communication).
Second, it bears a great resemblance to the highly stigmatized CY /ay/A/. And third, and perhaps relatedly, it does not (generally) occur in ThY. Thus Gorby is in the situation of balancing whatever benefit ‘sounding Bessarabian’ brings her, the individual factor, with the stigma that she thereby accrues, the social factor. In this light, the BesY variant of /ay/A/ is distinctly not cost-effective — too much stigma for too little BesY identification. In this case, then, she perhaps abandons the individual factor, selecting the StY of /ay/A/ as her sole target, on the basis of the social factor.

The case of the /u/1/ variable is, however, far more puzzling, both for Fishman’s speakers and for Gorby. In terms of social meaning, it should pattern just like /o U/ and /e Ey/, given that no dialect has one without the others, but apparently it does not. Fishman’s own explanation does not itself have an obvious explanation, though it certainly accords with my own semi-speaker CY intuitions: while the StY variants of /o U/ and /e Ey/ sound pretentious to SEY and CY speakers, the StY variant of /u/1/ does not. I have no suggestion as to why this should be the case but shall just accept it as fact. In any case, we have seen one variable, /a O/, where Gorby apparently ignores the social factor for good reason, and one variable, /ay/A/, where she is apparently subject to it, also for good reason, but, in the case of /u/1/, she is apparently subject to the social factor for no obvious reason. To investigate this, and to shed light on the other questions raised above, let us now turn to the cognitive factor.

5.0. The notion of attention and the open-/closed-class distinction

(11) a. Cross the green
 b. Twist my arm

What you see in (11a) is a trick sentence that schoolchildren used to pass around — and perhaps still do. Nobody passed around (11b). The ‘trick’, of course, in (11a) is that one tends to read it as cross at the green, not noticing the duplication of the. In (11b), although we have the same number of words, each of the same length, the trick does not work. The difference is that the is a closed-class item and arm is an open-class one.

In recent years, an abundant body of psycholinguistic research has been carried out on the differential processing of open- and closed-class items, namely nouns, verbs, adjectives, and ‘regular’ adverbs vs. articles, prepositions, conjunctions, and quantifiers. Some of the domains in which the distinction has been shown to be relevant are acquisition, aphasia, comprehension, errors, language change, language mixing, lexical retrieval, memory, processing, proofreading, and reading (see, inter alia, Blank and Bruskin 1984; Bradley 1978; Bradley et al. 1979; Forster 1976; Fromkin 1980; Garrett 1980; Goodenough et al. 1977; Joshi 1985; Kean 1979; Salasoo and Pisoni 1982; Sankoff 1980; Weinreich 1953). What all the research points to is that the two classes of lexical items are treated differently, both in production and in comprehension.

For example, as is well known, children acquire open-class items before closed-class, and certain aphasics involve the loss of open-class items and others of closed. In addition, speech errors involving the permutation of initial consonants involve open-class items, as in (12b), and not closed, as in (12c) (Fromkin 1980, inter alia):

(12) a. a man for all seasons
 b. a san for all measons
 c. *a fan mor all seasons

Analogously, intrasentential code switching in the speech of bilinguals typically involves open-class items, as in (13b), and not closed, as in (13c) (Joshi 1985, inter alia):

(13) a. He visited his grandfather.
 b. He visited his grandpère.
 c. *He visited son grandfather.

Regardless of how these phenomena are ultimately accounted for, it is clear that open- and closed-class items are processed differently and that closed-class items are more ‘automatic’, more deeply ingrained, than open, open-class items being more ‘salient’, more likely to be the focus of attention both of the speaker and of the hearer.

5.1. Revised hypothesis: the open-/closed-class effect

Returning now to stylistic variation and dialect shift, we must expect that, if the occurrence of target variants is a function of attention, we should expect that the open-/closed-class distinction is relevant to it. In particular, we hypothesize, in conformity with Labov’s cognitive factor, that open-class items, being more attended to, should show a higher frequency of the target variant than closed-class items. In the same vein, in the case of dialect shift, we predict an increase in the relative frequency of the target variant over time in open- as opposed to closed-class items. This of course assumes a single target variant for each variable. In cases where there might be two targets, one chosen on the basis of the social factor, one on the basis of the individual factor, we would expect the individual factor target, intuitively more
'conscious' than the social factor target, to favor open-class items. That is, in all cases, the variant that is less consciously desired should be realized less often in open-class items than in closed.

With respect to the corpus under investigation, we must posit, minimally, that the StvY variants of /a\O/ and /ay\A/ are the targets selected on the basis of the social factor and that the BesY variant of the former is the target selected on the basis of the individual factor. Omitting /e\EY/ for lack of variation, we would further suspect that the StvY variants of /u\I/ and /o\U/ are the social-factor targets, the BesY variants the individual-factor targets. In terms of the cognitive factor, this would generate (14):

(14) Revised hypothesis 4: Differential behavior of open/closed items with respect to quantitative attribution.

a. The StvY variants of /u\I/, /o\U/, /a\O/, and /ay\A/ are assumed to be the social-factor targets.

b. The BesY variants of /u\I/, /o\U/, and /a\O/ are assumed to be the individual-factor targets.

c. Over time, the BesY variants of /u\I/, /o\U/, and /a\O/, as individual-factor targets, should show a rise in open-class items relative to closed-class items.

d. Over time, the BesY variant of /ay\A/, not a target on the basis of any factor, should show a drop in open-class items relative to closed.

5.2. Results and discussion

To test this hypothesis, the corpus was analyzed quantitatively with respect to an open-closed-class factor group. Examples of words of each class from the corpus are presented in (15) and the percentages of tokens of each class occurring with a BesY variant are presented in Table 11.

(15) a. Open:
   1. /u\I/: ku 'cow', khupu 'wedding canopy', pupeklekhu 'navels'
   2. /o\U/: orem 'poor', kholom 'dream', yogn 'chase'
   3. /a\O/: nas 'wet', yam 'sea', kapen 'drip'
   4. /ay\A/: ayln (zikh) 'hurry', raykh 'rich', mayrev 'west'

b. Closed:
   1. /u\I/: tsu 'to', un 'and', plastum 'suddenly'
   2. /o\U/: dos 'the', do 'here', tomcrd 'always'
   3. /a\O/: ale 'all', avad 'of course', same 'very'
   4. /ay\A/: mayn 'my', dervayle 'meanwhile', aykh 'you'

| Table 11. BesY variants in open- and closed-class items |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|             | 1940s       | Middle      | 1970s       | Total       |
| /u\I/: open-class items |
| BesY variant | 79          | 213         | 130         | 422         |
| total N      | 87          | 240         | 173         | 500         |
| %            | 91          | 89          | 75          | 84          |
| Significance | p < .001    | p < .001    | p < .001    |             |
| /o\U/: open-class items |
| BesY variant | 116         | 234         | 106         | 456         |
| total N      | 131         | 257         | 120         | 508         |
| %            | 89          | 91          | 88          | 90          |
| Significance | p < .05     | p < .02     | n.s.        |             |
| /a\O/: open-class items |
| BesY variant | 81          | 222         | 114         | 417         |
| total N      | 96          | 244         | 121         | 461         |
| %            | 84          | 91          | 94          | 90          |
| Significance | p < .01     | n.s.        |             |             |
| /ay\A/: open-class items |
| BesY variant | 23          | 17          | 6           | 46          |
| total N      | 34          | 79          | 46          | 159         |
| %            | 68          | 22          | 13          | 29          |
| Significance | p < .001    | n.s.        |             |             |

In Table 11, we see that the hypothesis is in general supported. Consider first/ay\A/, the only variant for which no individual-factor target was posited. In fact, we find a marked decrease in the frequency of the BesY variant in both open- and closed-class items, but the decrease is much sharper for open. Taking each decade separately, we find that the open/closed-class distinction
is significant in the first period, with open favoring the BesY variant, but that this difference disappears in the following decade. Put differently, the StY variant, the social factor target, gains all around but more so in open-class items.

Now consider the BesY marker, the /a°O/ variable. Here a conflict was posited: the StY variant as social-factor target, the BesY variant as individual-factor target, with the individual-factor target assumed to be more conscious and hence predicted to favor open-class items. In fact, this is borne out: while Gorby is amazingly successful in retaining the BesY variant all around, we do find that an initial significant favoring of closed-class items is then neutralized, indicating that she is slightly more successful in open-class items. Note that this small adjustment in the effect of open vs. closed class is the only indication we have that the social factor is relevant here at all — had she simply had a certain level of stylistic variation for this variable and wished to retain it, with no conflicting influences, there should be no change in the distribution of the variants.

Turning now to the /u°I/ variable, we find an interesting pattern. Clearly, the StY variant, favored by the social factor, gains ground all around, but the individual factor, which favors the BesY variant, offsets much of this gain — in open-class items. That is, while the BesY variant drops in both open and closed, the drop is far sharper in closed; in fact, open-class items are virtually unaffected before the 1970s. (Note that the frequency of the relevant lexical items here, with closed-class items outnumbering open more than two to one, is such that one might have the impression of the BesY variant having dropped much more than it in fact has.)

As for the /o°U/ variable, where again the social-factor target is assumed to be the StY variant and the individual-factor target the BesY variant, we find a small drop of the BesY variant in closed-class items, that is, a small effect of the social factor, which is predictably totally neutralized by the individual factor in open-class items. This is perhaps clearer if we consider the probabilities for each time period, considering open- and closed-class items separately, as shown in Table 12. That is, we see that, for the /ay'A/ variable, where only the social factor with its StY target is posited, there is attrition of the BesY variant in both lexical classes, but greater in open. For the marker variable /a°O/, the social factor’s StY target has an effect in closed-class items, but this effect is not only cancelled but reversed in open, where the (very strong) individual factor’s BesY target actually rises. Likewise for /u°I/ and /o°U/, the social factor (StY target) has an effect in closed-class items; the individual factor (BesY target) offsets this effect in open-class items to a small degree in the case of /u°I/, completely in the case of /o°U/.

We have now answered the questions raised earlier: on the basis of this case study, it appears that one cannot be immune to the effects of the social factor. If the social factor is the only factor at issue in selecting a target variant, that target will be reached more often in open-class items. However, one can be simultaneously subject to a possibly conflicting individual factor; in this case, the target variant selected on the basis of the more conscious of the two, the individual factor, will be reached more often in open-class items, the target selected by the social factor doing better in closed. Furthermore, something which is intuitively obvious and which is clear in the figures presented here but which has not been discussed is that targets may be aimed at with a varying amount of zeal; look for example at the figures for /a°O/, /u°I/, and /o°U/, where the individual factor is stronger for the first than for the other two and where the social factor is weaker for the third than for the other two; that is, Gorby really wants to maintain /O/, and she does not believe society can be all that upset about /U/.

### Table 12. BesY variants by time period, probabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1940s</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/u°I:/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>closed</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/o°U:/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>[n.a.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>closed</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/a°O:/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>closed</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ay'A/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>closed</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>p &lt; .005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.0. Conclusion

In conclusion, let us return to the two factors originally claimed to account for stylistic variation, Labov’s notion of attention, the cognitive factor, and Giles’s and Bell’s, inter alia, notion of social pressure, the social factor. To understand the patterns seen in the corpus analyzed here, we need both, and also a third, the idiosyncratic goal, the individual factor.

First, we have seen a singer apparently committed to the maintenance of a generally stigmatized regional dialect but still showing signs of quantitative attrition. That this stigmatization can have an effect on her production is inexplicable unless we admit of the social factor at some deep level: why else would she come to sound more like her intended audience, or at least more
like what her intended audience purports to valorize? At the same time, note that we have found virtually no evidence of qualitative attrition, indicating a surprising robustness of the singer's lexico-phonological competence and suggesting sharp differences between it and phonological competence.

Second, we find that different variables may work differently, some having more stigma associated with them than others, some having more potential benefits associated with them than others. An individual may weigh these stigmas and benefits and choose target variants accordingly.

Finally, whatever targets are chosen, stylistic variation and dialect shift turn out not to be uniform across the lexicon but to reflect matters of attention, the cognitive factor. If we take the base-dialect variant to be the least consciously aimed at, the social-factor target variant to be more consciously aimed at, and the individual-factor target variant, where one exists, to be the most consciously aimed at, we find a pattern in which the most consciously aimed-at target is reached more successfully in open-class items, the items to which speakers are better able to attend.

University of Pennsylvania

Appendix 1. The data: sample excerpts

1940s: early 1940s. Sheyn bin ikh, sheyn (Folk) [S78; New York]

shreyen miyr ziy tsiygelekh, maa, maa, maa.
scream at me like the baby-goats, maa, maa, maa.

shpiylt, klezmuwrim, gazetst diy kOle, tsigenemen uwns diy kinder Ole.
play, musicians, seat the bride, away-taken us the children all.

shver gevEyn uwns diy tekhter dray, oy shverer nokh Uwn zey.
hard was us the daughters three, oh harder still without them.

shpiylt, klezmuwrim, arum uns trEYrn, 'slelste betl vet haynt leydik
play, musicians, around us tears, the last bed will today empty
vEYrn.
become.

'zgonste shtiybi lyr kleyder shrank, oy vey viy puwst uwn bank.
the-whole house her clothes closet, oh woe how lonely and sad.

1970s: 1975. Besarabia (S. Gorby) [CREACIONES; Buenos Aires]

besarabia, mAn haymat lOnd, vEyMen bistuw nit bakOnt?
Bessarabia, my home land, to-whom are you not familiar?

IOnD fun mayne kinder tEYG, fuwl mit liyder, ful mit freydl.
land of my children days, full of songs, full of joy.

ikh vel diykh keynmUwl nit fargesn, dUs kleyne shtiybi, dUs krIme gesl,
I will you never not forget, the little house, the crooked street,

vly mayn kindhayt 'khob farbrakhht, in a liyd, a tOnts, a lakh.
where my childhood I've spent, in a song, a dance, a laugh.

Appendix 2. The exclusion of Yankele

One song was eliminated from the corpus. This song, a lullaby by Gebirig entitled Yankele, recorded once in the 1970s (LID), was statistically remarkable in that it contained no occurrences of the BesY variants of /a'Y/ or of /ay/'A/, despite the presence of a sizable number of lexical items that were, in the rest of the corpus, very likely to have the BesY variant of the former, as shown in Table 1.

Thus, on the basis of statistical evidence, it was inferred that this absence of distinctly BesY variants was intentional and the rendition was therefore eliminated. Most interestingly, when Gorby's notes became available, this inference was corroborated, although not explained: in one written version, Gorby circled two out of four occurrences of mame, one out of two occurr-
Table 1. Comparison of Yankele with rest of corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexical item</th>
<th>Yankele BesY variant</th>
<th>Rest of corpus BesY variant</th>
<th>total N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>total N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mame 'mama'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ale 'all'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gants 'whole'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>venen 'when'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bald 'soon'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mazl 'luck'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iate 'papa'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < 0.001

ences of ale, the one occurrence of mazl, and nothing else. (The total numbers are somewhat different because, in the notes, repeated lines are indicated by bis and are not written out.)

The inference that Gotfry's marking these words was a way of reminding herself not to sing the BesY variants is supported by her CY transcription of a song carrying the title 'Folklore Warsowien' [sic]. She obviously intended to sing this song in CY, and she marked three groups of words: those having /ey/ in StY/BesY but /AE/ in CY, those having /e/ in StY/BesY but /ey/ (epenthetic /e/) in CY, and those having /a/ in StY/CY but /O/ in BesY. Clearly, she marked what was to be rendered in a way which was unusual for her, either because she was adopting a uniquely CY variant or because she was suppressing the uniquely BesY variant. The only word in the song containing a stressed /a/ which was not marked was pave 'peacock', which in fact occurs categorically in the corpus with the StY variant.

Notes

- This paper follows three years of research in the course of which an amazing number of individuals and institutions on four continents, representing an extraordinary range of fields and interests, gave me all the help I asked for, and then some, for no remuneration; a complete acknowledgment of my debt is just not possible, and I hereby thank collectively those I cannot mention individually. A very special debt must be acknowledged to M. Benya-Mate, for her tireless volunteer service as transcription-checker and tutor. I am especially grateful as well, for biographical information and for the data, to S. Balaban-Wo?kówicz, J.-H. Blumen, M. and R. Freedman, J. Grober, B. Lavandera, S. Lizaron, J. Masanet, N. and A. Mellijon, Y. Niborski, M. Rosenfeld, and V. Szajer, and to the family of the late Sarah Gorby. For their crucial aid in linguistic and sociolinguistic matters, I heartily thank N. Dorian, D. Estival, M. Herzog, A. Kroch, W. Labov, J. Myhill, R. Peltz, S. Pintzuk, G. Sankoff, M. Schaechter, and M. Yaeger, and, as always, I am grateful to A. K. Joshi for providing an ideal computational environment. Finally, my greatest debt has to be to Sarah Gorby, to whose memory I dedicate this work.

Earlier reports of this project were presented at NWAVE (1984), the LSA Annual Meeting (1985), YIVO (1985), and the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Be'er Sheva (1986). Due to a misunderstanding the should have been throughout this article.


2. This is particularly surprising when one considers how many linguists are themselves loci of dialect shift, given their geographic and, not infrequently, social mobility.

3. Compared to the common practice among English-language popular singers of adopting a (nonstandard) regional dialect when singing (see Trudgill 1983: ch. 8), the Yiddish folk/pop singers' practice of adopting a standard dialect seems strange indeed. Rather than imitating either their audience or some 'authentic' group of singers, they seem to be adopting (or simply sharing) their audience's idea of what is 'appropriate' in the secular public domain. This suggests that different situations call for different versions of the social factor discussed above.

4. Of course, these five variables are not the only ones by which the dialects differ. Still with respect to vowels, CY /AY/ corresponds to /ey/ elsewhere, and NEY /EY/ corresponds to /oy/ elsewhere. There is also a small degree of consonant variation, the only one crucially involving BesY being a BesY addition of /h/ intervocalically and a dropping of /h/ where it occurs nonintervocally. In addition, there is of course lexical variation throughout, and there is some morphological variation distinguishing NEY from all other dialects, involving a loss of neuter gender, a loss of the accusative/dative distinction, and a loss of one of the two past tense auxiliary verbs. None of this is relevant to the present study.

5. Previous treatments of the phonological conditioning of /a/ do not speak in terms of articular classes but at most list inhibiting following phonemes (Vayngerg 1929: 61; U. Weinreich 1954: 236, 238; M. Weinreich 1980: 679; Bin-Nun 1973: 186; Joffe 1954: 120). Space does not permit a full discussion here, but, if we take the Boolean sum of the inhibiting environments listed and add to them /g/, /O/, and vowels, we arrive at the classes of velars, palatals, and hiatus, with two qualifications. The first concerns /k/, counted here as velar but in fact apical, both in the corpus and in the dialect in general. Given that no other apicals (or liquids) inhibit the variation, we must infer that /k/ was velar at the time of the sound change, as it still is in many other dialects of Yiddish. Second, the differential effect of /n/ and /ng/ in the various subdialects of the region suggests that these, too, may have had a different quality at the time of the sound change. (Possibly relevant here is the absence of /n/ in Russian.) It turns out that the set of inhibiting environments thus arrived at exactly reflects the situation in the present corpus.

6. Perhaps the testimony of an informant will make the impact of the standard language clearer. One Polish-born retired Yiddish actress and singer who had belonged to an acting troupe in Bergen-Belsen assured me that she always performed in StY, even in the concentration camp. (The 'even' is mine; she saw nothing strange about it.) Furthermore, when I asked this woman, who had known Sarah Gorby in Paris in the 1950s, if they had ever discussed Gorby's practice of singing in BesY, she responded, with wide-eyed shock, 'You mean you KNOW about that? !' She went on to say that she had been debating with herself since my call about whether or not to tell me, finally deciding not to — 'After all, why speak ill
of the dead?' She then proceeded to tell me how 'horrible' it sounded, and what a shame that someone with such a beautiful voice should sing so 'vulgarly, like a peasant'. In fact, she interpreted my question—of whether she had ever 'spoken to Gorby' about this—as value-laden, her response being 'No, it wasn't my place, she was older than me—but SOMEONE should have.'

7. The more literate members of my family, originally all CY speakers, gradually adopted the SY variants of CY /ay/A:/ and /eY/AY/ and mocked the less literate members who retained these CY variants as 'Galitsianer'. No doubt constant exposure to ThY, plus a high level of metalinguistic awareness, was responsible. Moreover, the stylistic variation among BesY speakers noted by Fishman (1981a), to be discussed below, has a similar effect of approximating ThY.

8. In fact, this last inference was corroborated by Jacques Grober, a former student of Gorby's: at their first lesson, Gorby told him to use any pronunciation he liked but to be sure never to say /O/ for /a/ or else 'they'll scream, they'll insult you, and they'll say you studied with Sarah Gorby' [my translation from French].

9. According to musicologist Isachar Fater, Gorby said that she wanted to sing 'the way [her] husband spoke' [my translation from Yiddish]. I have not been able to corroborate this.

10. Interestingly, in the analysis of two of these five variables reported in Prince (forthcoming), where the corpus was smaller, I included all the lexical items which did not rule out the BesY variants on phonological grounds, but I attempted to take into account at least some of the effects of late borrowing by including language of origin as a factor group, and the percentages were surprisingly similar to the current ones.

11. For example, singer Ben Bonus, a CY speaker who switched to ThY, recorded one song in BesY wherein he sang */sOklUn/ 'things', violating the categorical prohibition against /O/ before velars.

12. That it is a feature of NEY was brought to my attention by Mordkhe Schaechter and Marvin Herzog, whom I thank. After learning this, I noticed for the first time that it is in fact categorical in the speech of one of my NEY/SY informants with whom I had been working for two years. That this speaker, a deeply committed 'standardist', has this feature testifies to its extreme nonassailability. Furthermore, reE- is written /tsu/- in Harkavy (1891), a classic Yiddish bilingual dictionary, and therefore probably elsewhere as well.

13. Indeed the near-total maintenance of /eEY/ is particularly striking and suggests that the one occurrence of the SY variant, shown in (i), may be a speech error. It is perhaps relevant that it is a hora, that is, very fast tempo, recorded when Gorby was about 75 and in poor health.

(i) under lOnd yisrUel hot shoon ale mUwale a veg tsoom ziyg.
our land Israel has already all time a way to victory

[Erger, yontov in kibuts: CREACIONES]

14. As has often been noted, some closed-class items are more 'closed' than others. Weinreich (1953) distinguishes 'syntactically integrated' closed-class items, such as prepositions, determiners, conjunctions, from the others, such as exclamations, floatable adverbs, etc. It is the former kind which he notes resist language mixing. Taking a different tack, but arriving at largely the same distinction, Keen (1979) restricts the set of closed-class items, for English at least, to one-syllable closed-class items. In the present study, an attempt was made early on to distinguish the 'really closed' from the 'not so closed' items; analyses were made in which only closed-class items having a monosyllabic stem were counted as closed, with the complement counted as open in one run and disregarded in another. In fact, both these analyses showed the same effect, only stronger, as the one in which all closed-class items were counted as closed, shown above. It was decided to present the analysis involving the least controversial coding, in spite of its being the weakest of the three.

15. Note that a counterexample of priming, that is, the inducement to repeat a linguistic form just heard, is untenable here, given the monologic nature of the data.

References


