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## **Proper English Usage : a sociolinguistic investigation of attitudes towards usage problems in British English**

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### **3. Defining (Usage) Attitudes: What Are They and How Can They Be Studied?**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The concept ‘attitude’ is central to the analysis of current attitudes towards usage problems in British English and therefore needs to be defined and appropriated for this investigation. Its definition and delineation can, however, be considered somewhat difficult due to its manifold applications in various fields of science. This is further complicated by the use of ‘attitude’ as a more general label not only to study attitudes as such, but also opinions, intentions, and behaviour in general, thus contributing to the “confusion and ambiguity surrounding the attitude concept” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 1). The focus of this chapter therefore lies on defining language attitudes in general by drawing on earlier definitions of attitudes and on attempting a definition of usage attitudes in particular. Before tackling a definition of the latter concept, I will provide a brief discussion of the theoretical background of the concept ‘attitude’, which will deal with the differences between attitudes, beliefs, opinions and values, as well as the different layers of attitudes themselves. These layers describe the three different components of attitudes, which can be identified as affective, behavioural and cognitive components.

After providing an overview of the development of language attitude studies, I will discuss the three main research approaches applied in linguistics to identify and measure attitudes. By providing the theoretical background about what attitudes are and how the concept has been incorporated into linguistics and sociolinguistics in particular, a definition of usage attitudes is possible which is vital for the discussion of attitudes towards usage problems, the main topic of this study. For the definition of usage attitudes, I would like to incorporate three possibilities explaining the basis for attitude judgments towards different language varieties described by Edwards (1999, pp. 102–103) and draw further on Preston’s concept of language regard (2010, 2011,

2013). Providing an overview of language attitude studies also allows for a discussion of different research approaches and an identification of data-gathering tools applied in attitude studies in linguistics. With this discussion, the necessary background information is provided to examine previously conducted usage attitude studies in the following chapter.

### 3.2. The Concept ‘Attitude’

While the concept ‘attitude’ has long been deeply rooted and considered a key theme in social psychology (Allport, 1935, p. 789; Oppenheim, 1992, p. 174; Edwards, 1982, p. 20; 2006, p. 324; McKenzie, 2010, p. 19), its importance for linguistics was only gradually discovered. Garrett (2010, p. 19) stresses the significance of Labov’s *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (2006), first published in 1966, in which speakers’ attitudes towards prestigious and stigmatised language features were used to explain language change and variation. Social psychologists as well as laypeople have often applied the concept ‘attitude’ to explain human behaviour (Ajzen, 2005, pp. 1–2). Despite its long history in social psychology, the concept remains complex and difficult to define due to advancements in the field and the tendency of social psychologists to suggest their own definitions of the concept to match their respective theories (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6). In order to find a suitable definition for the discussion of usage attitudes, I will provide an overview of the key components and characteristics of attitudes and furthermore contrast the concept ‘attitude’ with related notions such as belief, value, opinion and perception.

Oppenheim (1992, p. 174) states that “most researchers seem to agree that an attitude is a state of readiness, a tendency to respond in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli”. What can be gathered from his statement is, first and foremost, the necessity of a stimulus or attitude object.

According to Ajzen (2005, p. 3), an attitude object can be an “object, person, institution, or event” which can either trigger a favourable or unfavourable response to the perceived attitude object in a person. McKenzie (2010, p. 19) also adds abstract ideas to Oppenheim’s list of attitude objects. A linguistic example of an attitude object could be the Queen’s English. The importance of the role of the stimuli needs to be stressed, Oppenheim argues, as attitudes are often described as “dormant” and “inaccessible to direct observation” unless a person is confronted with the attitude object (Oppenheim, 1992: 175; Ajzen, 2005, p. 3). Only after confrontation with the stimulus will attitudes be expressed in either a verbal or behavioural response or evaluation of the attitude object. The observability, or rather accessibility, of attitudes has been discussed by Garrett (2010, p. 20), who states that attitudes are “psychological construct[s]” which “cannot be observed directly”. Garrett bases his discussion on Oppenheim’s definition of attitudes, which can be found below, and argues that in order to identify an attitude, one needs to infer it from the response obtained after the confrontation with the attitude object. In his definition, Oppenheim (1982, p. 39) lists observable processes, such as verbal statements and ideas, on which the inferred attitude could be based:

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 much 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 aspects of behaviour. (Oppenheim, 1982, p. 39)

Oppenheim describes attitudes as an “inner component of mental life”, yet he fails to mention how attitudes emerge or how they are constructed, an oversight which he corrected ten years later (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 174). Social psychologists have argued that attitudes are learned, and have subsequently formulated various theories as to how the acquisition process takes place.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, pp. 21–52) and Erwin (2001, pp. 21–41) provide overviews of the main learning theories of attitudes, whose discussion, however, is not the main objective of this chapter. I will therefore only mention the two main sources I consider important for the present investigation of usage attitudes, i.e. those which constitute personal experience and social environment (Garrett, 2010, p. 22). A distinction is made between observational learning, which describes learning an attitude by observing the behaviour of others, and instrumental learning, which includes attending “to the consequences of attitudes and whether these bring rewards or detriments” (Garrett, 2010, p. 22). Both observational and instrumental learning can be found in a school setting. Being confronted by the rules and workings of the standard variety, students will form “some fundamental language attitudes” which depend on their personal experience and social environment (Garrett, 2010, p. 22). More recent definitions of attitudes, however, incorporate suggestions that some attitudes are partially formed on a biological basis and thus should not be considered solely the product of a learning process (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 3). This is also visible in Eagly and Chaiken’s (1993, p.1) definition of an attitude as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour”. One of the most frequently quoted definitions of attitude is Allport’s attempt at defining the concept, which is said to “encompass most of the agreed upon meaning” (Gardner 1982, p. 132). Allport (1954, p. 45) defines ‘attitude’ as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related”. Allport’s definition does indeed include several of the key elements discussed above, such as the attitude object, the observability of attitudes as well as a hint at the learning theory of attitudes. For this reason, I consider Allport’s definition of attitude,

albeit a rather old one, the most suitable definition for the purpose of my study and as a starting point for my discussion of usage attitudes. Before this attempt to define usage attitudes is however made, I would like to discuss briefly the three key components of attitudes outlined above and contrast the concept ‘attitude’ with other related terms.

### **3.2.1. Three key components of attitudes**

The previous discussion showed that defining attitudes is a complex undertaking as not only the key components of attitudes need to be discussed, but also the contextual prerequisites of how an attitude emerges. The difficulty of this complexity becomes evident in our understanding of attitudes as comprising a dichotomous scale ranging from positive to negative attitudes and in the subsequent measurement of attitude, for which Oppenheim (1992, p. 175) provides the following assessment:

Our thinking on the nature of attitudes has been rather primitive. Most of the time we tend to perceive them as straight lines, running from positive, through neutral, to negative feelings about the object or issue in question. Our attempts at measurement then concentrate on trying to place a person’s attitude on the straight line or linear continuum in such a way that it can be described as mildly positive, strongly negative, and so on – preferably in terms of a numerical score or else by means of ranking. There is no proof, however, that this model of a linear continuum is necessarily correct, though it does make things easier for measurement purposes. For all we know, attitudes may be shaped more like concentric circles or overlapping ellipses or three-dimensional cloud formations. (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 175).

To discuss such attitude models, the three components that ‘attitude’ comprises need to be clarified. Early definitions of the concept ‘attitude’ (e.g. Allport, 1954, p. 45; Oppenheim, 1982, p. 39) agree on the affective nature of attitudes and include the most obvious component: an emotion. This is particularly obvious in Oppenheim’s definition in which he provides a list of responses including “emotions”, “anger or satisfaction”. To give an example,

the affective component of a positive attitude towards a linguistic variety such as the Queen's English could be expressed verbally with a favourable evaluation. As mentioned above, attitudes are inferred, which makes emotions an easily identifiable source for them. While the affective component of attitudes is clearly an essential and more obvious part of the concept, scholars have tried to unveil the underlying components and incorporate these into a definition. Besides the affective component, the previously discussed definitions also include two further components. Attitudes have often been described as a "mental and neural state of readiness" (Allport, 1954, p. 45) or "inner component of mental life" (Oppenheim, 1982, p. 39), which highlights their cognitive dimension. This component is expressed through thoughts and beliefs (Baker, 1992, p. 12). Thinking that the Queen's English is the only correct language variety, for example, would therefore be considered an expression of the cognitive component. Additionally, one can identify a behavioural component, which is described by Allport (1945, p. 45) as "exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response" and by Oppenheim as "a state of readiness" (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 174). The behavioural component is sometimes also referred to as the conative or action component (e.g. Baker, 1992, p. 13). To continue the example of the Queen's English, the behavioural component of a positive attitude towards the attitude object, the Queen's English, could be realised in the acquisition of the variety. These three components constitute the so-called ABC model of attitudes and are illustrated in Figure 3.1 below based on Baker (1992) and Augoustinos et al. (2006).

This tripartite structure of attitudes, which is often referred to as the classical or triadic model of attitudes (Erwin, 2001, p. 13), raises a number of questions concerning the measurement of attitudes, such as the following. What exactly is measured in an attitude test? Since most studies produce and



rely “on single-response measures to infer beliefs, attitudes, and intentions”, the measurement of one or more of the three components becomes a critical issue (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, pp. 53–54).

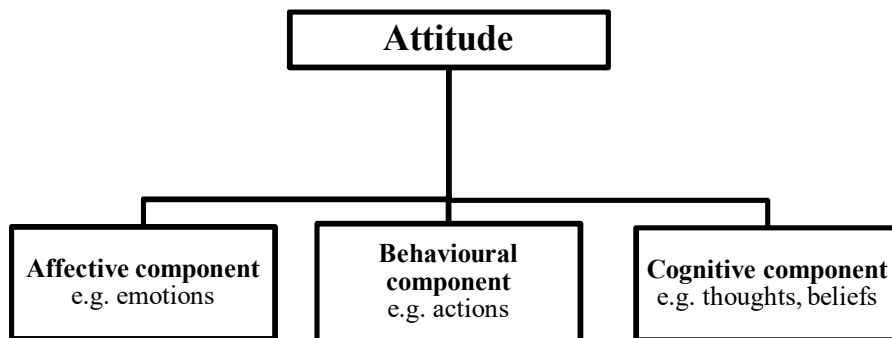


Figure 3.1 ABC model of attitudes

In this respect, the inference of attitudes from an evaluation has caused some confusion. Attempting to separate the three components in empirical studies, the affective and cognitive components have been found difficult to distinguish (Ajzen, 2005, p. 20). These three components together with the key elements discussed above need to be borne in mind when devising tests to measure attitudes.

To summarise the key components and processes, I would like to make use of Oskamp and Schultz’s (2005, p. 11–12) visualisation of the so-called Latent Process Viewpoint, which describes the evaluation process and which was introduced by DeFleur and Westies (1963). In Figure 3.2 I adapted Oskamp and Schulz’s model to fit the terminology used in this discussion. Thus, instead of using the term stimulus event in Figure 3.2 below, I decided to use the term attitude object. This model enables not only a summary of the main processes involved in the attitude formation process, but also allows a clear visualisation emphasising the observable and latent components of

attitudes. Hence, the fact that attitudes are inferred upon the observation of affective, behavioural and cognitive responses is highlighted in the Latent Process Viewpoint model.

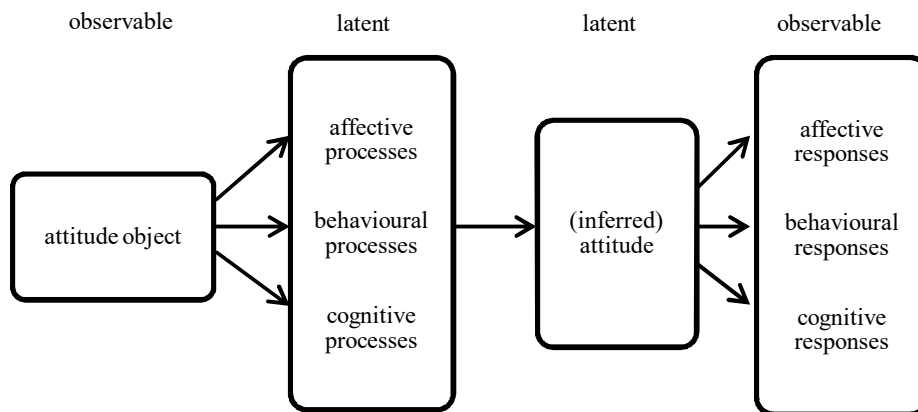


Figure 3.2 Latent Process Viewpoint (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005)

### 3.2.2.Related terms

The tendency to use ‘attitude’ as a general label to discuss related terms such as beliefs, values and the like as well as to use some of these terms synonymously can cause confusion, and therefore it is necessary to distinguish attitudes from these related terms. Although the difference in meaning is sometimes only subtle, I will briefly distinguish the terms ‘values’, ‘opinions’, ‘beliefs’, and ‘perception’.

Values are considered “superordinate ideals” which we aspire to (Garrett et al. 2003, p. 10) and thus they encompass broader notions such as happiness, justice and freedom (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005, p. 14–15). Attitudes are often described in terms of their depth and are contrasted with these related terms. Oppenheim, for instance, considers attitudes and related concepts as

being placed on different levels of superficiality. While opinions are placed on the most superficial level, values, which Oppenheim also calls “basic attitudes”, provide the foundation for attitudes (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 176). The importance of values in attitude formation is not only discussed by Oppenheim, but also by Oskamp and Schultz (2005, p. 15), who argue that values are “central in a person’s whole system of attitudes and beliefs” and therefore are more resilient to change.

Opinions, as mentioned above, are considered to be more superficial than attitudes or values. This is also reflected in their observability, as most opinions are expressed verbally (Baker, 1992, p. 14). The distinction between depth levels, i.e. superficial levels compared to more intrinsic ones, is important as this can affect the measurement of attitudes. This is further explained by Garrett (2010, p. 32) who argues that formulating attitudes might be more difficult than opinions, and that expressed opinions do not necessarily have to be identical reflections of an underlying attitude. To give an example, expressing a neutral opinion on the Queen’s English may in fact be connected to an underlying negative attitude either towards the variety itself, its speakers or even bigger notions such as the monarchy. Baker (1992, p. 14) states that opinions and attitudes are often used synonymously and mentions the lack of emotions in opinions as a key difference between the two terms.

Beliefs have been described as the cognitive component of attitudes and are also said to possibly lack emotions (Garrett, 2010, p. 31). While describing beliefs as thoughts and ideas, the question is raised how an affective thought or idea should be treated and measured. Oskamp and Schultz (2005, pp. 13–14) defined the type of belief, including a value judgment, as an intermediate category called evaluative beliefs. An example of such an evaluative belief would be the following statement: The Queen’s English is beautiful. The connection between the affective and cognitive components of attitudes is

stressed by Garrett (2010, p. 31), who states that beliefs “may trigger and be triggered by strong affective reactions”, which makes beliefs which merely express the cognitive component rather uncommon.

Perception is another term which is often used interchangeably with the term attitude. However, when reading Edwards’ definition of perception, subtle differences can be distinguished. According to Edwards (2006, p. 324), perceptions are defined as “the filter through which sensory data are strained”. This filter varies among individuals due to its unique formation and maintenance, which depends on the individual’s cultural environment and experiences (Edwards, 2006, p. 324). Perceptions, therefore, play a role in the discussion of what attitudes are, as the individual’s filter seems to influence attitude formation. To continue the example of the Queen’s English, the variety may be perceived differently by an actual speaker of the variety and a speaker of Cockney English for example. Their respective experience and environments serve as a filter through which the Queen’s English is perceived.

### **3.3. The Concept ‘Attitude’ in Linguistics**

Having distinguished between these related terms, I would like to give a short overview of how the concept ‘attitude’ has been incorporated into linguistics. Since this study deals with attitudes towards usage problems, a definition of what usage attitudes are is advisable. Despite having a long tradition in the social sciences, particularly the behavioural sciences and social psychology, the study of attitudes requires a discussion of its contextualisation and incorporation into linguistics. When discussing language attitudes, several questions are immediately triggered. Whose attitudes are we concerned with? Which language, language variety or linguistic aspect is investigated? How are attitudes to these phenomena measured? In order to answer questions such as these, an overview of previously conducted language attitude studies is

needed to illustrate how attitudes have gradually been incorporated in the study of language.

Today, investigating attitudes has become an important part in many linguistic areas, such as second language acquisition, bilingualism, perceptual dialectology and sociolinguistics. This, however, has not always been the case, as only from the 1960s onwards was more attention paid to attitude studies in linguistics. What is also characteristic of the early stages of language attitude studies in the field of linguistics is that there was a complete isolation from attitude studies conducted in the social sciences, which impeded the exchange of valuable research experience (Cooper & Fishman 1974, p. 5; Garrett, 2002, p. 626). For all that, language attitude studies found fruitful ground from the 1960s onwards in linguistics with its incorporation into the fields of social psychology of language, sociolinguistics, and communication studies (Garrett, 2003, p. 626; Speelman et al., 2013, p. 84). Important studies such as that of Lambert et al. (1960) on attitudes towards French and English in Canada, which will be discussed below, contributed to and promoted the development and implementation of attitude studies in these fields by demonstrating their usefulness beyond the fields in which they had originated.

Early investigations of the development of language attitude studies indicate a tendency to categorise these studies according to specific factors. One possible way of categorising such studies is demonstrated by Agheyisi and Fishman (1970). Their overview of early language attitude studies conducted in the 1960s is based on a bipartite categorisation according to research topics as well as to the research tools applied in these studies. By compiling this overview Agheyisi and Fishman (1970, p. 144) discovered that the majority of language attitude studies were conducted in areas in which the social significance of language varieties, language choice and usage were investigated. Another categorisation of attitude studies was undertaken by

Cooper and Fishman (1974), who differentiated language attitudes according to the attitude object and created a demarcation between language attitudes and attitudes in general. Thus, Cooper and Fishman (1974, p. 6) established four language attitude categories based on the attitude object:

- 1) Attitudes towards a language
- 2) Attitudes towards a specific language feature
- 3) Attitudes towards language use
- 4) Attitudes towards language as a symbol (e.g. group marker)

Niedzielski and Preston (2000, pp. 8–9), who have worked in and considerably shaped the folk linguistic framework, state that language attitude studies do not aim to identify linguistic levels as such, but stress the association of linguistic features with their users. They define language attitude as follows:

A language attitude is, after all, not really an attitude to a language feature; it is an awakening of a set of beliefs about individuals or sort of individuals through the filter of a linguistic performance, although, admittedly, association with a linguistic feature and a group may be so long-standing that the attitude appears to be the linguistic feature itself. (Niedzielski & Preston, 2000, p. 9)

This association between linguistic features and a specific type of speakers has also been mentioned by Edwards (1982, p. 20), who highlights the importance of attitude studies for sociolinguistics. To give an example, an attitude towards the Queen's English may in fact be an attitude held towards a very particular group, namely its speakers. It is argued that the association of the Queen's English with this particular group becomes so strong that the two attitudes appear to be the same. That is why this association is crucial for the understanding of language attitude studies, which needs to be borne in mind for the rest of the discussion.

Creating categories of language attitude studies as done by Cooper and Fishman (1974) is not only a useful means to get an overview of what is

understood by language attitudes, but it also enables a better understanding of the essential components when studying language attitudes. Whose attitudes are investigated towards which component? To apply this question to the research carried out here, I am investigating the attitudes of members of the general public towards usage problems. So, what are usage attitudes then?

### **3.3.1. Defining usage attitudes**

As discussed in the introduction to this study, usage problems are disputed language features which prescriptivists argue are not part of the standard language. However, these features are in actual use and are widespread among the general public, who might or might not be aware of their disputed status. Due to the reduction of optional variability in the language standardisation process (Milroy & Milroy 2012, p. 22), these language features are in competition with what prescriptivists consider to be the correct standard forms. Drawing on the standard language ideology, Lesley Milroy (1999, p. 175) describes how such optional variability is considered “an undesirable deviation from a uniquely correct form”. The stigmatisation of usage problems is a process which plays a crucial role in this discussion, since there seems to be a difference in awareness of the stigmatisation of particular usage features between language users. This difference in awareness has been studied by various linguists before, such as Labov (1972), Cheshire (1982), Trudgill (1986) and Levon (2006), to name a few. Distinguishing language features according to their level of awareness in a speech community resulted in their categorisation into three different types of sociolinguistic variables: markers, indicators and stereotypes. These three types of variables are said to stratify differently in a speech community. Labov (1972, p. 237) argues that indicators are linguistic variables which “show a regular distribution over socio-economic, ethnic, or age group, but are used by each individual in more or less

the same way in any context”. This means that a linguistic feature would be used differently by various age groups or ethnic groups. This social stratification also means that indicators are not very obvious and that considerable linguistic knowledge is needed to be able to recognise them (Mesthrie et al. 2009, p. 88). Rácz (2013, p. 25) describes indicators as not provoking value judgments from other members of the speech community. An example quoted in Rácz (2013, p. 25) would be the vowel /a:/ in Norwich which Trudgill found to be more fronted than the standard variant stating that the social and contextual situation would not influence its pronunciation greatly (Trudgill, 1986, p. 10). Unlike indicators, sociolinguistic markers, according to Labov (1972, p. 237), are “[m]ore highly developed sociolinguistic variables”, in the sense that they not only stratify socially, but also stylistically. Focussing on phonetic variables, Labov provides the variable (-*ing*), which has a stressed (-*ing*) and an unstressed variant (-*in*), as an example of a sociolinguistic marker (1972, pp. 237–239). This linguistic variable is said to vary according to different speech style, so that we find the unstressed variant (-*in*) more frequently in informal context such as casual speech and among speakers of the lower social classes as shown by Trudgill in his study of sociolinguistic variation of English in Norwich (1974, pp. 91–92). Rácz’s explanation of markers highlights their significance in terms of sociolinguistic investigations, as he states that “[m]arkers correlate with a sociolinguistic identity. If a marker attaches to a nonstandard dialect, speakers will try to avoid it in more formal style settings and will regard its use as *base* or *erroneous*” (2013, p. 25). Lastly, sociolinguistic stereotypes are variables that are not only socially stratified but whose social variation is also noted by the speech community (Labov, 1972, p. 314; Mesthrie et al., 2009, p. 88). This is described by Rácz (2013, p. 26) as becoming a “subject of naïve linguistic awareness”. The increased use of high-rise terminals or so-called ‘uptalk’ has gradually become a linguistic



stereotype (Cameron, 2001, p. 112). The distinction between indicator, marker and stereotype is a necessary one and will be applied in the data analysis of this thesis. By identifying the speech communities' awareness towards usage problems, it will be possible to assess whether a usage problem such as *literally* as an intensifier is more a marker or a stereotype, for example.

An important question raised in connection with language attitudes and attitudes in general concerns what forms the basis of speakers' judgments. Edwards (1982, 2006) discusses three different types of basis for language attitudes on which speakers tend to justify their judgments. The first type constitutes the so-called intrinsic difference according to which speakers evaluate language varieties or features based on their "intrinsic linguistic inferiorities/superiorities" (Edwards, 1982, p. 21). By stressing the intrinsic superiority of Standard English for example, one will automatically assume all other English varieties to be inferior to this standard variety. The second type of judgment basis also deals with an inherent quality, namely a variety's or feature's aesthetic quality (Edwards, 2006, p. 325). This type has also been called the "inherent value hypothesis", which has been investigated in studies such as Giles et al. (1974) which attempts to verify the hypothesis that varieties possess such inherent aesthetic values. While French Canadians consider European French varieties as aesthetically more pleasing, Giles et al.'s (1974) study showed that Welsh speakers who are unfamiliar with these varieties do not judge them differently when it comes to aesthetics. Thus, the inherent value hypothesis could not be proven in their attempt to verify the assumption that some varieties possess aesthetic values. The third type of judgment basis discussed by Edwards (1982, 2006) is the so-called social perception basis, which he believes to be the only plausible option with respect to the speakers' judgment basis. According to the social perception basis, speakers are said to make evaluations to reflect the social conventions of their speech community,

in the process of which they show an awareness of what is considered prestigious or carries status in a speech community (Edwards, 1982, p. 21). Edwards (2006, p. 326) states that speakers “listening to a given variety acts as a trigger or a stimulus that evokes attitudes (or prejudices, or stereotypes) about the community to which the speaker is thought to belong”. This ties in neatly with Niedzielski and Preston’s definition of language attitudes discussed above. Niedzielski and Preston’s (2000) discussion of folk linguistic awareness highlights how laypeople’s understanding of language varieties differs from that of linguists or language specialists. What can be identified as Edwards’ (2006, pp. 324–325) intrinsic difference basis and aesthetic quality value are reflected in their discussion of laypeople awareness. Niedzielski and Preston (2000, p. 18) illustrate below how laypeople’s perceptions of what constitutes “good language” need to be scrutinised and that a simple equation of “good language” with “good speakers” is simply insufficient to grasp language attitudes. Niedzielski and Preston (2000, p. 18) state that “good language is not good just because it is (and has been) used by good speakers. Good language for the folk is a much greater abstraction; it is good because it is logical, clear, continuous (in an etymological sense), and so on”. As part of the folk linguistics and perceptual dialectology framework, Preston (2010, p. 100, 2011, p. 10) has coined the term ‘language regard’, to encompass not only beliefs about language, but also reactions to language. Language regard serves as an umbrella term covering implicit attitudes to linguistic features as well as explicit opinions about these features which may entail an effective evaluation or not (Nerbonne et al., 2011, p. 3). Preston (2011, p. 10) argues that it is possible to obtain beliefs about language without an effective evaluation and so prefers the use of the term ‘regard’ to ‘attitude’ as the latter has an evaluative component as discussed above.

Figure 3.3, which is based on Preston (2010), illustrates the language regard process, a process of how beliefs about and reactions to language, its structure, its use and status emerge.

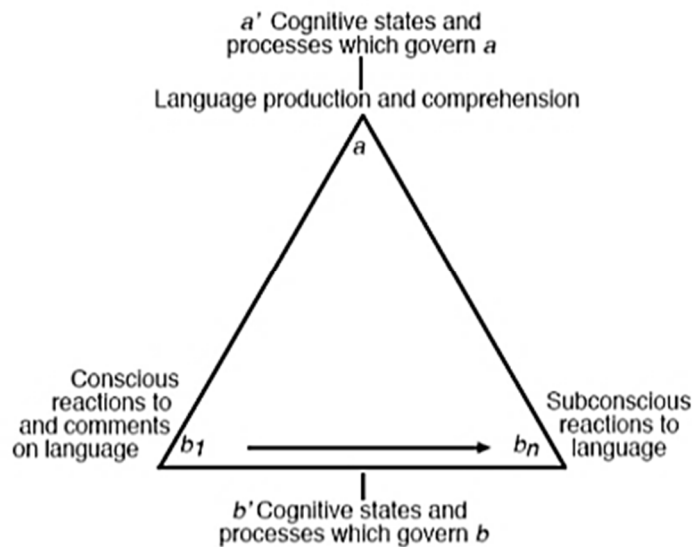


Figure 3.3 Preston's (2010, p. 101) Language Regard concept

Preston (2010, p. 101; 2011, p. 10) argues that speakers are not necessarily aware of what they say or of what is being said by others, a finding which he bases on Sibata (1999) and calls "The Communicative Mandate". By adding the element of salience to his framework, Preston states that speakers will notice forms which are different from the ones they use themselves or expect to hear from others, calling this the "Contrastive Mandate" (2010, p. 101). To exemplify the latter concept, if one did not expect one's interlocutor to use *literally* in a non-literal sense but as an intensifier based on his or her physical appearance or other stimuli, one would notice the feature, according to the Contrastive Mandate. As illustrated in Figure 3.3, language production and comprehension at the top of the triangle and marked with *a* constitutes the starting point of the language regard process. Preston (2010, pp. 102–104)

explains that a variety or feature such as *literally* as an intensifier is first noticed by the hearer due to the difference in use or expectation before a classification of the feature or variety is made. In order to do so, the speaker draws on his knowledge and experience, represented as  $b'$ , to form his regard towards  $a$ , which is consequently imbued by the speaker's knowledge (Preston, 2010, p. 2). Preston (2011, p. 13) states that  $b'$  constitutes the main object of investigation in language regard and describes how variable  $b'$  can range from  $b_l$  to  $b_n$  on a consciousness dimension.

To illustrate the language regard process, I will provide an example. A speaker produces a double negative which the hearer either does not normally use himself or does not expect to hear from that speaker based on extralinguistic aspects about the speaker such as their physical appearance, age or the like. If we identify the observed double negative, as in *didn't do nothing*, according to Preston's scheme (2011), the following steps may be identified:

The speaker produces a double negative (*didn't do nothing*) which will be referred to as  $a$  hereafter.

Step 1: As the hearer would not use or does not expect to hear a double negative, he notices  $a$  in the production of the speaker

Step 2: The hearer then classifies  $a$  as a dialectal language use.

Step 3: The hearer draws on his knowledge about and experience with this feature and "caricatures" of dialect speakers from  $b'$  (Preston, 2010, p. 102) and instils these into  $a$

Step 4: Finally, the hearer produces his response in  $b_l$

As discussed above, language attitudes are not necessarily attitudes to linguistic features or a language variety, but are rather connected to beliefs held towards their user. A long-standing and strong connection between such beliefs about their speakers and the linguistic feature or variety itself may

result then in the attitude being representative of the linguistic feature or variety (Niedzielski & Preston, 2000, p. 9). Preston incorporates this assumption in his language regard process by drawing on Irvine's (2001, p. 33) iconization, a transformational process in which the linguistic features become a representation of their social images. He argues that due to previous exposure and imbuelement of *a*, a hearer might not necessarily draw on his knowledge, but previously imbued characteristics might be directly triggered (Preston, 2010, pp. 102–103; 2013, p. 95). According to this modification, we would obtain a different process, which can be described as follows:

The speaker produces a double negative (*didn't do nothing*) which will be referred to as *a* hereafter.

Step 1: As the hearer would not use or does not expect a double negative, he notices *a* in the production of the speaker

Step 2: The hearer then classifies *a* as sloppy based on his previous imbuing of *a*

Step 3: The hearer draws on “associated beliefs about” sloppy language (Preston, 2010, p. 103)

Step 4: Lastly, the hearer formulates a folk belief in *b*,

This automatization of responses through previous exposure is crucial in the discussion of usage attitudes as it could well be at play when conducting attitude elicitation tasks. What Preston's discussion of language regard also highlights is that the set of beliefs and experiences of speakers vary not only culturally but also individually (2013, p. 96). Nevertheless, whether language regards are truly evaluation-free beliefs about language, as is argued by Preston (2011, p. 10) and was discussed above, needs to be questioned. If folk beliefs contain an effective evaluation of a language variety or language feature, as for example in classifying dialectal language use as sloppy, a case

could be made for assuming that the language regard process also includes attitudes.

What then are usage attitudes? The key element of usage attitudes is the speakers' awareness of the disputed status of linguistic features which become salient due to their stigmatisation or deviance from a norm. If speakers have not been exposed to the discussion of disputed usage features, be it through their education, their social environment or the mass media, they will not be aware of the feature's stigmatised status. As shown by Edwards' (1982, 2006) discussion of the three bases of judgments, speakers who do not have this awareness will base their judgment on either their understanding of the intrinsic difference of a variety by assuming a linguistic superiority or inferiority of a linguistic feature or variety or on an inherent aesthetic value. I suspect that speakers who are aware of the disputed status of usage problems will base their judgments on the third social perception basis which emphasizes the language conventions in a speech community. Therefore, usage attitudes are evaluations of usage problems which are either found to be acceptable or unacceptable depending on the context of use agreed upon within a speech community, or an evaluation of users of usage problems. Awareness of the stigmatised status of usage problems is a key characteristic of usage attitudes and it is either acquired through exposure in education, the speaker's social environment or the media.

### **3.4. Research Approaches to the Study of Language Attitudes**

Now that the terminology and concepts that are relevant to this study have been clarified, an overview of research approaches developed to study language attitudes in general can now be undertaken. I will focus on the three main approaches: the Direct Approach, the Indirect Approach and the Societal Treatment Approach. In spite of the initial isolation of attitude studies, several

research techniques have been transferred from the social sciences to linguistics. As sociolinguistics was still a relatively young discipline in the 1970s, it is no surprise that the social sciences provided a wide array of established and approved research tools for linguists. Examples of such tools are attitude questionnaires and semantic differential scales, which will be explained later in this chapter. Yet, new research techniques have been developed as well and have been gradually incorporated into sociolinguistics in order to meet new or different needs.

An overview of the kind of techniques applied in language attitude studies was made by Agheyisi and Fishman (1970, pp. 142–143), which comprises the use of surveys, questionnaires and interviews, participant observation and case studies. This overview allows a comparison between the analytical approaches which have been adopted from the social sciences and the research tools that have been applied in the study of language attitudes. Apart from the topical differences of attitude studies in the social sciences compared to those carried out within linguistics, Miller (1977, p. 66) provides an overview of analytical approaches applied in this field which include a large array of research tools such as questionnaires, interviews, case studies, experiments and observations. Such basic, yet fundamental, research techniques can be found in both the social sciences and linguistics, as becomes clear from a comparison of the techniques listed by Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) and Miller (1977). The matched-guise technique, for instance, pioneered by Lambert et al. (1960), is an example of a technique that was developed specifically for the study of language attitudes. What lies at the heart of all these research methods is, however, the understanding of the concept ‘attitude’, which is intrinsically linked to the development of different approaches to the study of language attitudes. Having discussed the beginnings of language attitude studies relatively broadly here, I will now take a

closer look at the development of these research approaches when applied to sociolinguistics. The following discussion of the three main research approaches, the Direct Approach, the Indirect Approach and the Societal Treatment Approach, is led to identify their advantages and disadvantages.

### **3.4.1. The Direct Approach**

The Direct Approach targets respondents' cognitive, behavioural and affective levels as they are expected to express their attitudes overtly. Elicitation of language attitudes is usually done by asking explicit and direct questions in interviews or questionnaires (Garrett, 2010, p. 39; McKenzie, 2010, p. 37), which is how this approach has obtained its name. An example of its application can be found in MacKinnon's (1981) study of the attitudes of Scottish people towards Gaelic. Using a questionnaire with questions targeting the explicit opinions of Scottish people towards Gaelic and its use illustrates this Direct Approach, which is, however, often considered to be intrusive and thus could lead to biased and distorted responses (Garrett, 2004, p. 1252).

At first glance, asking respondents for their attitudes directly seems to be the easiest and most straightforward method to obtain results. However, there are a number of disadvantages to this approach which have to be considered. Being asked to express one's attitude directly could result in the production of opinions rather than the respondents' true attitudes. Especially in interviews, respondents may be inclined to provide socially desired responses, as when replying to questions on socially and politically sensitive issues (Garrett, 2010, p. 44). It is, therefore, possible that the results obtained do not reflect the respondents' true attitudes (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 117; Baker, 1992, p. 12–13; McKenzie, 2010, p. 42). In interview situations, a phenomenon known as the Observer's Paradox (Labov, 1972) may occur, in which the participants' response could be influenced by the mere presence of the



interviewer or observer and the interview environment itself. Although this phenomenon usually applies to language production and language use, it can also have an effect on the participants' responses in attitude elicitation tests. A distinction is made between what is known as the Hawthorne effect – how the respondents' perception of the researcher and the study can influence the respondents' answer – and what has been called the Pygmalion effect – how the researcher is influenced by his or her perceptions of the respondents and their abilities to complete specific tasks or the like (McKenzie, 2010, pp. 43–44). The effects of the researcher's own sociological background, such as their age, sex and ethnicity, has long been acknowledged by linguists as potentially detrimental to the reactions of participants and thus needs to be considered in the data-gathering process. Furthermore, the construction of the questions used to elicit attitudes poses a number of dangers that distort attitude measurements not only in interviews but also in questionnaires. Slanted or biased questions can lead the respondents to answer in a specific, predetermined way, which would result in obscured data and thus should be avoided (Oppenheim, 1966, pp. 62–63).

A special form of the Direct Approach method can be found in perceptual dialectology, a field of folk linguistics established by Dennis Preston (1989). As already discussed previously in this chapter, folk linguistics investigates the beliefs and opinions of laypeople towards language. In order to investigate their beliefs about and attitudes towards language, several direct methods are applied in perceptual dialectology, such as having participants draw dialect maps or rank dialects according to their proximity to the participant's own dialect (McKenzie 2010, 44). Although this falls under the Direct Approach method, perceptual dialectology sees an advantage in providing a familiar context for the respondents (McKenzie, 2010, p. 44). In order

to avoid the intrusive character of the Direct Approach, a subtler approach was sought and found in the Indirect Approach.

### **3.4.2. The Indirect Approach**

By applying complementary, less direct and to some extent deceptive techniques, the application of the Indirect Approach aims to obtain language attitudes in a different manner (Garrett, 2010, p. 41). As opposed to the Direct Approach method, explicit questions are avoided since the validity of language attitudes obtained by the application of direct methods has been questioned, as discussed above. An advantage of the Indirect Approach is that its application enables the researcher to retrieve sensitive data, such as people's attitudes towards foreign accents, which, if directly asked for, could cause respondents to answer in a manner they would consider to be socially appropriate or desirable. The multidimensional character of attitudes, furthermore, may be better accessed by the Indirect Approach, as this method allegedly reaches beyond the conscious level (McKenzie, 2010, p. 45). To obtain subconscious attitudes, which are implicit attitudes held by a speaker who might not be even aware of them, the Indirect Approach is therefore considered most suitable. Kristiansen (2015, p. 87) argues for the importance of subconscious attitudes as they "appear to be a driving force in linguistic variation and change in a way that consciously offered attitudes are not".

Pioneering research in developing a technique to study language attitudes was conducted by W. E. Lambert (1960) and his colleagues at McGill University, who developed one of the most popular and frequently applied techniques in the Indirect Approach: the matched-guise technique. This technique involves the rating on Likert scales by participants of recordings of bilingual speakers who read exactly the same extract in both languages, thus keeping variation in voice quality, intonation and the like to a minimum. This

technique provides the opportunity to get respondents' attitudes in a rather indirect and subtle way (Lambert et al., 1960, p. 44). In Lambert et al.'s study (1960) of bilingualism in Canada, listeners' attitudes towards French and English speakers were investigated by the application of what was, at that time, an innovative approach. French and English-speaking bilinguals were recorded reading a text in both languages (Lambert et al., 1960, p. 44). The participants of the study, French and English-speaking students, were then asked to rate these matched voices, as well as two so-called filler voices which served as a distraction, on a six-point Likert scale on alleged personal characteristics of the speakers such as height, good looks, intelligence, self-confidence and kindness (1960, pp. 44–45). After having assessed the recordings, the participants were asked to complete various questionnaires to provide further insights into their attitudes to the languages investigated. Lambert et al. were thus able to obtain the participants' attitudes on both languages. Surprisingly, the French participants ranked the English guises higher in favourability, as did the English, and additionally ranked their own linguistic group of French speakers lower than the English participants did (1960, p. 48). These insights would probably not have been obtained by asking the participants directly about their attitudes towards French and English speakers and their respective languages. The matched-guise technique as a tool applied in the Indirect Approach clearly highlights the main difference to the Direct Approach. Due to its slight deceptiveness and diminished obviousness, the matched-guise technique makes respondents believe that they are judging different speakers and not just two bilinguals. Moreover, the Indirect Approach enables the researcher to target attitudes which may be hidden or which are unconscious to the respondents themselves (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 161).

Garrett et al. (2003, pp. 57–61) have identified variables that may be considered by researchers in order to avoid possible pitfalls that come with the

complexity of attitude studies. One of the main criticisms of the matched-guise technique deals with issues of authenticity and contextualisation (Garret et al., 2003, pp. 57–61). Not providing a context in which the recorded messages take place and mimicking authentic accents are two issues which should be borne in mind when applying the matched-guise technique. Despite its advantages, the Indirect Approach may, however, entail ethical problems, as the respondents are led on to believe in a different focus of the study. According to McKenzie (2010, p. 45), ethical issues can, however, be counter-balanced by debriefing the participants after completing the test. Despite increasing attention for such ethical considerations when carrying out indirect attitude elicitation, the matched-guise technique's popularity does not seem to have suffered from such criticism, but seems to have sparked interest in developing the technique further.

One variant of the matched-guise technique constitutes the verbal guise technique. This indirect technique is in fact very similar to its predecessor, but the issue of authenticity is avoided as various authentic accents or dialect speakers are recorded (McKenzie, 2010, p. 50). Many studies have been conducted in which the verbal guise technique was applied (e.g. Giles, 1970; Coupland & Bishop, 2007) in order to investigate attitudes towards different accents or dialects. One of the first studies incorporating the verbal guise technique in Great Britain was published by Howard Giles in 1970, who investigated respondents' attitudes towards British and foreign English accents. In his study, 177 secondary school children were asked to rate recordings of one male speaker reading a passage in thirteen accents on a seven-point Likert scale on three dimensions: aesthetics, communication and status (Giles, 1970, pp. 212–214). Using these three dimensions, Giles aimed at identifying how pleasant or unpleasant a particular accent appeared to the listener on the aes-

thetics dimension, how comfortable the participant would feel in a conversation with the speaker in question on the communicative dimension, and how prestigious the speaker came across on the status dimension (Giles, 1970, p. 215). The fact that only one speaker was used for the thirteen recordings was concealed by informing the participants that the researcher had made a great effort to find these different speakers (Giles, 1970, p. 216). Disguising the speaker follows the standard procedure of a matched-guise test, yet in contrast to the traditional matched-guise test, the verbal guise technique only includes one recording of each variety and hence speaker. Thus, Giles's study constitutes a bridge between the matched-guise and verbal guise techniques as it incorporated thirteen different recordings of accents, which were, however, read by only one speaker.

Giles's study, moreover, constitutes a special instance of attitude studies as it applied both the Direct and the Indirect Approaches by including an attitude rating scale (Giles, 1970, p. 213). The pupils were first asked to listen to the recording, then rate it on the seven-point Likert scale for the three dimensions and identify which accent had been recorded, and lastly to rate each of the sixteen accents on a single seven-point Likert scale to determine their pleasantness. Thus, the experiment included both vocal and conceptual accent stimuli. The results of Giles's study showed that at the time the two investigated age groups of 12 and 17-year-old school children rated Received Pronunciation highest on all three dimensions in the vocal stimuli test, while the Birmingham accent scored lowest (1970, p. 218). Giles was able to identify various correlations between the social factors age and sex and how the accents were rated by the participants, finding that for instance male participants as well as the younger age group rated the French accent less favourably than female participants and the older age group did (1970, p. 221). Applying this Indirect Approach to identifying attitudes towards both British and

foreign accents, Giles was able to retrieve the participants' attitudes without falling into the social-desirability trap, which especially plays a role when surveying socially sensitive matters.

The open guise test is a recent variant of the traditional matched-guise test pioneered by Barbara Soukup, who questioned the effectiveness and purpose of disguising the multiple speakers in the original test setup (2013, p. 269). Therefore, this test involves informing the participants about hearing the same speaker twice as opposed to disguising this fact, as is customary in a matched-guise test. The recorded speaker makes use of two different styles, which in Soukup's investigation were Standard Austrian German and the Middle-Bavarian dialect (2013, p. 275). Informing the participants about hearing the same speaker twice is based on Labov's (1972, p. 208) principle that "there are no single-style speakers", a characteristic which is also reflected in Soukup's bidialectal speakers. Soukup's application of the open-guise test in her study of perceptions of bidialectal language use produced different ratings by study participants despite them having been informed about listening to the same speaker twice. According to Soukup (2013, p. 279), the recorded Standard Austrian German speakers sounded significantly more educated and arrogant, while the same speaker using Middle-Bavarian was considered to be more relaxed and honest.

### **3.4.3. The Societal Treatment Approach**

The last of the three main approaches to the study of language attitudes that I will discuss in this chapter is the so-called Societal Treatment Approach, which is a content analysis of already existing data (Garrett, 2010, pp. 46–48). As opposed to the Direct Approach method, attitudes are not elicited but are inferred by the researcher by examining already existing attitudinal expressions (McKenzie, 2010, p. 41). The data can, for example, be compiled

by newspaper letters-to-the-editor expressing the reader's views on language (Schmied, 1991; Lukač, 2016) or speech behaviour exhibited in literature or films (Walshe, 2009). By choosing texts as a data source, this approach can be qualitative and quantitative and seems to provide immense possibilities to study language attitudes. Despite the vast amount of already existing data, the Societal Treatment Approach has been frequently overlooked in the past (McKenzie, 2010, p. 41), which could be due to specific research topics and questions, as well as to the perceived danger of inferring attitudes from the data resulting in subjective interpretations by the researcher. The researcher's individual disposition to the texts and experience with the subject matter, therefore, can influence his or her perception of the data, which may ultimately result in the researcher's own personal attitude being reflected in the results.

This issue with the Societal Treatment Approach is illustrated by Kristiansen (2003), who compiled an overview of attitudes towards Danish language varieties by collecting the results on three main research approaches to attitudes studies. Despite being able "to make pretty reliable inferences about the valuation and hierarchization of language varieties in Denmark" especially in public domains, he notes that the Societal Treatment Approach has not been used frequently (2003, p. 58). A successful application of the Societal Treatment Approach is Walshe's (2009) study of Irish English as represented in movies. She investigated phonological, grammatical, lexical and discourse features of Irish English in 50 films produced in Ireland between 1935 and 2007 (2009, pp. 1–4). By compiling a corpus of these films, she made a systematic analysis of how Irish English is portrayed in films. Walshe also included an analysis of how foreign actors' Irish accents were perceived by reviewers and laypeople (2009, p. 260) and so was able to avoid the inference and subjective treatment of attitudes by the researcher. Stereotypical expressions used by the film characters and their accents were among the

features investigated. Using corpora like these and subjecting them to the Societal Treatment Approach could, however, shift the focus from a qualitatively driven approach to a quantitative one. While the Societal Treatment Approach has been used in studies of public domains, institutions and media output, the Direct and Indirect Approaches have been favoured in studies of speaker attitudes.

### **3.5. Concluding Remarks**

Despite its long history in social psychology, the concept ‘attitude’ still proves to be a complex topic, even though it has made its way as a topic worth analysing even in linguistics. By establishing Allport’s definition (1954) as the starting point of the study of usage attitudes, I have tried to illustrate how attitudes emerge and to describe the different components they encompass. Furthermore, drawing on folk linguistics and perceptual dialectology to illustrate the differences in understanding language attitudes between laypeople and linguists was necessary for the investigation of usage attitudes of the general public. For the definition of usage attitudes, I drew on the folk linguistic paradigm, originally designed by Dennis Preston, and made use of Edwards’ (2006) discussion of the judgment bases of attitudes.

When discussing research approaches and tools, questions concerning the population studied, the subject of investigation and the means of attitude measurement are essential, as is the constant consideration in choosing a suitable approach. Above all, the concept and definition of ‘attitude’ need to be borne in mind when doing so. As discussed in this chapter, the concept ‘attitude’ is treated as a multidimensional construct involving cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Garrett, 2010, p. 23; Lambert & Lambert, 1973, p. 72); these components are catered to in research approaches to different extents. Therefore, previous studies such as Leonard’s study of



educated speakers' attitudes towards usage problems in American English (1932), for instance, have made use of already established and validated research techniques whose application has, in fact, implications for whether the concept 'attitude' is treated as a multidimensional or one-dimensional construct by the researcher, whether attitudes are simply considered to be expressed verbally, or whether affective, behavioural and cognitive effects are taken into account when assessing attitudes.

My review of the three main research approaches to the study of language attitudes has shown various methodological flaws in each of them. One suggestion to avoid these flaws is to adopt a combination of different research approaches as exemplified by Giles's (1970) study of British English and foreign accents incorporating both direct and indirect approaches. Such a mixed-methods approach results in a complementation of research approaches and the eradication of methodological flaws if applied carefully. The combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods provides further possibilities to avoid drawbacks of the different research approaches and techniques and to obtain attitudes that are more representative of the actual attitudes held by the participants. For my own analysis, I will make use of a mixed-methods approach combining direct with indirect elicitation techniques in order to avoid obtaining merely superficial opinions. Therefore, the methodological downsides of the techniques will be minimised.

