

Investigating Language Attitudes

Social Meanings of Dialect,
Ethnicity and Performance

Peter Garrett, Nikolas Coupland
and Angie Williams

University of Wales Press

INVESTIGATING LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

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Peter Garrett, Nikolas Coupland
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Several chapters of this book develop material that we have previously published as journal articles or as contributions to edited collections. In particular, chapters 5 and 6 develop Coupland, Williams and Garrett (1994; 1999), Garrett, Coupland and Williams (1995), and Williams, Garrett and Coupland (1996). Chapters 7, 8 and 9 build on Garrett, Coupland and Williams (1999; forthcoming), and Williams, Garrett and Coupland (1999). Chapters 4 and 10 develop aspects of all of these.

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The responsibility for any weaknesses and errors lies with us.

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Introduction: the scope of language attitudes

We begin this book with a critical review of the main methods employed in language attitudes research, in order to discuss their various strengths and weaknesses. Some of the methodological issues raised in this review we then explore and develop in a series of investigations that we have conducted into language attitudes in Wales over recent years, focusing mainly on how the main regions of Wales and their associated patterns of English speech are characterized and evaluated. Within this structure, the book has three parallel aims. The first is to provide an overview of approaches to investigating language attitudes. The second is to introduce a range of linked empirical studies, focusing on the Welsh context, demonstrating two broad methodological approaches. The third is to develop a dialogue between these first two aims, to explore how sociolinguistic interpretations are both guided and constrained by the different empirical approaches. Through this, we will address the issue of, and indeed demonstrate, how different research methods produce different insights into language attitudes and sociolinguistic structure, contributing to a multi-faceted account of the ‘subjective life’ of language varieties.

In this first chapter, we begin by considering the nature of language attitudes, since it is their complex and rather elusive nature that brings to the fore the methodological issues considered in this book. We then move on to consider why, for sociolinguistics, it is necessary to study language attitudes, and so why it is necessary to grapple with these methodological problems. We then introduce the main approaches to studying language attitudes, as they have developed mainly since the 1960s. Finally, we set out the main research questions to be addressed in this book, and provide a plan of the book as a whole.

The nature of language attitudes

Let us begin by considering the concept of 'attitude' generally, without being concerned too much at this stage about whether it relates to language or to other objects, processes, or behaviours. Despite attitude being one of the most distinctive and indispensable concepts in social psychology (Perloff, 1993: 26), and, indeed, a pivotal concept in sociolinguistics ever since Labov's (1966) pioneering work on the social stratification of speech communities, defining the concept is by no means straightforward. Researchers have offered a number of definitions. The difficulty undoubtedly stems from the latent nature of attitudes. Allport's work in the 1930s commented on this hampering characteristic of attitudes research in the following way: 'Attitudes are never directly observed, but, unless they are admitted, through inference, as real and substantial ingredients in human nature, it becomes impossible to account satisfactorily either for the consistency of any individual's behaviour, or for the stability of any society' (1935: 839).

Some authors settle for brief and somewhat general definitions. For example, Henerson, Morris and Fitz-Gibbon (1987: 13) write: 'In this book, the word "attitude" will be used quite broadly to describe all the objects we want to measure that have to do with affect, feelings, values and beliefs.' Others offer more elaborate definitions. Oppenheim (1982) includes in his definition some of the many outcomes, including behaviours, from which people try to infer other people's attitudes. For him, an attitude is:

a construct, an abstraction which cannot be directly apprehended. It is an inner component of mental life which expresses itself, directly or indirectly, through such more obvious processes as stereotypes, beliefs, verbal statements or reactions, ideas and opinions, selective recall, anger or satisfaction or some other emotion and in various other aspects of behaviour. (Oppenheim, 1982: 39)

For our present purposes, we will follow the practice of Cargile, Giles, Ryan and Bradac (1994: 221), albeit with more elaboration, and take a general and simple 'core' definition that has an adequate basis of agreement for proceeding, and then establish some of the qualities of attitudes on which there is considerable consensus. Sarnoff's (1970: 279) statement can be used as a starting point, that an attitude is 'a

disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects'. We take it as axiomatic, then, that an attitude is an evaluative orientation to a social object of some sort, but that, being a 'disposition', an attitude is at least potentially an evaluative stance that is sufficiently stable to allow it to be identified and in some sense measured.

Beyond this, it is widely claimed that attitudes have a tripartite structure, in that they are said to have cognitive, affective, and behavioural components (for example, Edwards, 1982). They are cognitive in that they contain or comprise beliefs about the world (for example, that learning the Welsh language will help me to get a better job in Wales). They are affective in that they involve feelings about an attitude object (for example, enthusiasm for poetry written in the Welsh language). And they are systematically linked to behaviour, because they predispose us to act in a certain way (for example, to learn Welsh).

In language attitudes, cognitive processes are likely to be shaped by the individual and collective functions arising from stereotyping in intergroup relations. Linguistic forms, varieties and styles can set off beliefs about a speaker, their group membership, and can lead to assumptions about attributes of those members. This sort of categorization is said to serve a number of functions (Tajfel, 1981). At the individual level, the complex social world is made more orderly, and so more manageable and more predictable. Whether they are favourable or prejudiced, attitudes to language varieties and their users at least provide a coherent map of the social world. One way in which this is achieved is through stressing similarities within a category and differences between and amongst categories, simplifying the complex array of individual experiences in social life. At the intergroup level, stereotypes can serve two major social collective functions: a social-explanatory function and a social-differentiation function. The former is the creation and maintenance of group ideologies that explain and defend relations between groups, in particular evaluations and treatment of members of outgroups. The latter concerns the creation, preservation and enhancement of favourable differentiations between the ingroup and relevant outgroups. The contents of stereotypes vary from one intergroup context to another, and are defined by which group function or functions they fulfil in any specific social context. Hence it is possible for people to construct almost any evaluation of a speaker to fit their collective cognitive needs. That is, we have a situation where social stereotypes tend to perpetuate themselves, acting

as a repository of 'common-sense' beliefs or filters through which social life is transacted and interpreted. In summary, 'stereotypes constitute a crucial aspect of intergroup communication' (Hewstone and Giles, 1997: 278).

The affective component of attitudes can sometimes appear to determine an attitude, to the exclusion of the cognitive component (Mackie and Hamilton, 1993). For example, a person may hear a language or linguistic variety which they are unable to identify, but may nevertheless consider it 'pleasant', or 'ugly', and this may affect their response during the encounter (van Bezooijen, 1994). In contrast, however, Cargile et al. (1994) consider it rare for the cognitive component to evoke judgements that are devoid of affective content, and indeed most would claim that attitudes always have a strong affective component (Perloff, 1993: 28). The third component – behaviour – is where much controversy lies in the study of attitudes, and this issue is dealt with separately in the next section.

Although most theorists appear to agree that there are affective, cognitive and behavioural aspects to attitudes, a number of models thread these together in different ways. The simple 'tripartite model', which is so often referred to in language attitudes work, was outlined by Rosenberg and Hovland (1960), and supported by subsequent studies by Ostrom (1969), Kothandapani (1971) and Breckler (1984). This model claimed that affect, cognition, and behaviour emerge as separate and distinctive components of attitude, and it has been criticized for prejudging a relationship between attitude and behaviour (Zanna and Rempel, 1988). For many professional persuaders, most notably advertisers and politicians, this is the relationship by which much of the justification for the study of attitudes stands or falls (Perloff, 1993: 79); will surveys of attitudes allow them to predict actual behaviour?

Where do attitudes come from?

When we talk about attitudes, we are talking about what a person has *learned* in the process of becoming a member of a family, a member of a group, and of society that makes him [*sic*] react to his social world in a *consistent* and *characteristic* way, instead of a transitory and haphazard way. (M. Sherif, 1967: 2)

This view locates attitudes as a fundamental part of what is learned through human socialization. It also emphasizes the durable qualities

of attitudes as socially-structured and socially-structuring phenomena. However, there is by no means unanimous agreement on these points. The persuasion literature (for example, Sears and Kosterman, 1994: 264) points to differing levels of commitment in attitudes. Some attitudes are superficial and less stable, and others are more enduring. Evaluative responses may be so superficial and unstable that they might be labelled 'non-attitudes' (Ostrom et al., 1994), where people might just make up an evaluation on the spot, perhaps as a first-reaction phenomenon to a new topic, or to one that is too complex to evaluate fully. On the other hand, attitudes that are enduring are sometimes seen as being acquired early in the lifespan and unlikely to change much in later life (Sears, 1983). As we shall argue later, there is evidence that, like language itself, some language attitudes are acquired at an early age, and so, following the point above, are likely to be relatively enduring.

Nevertheless, the claim that attitudes can even potentially be stable and enduring is itself by no means uncontroversial. Potter and Wetherell (1987), for example, arguing for a discourse analytic perspective, paint a picture of individuals' evaluative stances unfolding in social interaction, and changing from moment to moment, demonstrating considerable variability and indeed volatility. They claim that traditional attitude measurement misses this dynamic and constructive process. We address the link between attitude and discourse in the series of investigations we report in the second part of this book. We certainly agree with Potter and Wetherell that discourse – in the sense of spontaneous face-to-face social interaction through language – is a rich and dynamic locus for doing social categorization and social evaluation. More than that, what we are calling 'language attitudes' can themselves be stereotyped responses to community-bound ways of speaking, to discourse styles as well as to dialect varieties in the conventional sense. On the other hand, we see no value in restricting the study of social evaluation to the qualitative analysis of talk in interaction, as Potter and Wetherell imply we should. These arguments are caught up in much wider debates about quantitative/qualitative and empiricist/interpretive designs for research, and we return to some aspects of them in later chapters. But our starting point for the volume is an open stance on method and interpretation, and one that includes attempts to generalize about *community-level* phenomena, including subjective phenomena. The methodological concerns of this book are anchored more in the group-focused empirical work in sociolinguistics and the

social psychology of language. The research discussed in the latter half of the book is concerned with attitudes of *groups* about other *groups*. In particular, we aim to construct a geolinguistic atlas of attitudes in regional Welsh communities, rather than to conduct an in-depth investigation of individuals' attitudes and how these may be variably constructed in social interaction. The theoretical issues of attitude stability/ephemerality, and of context-dependent versus context-independent attitudes, are nevertheless important. Even when social evaluations can be shown to be variable across or within social situations, this does not preclude the existence of stable subjective trends existing at higher levels. In much attitudes research, a degree of variability or 'systematic variation' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 45) is not seen as seriously prejudicial to the notion of durability, any more than systematic language variation in the speech of an individual severely problematizes the notion of someone 'having a dialect', sharing features with others at the level of the community. Social judgement theory (for example, C. Sherif and M. Sherif, 1967), which is often employed as an explanatory framework for attitude change, suggests that people operate with an 'anchor' position, but will tend to move comfortably within a finite latitude of evaluations that they find acceptable. This issue is revisited when considering attitudes and behaviour below.

Another generally accepted characteristic of attitudes is how they function as both input to and output from social action. This is of particular importance in educational research, and in areas such as language planning, but it can also be invoked to explain the role of attitude in both the reception and production of language. For example, Baker (1992: 12), focusing on Welsh-language education, sees attitude towards Welsh as an important input factor. A strongly favourable attitude towards Welsh may provide the impetus to high achievement in a Welsh-language programme. Conversely, success in a Welsh-language course for beginners may foster a more favourable attitude towards the language. Educationists and language planners often work with such issues in the hope that attitudes will ultimately serve a double function, as both a presage (input) and a product (output) ingredient. Beyond the educational context, in terms of the everyday language use of individuals, since language attitudes and the sociocultural norms that they constitute are an integral part of communicative competence (Hymes, 1971), they would be expected not only to affect our responses to language users around us, but also to

allow us to anticipate others' reactions to our own language use. So we may modify our speech in an attempt to gain from others particular reactions that we seek (for example, to be seen as trustworthy, educated, from a particular region, competent, an ideal person to employ, or to gain approval from the teacher, etc.). Here too then, attitudes may be seen in terms of input and output, completing a cycle of influence between language variation and social cognition. Indeed, it has been argued from this dynamic relationship between 'language' and 'language attitudes' that the two need not be separated conceptually (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 59). However, when attitudes are considered in terms of input and output in this way, they again are being considered in relation to (as input to, or output from) behaviour.

Attitudes are also seen as complex phenomena in the sense that they can have many facets and manifestations. For example, if we wanted to investigate 'students' attitudes towards their Spanish-language lessons at school', we would need to identify the relevant facets of such attitudes: what do we mean – and what do the students mean – by 'Spanish-language lessons'? Facets are likely to include a host of components of communicative events, such as teachers, classmates, teaching methods, course materials, perhaps even the room in which the lessons are held, quite apart from the Spanish language itself. Manifestations concern how we think these attitudes will reveal themselves: that is, what will we look for empirically in our studies and try to assess? We might interview the students individually or in pairs or groups. We might get them to write essays for us about their Spanish-language lessons. We might ask them to circle numbers on attitude-rating scales. We might try to infer their attitudes from their productivity in these lessons. We might try to assess their level of attention in the lessons (for example, by counting how many times students put up their hands to ask relevant questions), and infer attitudes from this behaviour. We might want to assess a number of different manifestations to see if they tell us the same story, or to see if they seem to tell us different things. Comparing different manifestations is a central concern of this book.

The problematic relationship between attitudes and behaviour

A common-sense view about the relationship between attitudes and behaviour can lead people to assume that if they are able to change

someone's attitude towards something, they will also change that person's behaviour. It can also lead people to assume that they can confidently infer someone's attitudes from the way that that person behaves. In addition, the assumption is sometimes made that if we can get someone to behave in a certain way, their attitudes will 'look after themselves'.

Much advertising and marketing, in fact, bases itself on such assumptions. To take the first of the above, an advertiser might, for example, try to get men to associate a certain make of car with speed and masculinity, on the assumption that such changes in attitudes towards the car will lead to more men buying that make. To take the last point in the previous paragraph, marketing managers are keen to get us to try out free samples, on the assumption that, having tried out the product, we will then develop favourable attitudes towards the product. Indeed, Festinger's (1957) theory of 'cognitive dissonance' proposes that we prefer to keep our beliefs, attitudes and behaviour aligned.

However, there is considerable evidence from attitudes research that attitudes and behaviours may at times be far removed from such alignment (for example, Wicker, 1969; Hanson, 1980). Various explanations are provided for this. Many of these reflect the method or context of attitude measurement (the main focus of this book). For example, Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) 'theory of reasoned action' stresses the social context within which any individual operates, and how this may affect the relative importance of private attitudes. Hence we might be deterred from behaving in accordance with our attitudes by the anticipated hostile reactions of significant others. Furthermore, even if we have every intention of acting in line with our attitudes, we might be prevented from doing so by any number of circumstances (too busy, competing priorities, bad weather, absent-mindedness, etc.). Other examples are concerned with notions of 'deindividuation', the tendency of respondents at times to report socially desirable attitudes rather than their own private attitudes, to show acquiescence in attitudinal responses by giving the response they assume the researcher wants, or on some occasions simply to be swept along in their behaviour by the scripted nature of some situations, without any thought about what their attitudes are (for example, Baker, 1988; Perloff, 1993; Ostrom et al., 1994). Some of these ideas will be considered more fully in the next chapter.

Before ending this general review section, there are two important points to draw out, both relating once again to the issue of stability and

durability of attitudes. Firstly, the lack of accord that one sometimes finds between attitude and behaviour may be attributable to a failure to gather reliable and valid data on attitudes. In other words, although there may be a gap at times between what we take to be someone's attitude on the one hand, and what we know to be their behaviour on the other, it may be the case that there is no discord whatsoever between their behaviour and their 'real' or dominant attitude, but that we have simply failed to identify what their 'real' or dominant attitude is. We emphasized earlier that there are genuine difficulties in confidently identifying such latent variables. Secondly, although some commentators claim that 'there wouldn't be much point in studying attitudes if they were not, by and large, predictive of behaviour' (Gass and Seiter, 1999: 41), in the field of language attitudes the lack of accord is often very much of interest. For example, links between people's attitudes towards language varieties and their behaviours are likely to differ according to the complexity of domains. Learning a language or forming a friendship, for example, involves a long-term commitment, compared to, say, deciding to buy a car. Attitudes may be in competition: a candidate at an interview for a job may strategically adjust their speech style in a way that diverges from (or conceals) the dialect to which they otherwise have a strong loyalty, if they feel this enhances their chances of getting the job, thus helping them to fulfil their career ambitions, and/or to please significant others, such as a partner or parent.

Attitudes and related terms

No doubt relating to some of the difficulties of definition outlined above, along with the fact that 'attitude' is a term in common usage, there are a number of other concepts that are in some contexts used almost interchangeably with 'attitude'. It will be useful to identify and, as far as possible, distinguish these here. To some extent, to define a concept is to state not only what it is, but also how it differs in meaning from other concepts with which it is closely linked. The following discussion focuses on the concepts: habits, values, beliefs, opinions and ideologies.

Like attitudes, *habits* are learned and, like some attitudes, they are also enduring. But the most significant difference is that attitudes are not generally considered to be intrinsically behavioural (though there may,

as discussed above, be links with behaviour). Habits, on the other hand, are usually viewed as behavioural routines. Perloff (1993: 29) claims that individuals are likely to be less aware of their habits than they are of their attitudes, and so are more likely to be able to talk about their attitudes than about their habits. However, there are certainly different levels of reflexive awareness with attitudes, too. The main methodological challenge of language attitudes research is to assess whether specific manifestations or indices of evaluative stances to language varieties or users are reliable indicators of underlying social tendencies. Reflexivity is what allows us to access attitudes empirically, but it is also a potential source of systematic error in measuring attitudes.

Values are usually seen as superordinate ideals that we strive towards. Rokeach (1973) distinguishes *terminal values* (such as freedom, equality) from *instrumental values* (such as the importance of being honest, responsible). A terminal value such as 'equality' may underlie a number of highly differentiated attitudes (attitudes towards equal-opportunities legislation, income tax, an inter-ethnic war overseas, a political party, a bilingual policy, etc.). Oskamp (1977) refers to values as 'the most important and central elements in a person's system of attitudes and beliefs', and judges them to be more global and general than attitudes are.

Beliefs are said to be fundamentally cognitive in nature. However, it is usually argued that, even if beliefs do not have any affective content, they may trigger and indeed be triggered by strong affective reactions.

Opinion is the most difficult to differentiate from attitude. As Baker (1992: 14) has pointed out, the two terms tend to be synonymous in everyday usage, and Perloff (1993: 29) notes that many researchers, too, use the terms interchangeably. Some make a distinction, claiming that opinions are cognitive, lacking any affective component. Baker (1992: 14) and Perloff (1993: 30) both make this assertion. Baker also claims that 'opinions are verbalisable, while attitudes may be latent, conveyed by non-verbal and verbal processes' (1992: 14). Hence we can regard opinion as a more discursive (or 'discursable') entity – a view that can be developed about something, while attitudes may be potentially less easy to formulate, needing to be accessed indirectly as well as directly. Although Baker does not include any illustration of this distinction, it does appear at least to leave open the possibility of a distinction in terms of a person's expressed opinion not necessarily reflecting their attitude. Such issues will be returned to when considering the

problematic relationship between attitude and behaviour (for example, verbalization), and some of the methodological questions that underlie this book.

The concept of *ideology* has come to the fore in social science and in sociolinguistics through renewed interest in the political climates in which social life is conducted. Distanced from its original Marxist sense of 'false consciousness', ideology generally refers to a patterned but naturalized set of assumptions and values associated with a particular social or cultural group. We might identify, for example, a right-wing political ideology which represents the privileges associated with powerful and affluent social groups as 'freedom of action' and represents left-wing political policies as evidence of 'the nanny state'. Ideology has been taken up as a key concept in, for example, critical discourse analysis (see Fairclough, 1995), where the often hidden values that structure modes of linguistic representation are opened up to critical scrutiny (see Jaworski and Coupland, 1999).

In sociolinguistics *language ideology* is emerging as an important concept for understanding the politics of language in multilingual situations, such as in relation to immigration and social inclusion/exclusion generally (for example, Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998), and indeed as a politically more sensitive backdrop to any investigation of language variation and change (see Gal and Irvine, 1995; Irvine 2001; Irvine and Gal 2000; Woolard, 1998). Language ideology is coming to be seen as a key part of the 'ethnoscapes' (Appadurai, 1996) in which language codes and varieties function. The field of language ideology is not tied to a particular methodological tradition of research, although what we are labelling language attitudes research in this book constitutes a coherent and, we would argue, central set of methodological options for ideology analysis. One of our ambitions for the book is in fact to show how particular methods in the study of language attitudes, in combination with each other, can build richly differentiated accounts of the ideological forces at work in a community – in our case, contemporary Wales – and how they coalesce around distinctive regional dialects and ways of speaking.

Why study language attitudes?

The field of *language attitudes* encompasses a broad range of focuses, and in specific terms, reasons for studying language attitudes depend

on the particular focus. Baker (1992: 29) points to the following focuses of language attitudes research over the years:

1. Attitude to language variation, dialect and speech style
2. Attitude to learning a new language
3. Attitude to a specific minority language (such as Welsh)
4. Attitude to language groups, communities, minorities
5. Attitude to language lessons
6. Attitude of parents to language learning
7. Attitude to the uses of a specific language
8. Attitude to language preference

The main focus in this book is on the first of these. However, even if the empirical studies considered in the latter section of this book concern attitudes to varieties of English in Wales and to their respective dialect communities, the bilingual nature of the Welsh context inevitably draws in references to and implications for the Welsh language and Welsh-language speakers (and so to 3, 4 and 8 above). As regards 4, it is generally difficult to distinguish attitudes to language varieties from attitudes to the groups and community-members who use them. This is so for particular, important theoretical reasons. Language varieties and forms have indexical properties which allow them to 'stand for' communities, metonymically. Language is often, therefore, more than just 'a characteristic of' or 'a quality of' a community. It is able to enshrine what is distinctive in that community, or, we might even say, constitutes that community.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, one important goal of sociolinguistic research is to construct a 'record of overt attitudes towards language, linguistic features and linguistic stereotypes' (Labov, 1984: 33). Language attitudes research, for Labov, provides a backdrop for explaining linguistic variation and change. It could be argued, though, that attitudes to language varieties underpin all manner of sociolinguistic and social psychological phenomena: for example, the group stereotypes by which we judge other individuals, how we position ourselves within social groups, how we relate to individuals and groups other than our own. There may be behavioural consequences, in the short – and long – term, and serious experiential outcomes. For example, do language attitudes lead to certain groups (such as speakers of regional dialects, speakers of minority languages) doing better or worse in the labour market, in health care, in the courts, in the

educational system? And how, in turn, might awareness of such consequences impact on attitudes or behaviours? Will people speak a minority language less, eventually leading to language death, and perhaps even cultural assimilation? Or will psychological reactance set in (J. Brehm and S. Brehm, 1981) and concerted efforts be made to protect and promote the language, to change attitudes and behaviours, and to rescue and re-establish linguistic and cultural continuity? As we will see, issues of this sort are very much to the fore in contemporary Wales, a traditionally fragmented community which is presented with new opportunities to achieve more integration and coherence.

The study of language attitudes seeks to do more than to discover simply what people's attitudes are, and what effects they might be having in terms of behavioural outcomes. A further concern is to understand what it is that determines and defines these attitudes. Particular linguistic forms have understandably received a great deal of attention, particularly from sociolinguists. Labov's early work focused on the evaluative meanings of specific phonological sociolinguistic variables, most famously, the postvocalic (r) on the eastern seaboard of the USA. Social psychologists have often tended to work at a less specific level regarding linguistic features, working at times with the notion of a 'whole language' (for example, French, in Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner and Fillenbaum, 1960; Classical Arabic, in El Dash and Tucker, 1975), or with a 'whole' or 'generalized' variety such as a 'south-Welsh accent of English' (for example, Giles, 1970). Other researchers, particularly sociolinguists, have sometimes felt that terms such as 'Welsh English' are too unspecific. For example, there are certainly many regional dialect communities of English speakers within Wales, and so it may not be clear enough to which of these the attitudinal data refers. For that reason, they have often offered a description of some of the most salient phonological features of the language variety being evaluated in the study (for example, Knops, 1988; Garrett, 1992; Levin, Giles and Garrett, 1994). Other studies have focused on the use of features of grammar rather than phonology: for example, tag questions (Petty, Cacioppo and Heesacker, 1981), the ordering of clauses (Levin and Garrett, 1990). The studies discussed in the second half of this book focus on a range of dialects of English in Wales, reflecting the broad pattern of dialect differentiation that emerges from the descriptive work set out in Coupland (1990). We overview phonological and other differences between major varieties on p. 70, following.

Attitude studies can also tell us about within-community and cross-community variation and cultural differences. Many studies have found language attitudes differing according to the social characteristics of the people making the judgements (the 'judges'). If attitudes are learned and based on people's earlier experiences, information and inferences, these sources are of course related to social-group membership. Ethnic and regional groups have received much attention from researchers, and attitudinal differences between such groups have often been found to be the most salient compared to other dimensions of group belonging, such as gender (for example, Gorter and Ytsma, 1988), perhaps because individual members of such groups are under more pressure to conform to their speech communities (Saville-Troike, 1982). Earlier language attitudes work in Wales, focusing mainly on attitudes to the Welsh language, to Standard British English (or at least its phonological level of Received Pronunciation), and to Welsh English dialects, showed an ambiguous (or even seemingly contradictory) mixture of findings, culminating in Price, Fluck and Giles (1983) arguing for a survey of attitudes over a larger geographical area (such as all of Wales), capturing a spread of regional communities. The studies detailed in the second half of this book are in part a response to their call to investigate the regional variation of attitudes over a number of communities throughout Wales.

Language attitudes research sometimes also seeks to understand how evaluative judgements are affected by properties of the context in which language use occurs (Hymes, 1972). For example, Received Pronunciation (RP) speakers are associated with prestige, intelligence, a good job, etc., in many situations. However, in certain legal contexts, they may be associated with embezzlement and fraud (Seggie, 1983). Our own research focuses mainly on the educational context, with data gathered from teachers and students all over Wales. In chapter 3, further components in the context of our research are considered, such as discourse goals, the content of talk, and interlocutor features, such as age.

Main approaches to the study of language attitudes

Approaches to researching language attitudes are usually grouped under three broad headings (for example, see Ryan, Giles and Hewstone, 1988): the analysis of the *societal treatment* of language varieties

(relabelled 'content analysis' by Knops and van Hout, 1988: 6); *direct measures*; and *indirect measures* (sometimes referred to as the 'speaker-evaluation paradigm', or 'the matched-guise technique' by Lambert et al., 1960). Each of these approaches inevitably has its own strengths and weaknesses. For the purposes of this introductory chapter, these approaches will be briefly outlined and distinguished. While we do not pursue the societal-treatment approach any further after this introduction (for reasons which are explained below), the direct and indirect approaches will be examined more closely in chapter 2.

The *societal treatment approach* is in fact often overlooked in contemporary discussions of language attitudes research, but it is undoubtedly an important source for gaining insights into the relative status and stereotypical associations of language varieties. The approach generally involves a content analysis of the 'treatment' given to languages and language varieties, and to their speakers within society. Studies falling under this heading typically involve observational, participant observation and ethnographic studies, or the analysis of a host of sources in the public domain. Examples include government and educational language-policy documents and their view on the use of various languages in schools (Cots and Nussbaum, 1999); job advertisements and the occupational demands for Anglophone and Francophone bilinguals in Montreal (Lieberson, 1981); the use of dialect by various characters in novels (Rickford and Traugott, 1985); media output, such as the ethnocultural stereotypes projected through the use of foreign languages in advertisements in Japan (Haarmann, 1984, 1986) and in Switzerland (Cheshire and Moser, 1994); variations in English usage in newspaper-style books (Metcalf, 1985), cartoons, proverbs and etiquette books, and what they have to say to and about women (Kramer, 1974; Kramarae, 1982). Although many of the studies under this rubric are largely qualitative in approach, some of them also use formal sampling procedures and at least provide some descriptive statistics (for example, Lieberson, 1981; Cheshire and Moser, 1994).

In spite of there being relatively little mention in the language attitudes literature of studies employing this approach, this may well not be a function of any dearth of such work. It seems more likely that there is a great deal of attitudinal data in a good number of ethnographic studies, for example, which simply do not get properly reviewed in 'mainstream' accounts. The predominant view of societal treatment research amongst many language attitudes researchers, especially those working in the social psychological tradition, is that much of it is too

informal, and that it can therefore serve mainly as a preliminary for more rigorous sociolinguistic and social psychological studies (Ryan et al., 1988: 1069), perhaps as a source of convergent validity to data collected through direct or indirect methods (Knops and van Hout, 1988: 7). Knops and van Hout argue that this approach may be appropriate in situations where restrictions of time and space do not allow direct access to respondents, or where respondents can be accessed only under highly unnatural conditions. It should be pointed out, of course, that the flood of work in discourse analysis and text analysis makes the very different assumption that this work stands independent of these other approaches.

The *direct approach* is generally far more obtrusive than societal-treatment methods. It is characterized by elicitation: the asking of direct questions about language evaluation, preference etc., usually through questionnaires and/or interviews. Knops and van Hout (1988: 7) see the main difference between this and the societal-treatment approach being that it is not the researcher who infers attitudes from the observed behaviours, but the respondents themselves who are asked to do so. Later in this book, we describe and discuss recent attitudinal research employing perceptual dialectological and folklinguistic techniques (Preston, 1989, 1999), and we also include these under the direct approach rubric.

One can of course nevertheless argue that answering interview questions, ticking boxes or circling numbers on questionnaires are all themselves merely behaviours from which the researcher has to infer attitudes. However, they are at one remove from the behavioural reactions in the data analysed in societal-treatment research. As with the societal-treatment approach, the direct approach embraces a considerable array of methods and techniques. The strengths and weaknesses of these, as well as their use in researching language attitudes in Wales, will be considered in chapter 2.

The *indirect approach* to researching attitudes involves engaging in more subtle, and sometimes even deceptive, techniques than directly asking questions. In attitudes research generally, three broad strategies are used under this heading (Dawes and Smith, 1985). These are: observing subjects without their awareness that they are being observed; observing aspects of people's behaviour over which one can presume that they have no control (see, for example, Cacioppo, Petty, Losch and Crites, 1994, on physiological reactions); successfully fooling subjects, for example, into believing that the questioner is examining