The utility of social networks in historical sociolinguistics II

Susan Fitzmaurice
Plan

• Review of utility and explanatory value of SNA
• Key terms and definitions II
  – Discourse communities
  – Communities of practice
• Enriching social networks analysis in historical sociolinguistics
  – Exploiting the discourse community
  – Incorporating the CofP
Review

• Is SNA sufficient for the rich description of groups in historical societies?
• Is SNA good enough to capture the practices of groups in historical societies?
• How can we distinguish groups in historical societies from their textual practices?
• How can we situate specific textual practices within the historical textual context?
Historical SNA

Advantages

• **Dynamic complexity**: SNA captures lifetime of an individual’s networks

• Individual-focused: ties connect **individuals** in open-ended networks not **institutions**

• Sociometric (structural) aspects (e.g. rank) can be richly informed by specific historical conditions

• **Particularity**: Specific types of SN (e.g. coalition) provide expression of particular psychological (functional) and strategic connections
Historical SNA

Disadvantages

• Data is always **partial** (so a complete picture of an individual’s connections is impossible?)

• Historical SNA depends upon **texts** (as the witnesses of speakers)

• Determining close-knit networks to investigate maintenance of linguistic norms is a bit hard

• Connecting apparently loose-knit networks to linguistic change is hard
Questions

• How do we differentiate norms operating within the (local) social network of the community from norms operating at the (supra-local) level?

• How do we inform an historical understanding of the strategic nature of a coalition using the purposive engagement of a CofP?

• I.e. Can social network analysis of historical groups be enriched by other categories of social description?
Historicizing the question

• How do we differentiate norms operating within the (local) social network of the community from norms operating at the (supra-local) level?

• How do we differentiate *The Spectator* writers’ practices from the behaviour practised by people involved in the broader periodical writing enterprise?
Discourse community

• A concept developed in applied linguistics and rhetoric research to capture the shared conventions and practices observed by people in a shared field or occupation.

• Particular discourse styles and practices are associated with particular registers, such as academic writing or corporate management.

• These practices and conventions may not necessarily be explicitly prescribed but they must be sufficiently valued to be upheld as norms of the domain, and targets for participants new to the field.
Discourse community (Watts, 1999)

• A set of individuals interpreted as constituting a community based on how their discourse practices reveal common interests, goals and beliefs...

• The members of the community may or may not be conscious of sharing their discourse practices.

• Thus, a discourse community may show strong or weak member affiliation to the values of the community, and the community itself may only become ‘visible’ through the course of time.

• A discourse community might also be defined as an embryonic institution with its own historicity.
Community of Practice

• ‘an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor’ (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992:464) in the course of which emerge shared beliefs, norms and ideologies

• ‘defined in terms of the members’ subjective experience of the boundaries between their community and other communities’ (Meyerhoff, 2002: 526)
Community of Practice

• CofP analyses of [linguistic] variation depend on the assumption that language use and variation are social practices; so language is understood as a vehicle in which speakers ‘construct, maintain or contest the boundaries of social categories and their membership or exclusion from those categories’. (Meyerhoff, 2002)
Community of Practice

• Key indices include a domain of interest shared by its members, which is maintained by the pursuit of joint activities conducted over time through sustained interaction.

• Members of the community develop a shared set of practices or repertoire of resources to advance their engagement with the domain of interest.
CofPs and SNs

• CoP locates the ‘interactional sites [intersecting clusters of individuals engaged in a particular enterprise] where social meaning is indexed by linguistic elements, and linguistic change and social meaning are co-constructed’

• SNA does not attend to the identification of these clusters but deals with the **structural and content properties of the ties which constitute egocentric networks** (Milroy, 2002:552)
Of Coalitions, Communities of Practice and Discourse Communities

The Spectator and the London periodical discourse community
Research questions

• How distinctive is the *Spectator* project in the contemporary London essay discourse community?

• Is the identity of the *Spectator* different and separate from its broader literary context?

• Is the identity of the *Spectator* different and separate from the identities of its key components, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele?
Methodological question

• Can an historical understanding of the strategic nature of a coalition be informed using the purposive engagement of a CofP?

• Is it possible to see *The Spectator*’s linguistic distinctiveness as the product of a community of practice despite the fact that it starts out as a coalition of actors engaged in a limited, highly defined project?
The coffeehouse community

The broader cultural context:

• The locus par excellence of public discourse where people of all sorts meet to talk politics, get the news, read broadsides, pamphlets, and periodicals, conduct business and socialize.

• A place promoting sociability and civility, but the quality of that civility was dubious as the hub of newsmongers, gossips and idlers;
Spectator Coalition

• The Spectator group is a coalition if a coalition is a set of individuals connected by a common set of interests and goals for the duration of a particular project or enterprise [original run of 555 issues (March 1711—Dec 1712)].

• Members: Addison, Steele (principal writers), Samuel Buckley, Jacob Tonson (publishers), Abigail Baldwin and Charles Lillie (distributors)
The coffeehouse community

Where you us’d to see Songs, Epigrams, and Satyrs, in the Hands of every Man you met, you have now only a Pack of Cards; and instead of the Cavils about the Turn of the Expression, the Elegance of the Style, and the like, the Learned now dispute only about the Truth of the Game. (Tatler No 1, Tuesday, April 12, 1709).
Spectator and coffeehouse culture

- By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the coffeehouse had become a disreputable place associated with the degradation of discourse (scandal, newsmongering, gossip)
- The Spectator intervenes to rehabilitate the public sphere of the coffeehouse by refocusing and changing the content and tenor of public discourse
Mr. Spectator as reformer

I shall endeavour to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality, that my Readers may, if possible, both Ways find their Account in the Speculation of the Day. ... I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee-Houses. Spectator 10 (March 12, 1711)
Spectator Community of Practice

- **Shared domain of interest**: vision of a public sphere as a forum for urbane conversation, moral reflection, temperate agreement on affairs of state
- **Joint activities**: regular publication of essays for sociable consumption in coffeehouses like Button’s as a reformed social sphere
- **Shared practices** that differentiate the *Spectator* CofP is the active championing through serial publication of the Whig social ethic of politeness to replace newsmongering (*quidnunc*) and irresponsible coffeehouse gossip with discursive decorum
18th-century discourse community

• adherence to a set of essay genre conventions that members recognize and easily identify (e.g. standard rhetorical and stylistic markers of the essay) regardless of whether they are writing a single treatise or pamphlet or contributing to a serial publication for a periodical audience;

• The material historical conditions governing the production, distribution and consumption of the periodical shape the practices of the essay discourse community
Major periodical publications in early eighteenth-century London

*The Review* (Defoe, 1704-1713)
*Tatler* (Steele, Addison, Swift, 1709-1711)
*Spectator* (Addison, Steele, Budgell, Pope, Hughes, 1710-1712, 1714)
*The Examiner* (King, Swift, Freind, Prior, Manley, Atterbury; 1710-1711)
*Guardian* (Steele, Addison, Pope, Budgell, Philips, Tickell, Garth; 1713-1715)
*Freeholder* (Addison, Dec 1715-June 1716)
*The Medley* (Oldmixon, Maynwaring, 1710-1711)
The periodical press

• Early 18\textsuperscript{th}-century serial publications were associated with the ephemeral, satirical, deeply partisan, and highly unreliable news and propaganda products of the 17\textsuperscript{th}-century civil war and Restoration crises of authority.

• The periodical was akin to the scandalous and disreputable libel, and periodical prose writers were highly suspect and controversial figures (Cowan, Mr Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere, 2004:350).
The periodical press

• As to precedency among them, whether Protestant or pagan, Flying Posts, Lying Posts, Medleys, Examiners, Plain Dealers, or what else shall stand foremost, be it to them as they merit; I leave that to justice. (Daniel Defoe, Review: Of Truth, and Freedom of the Press)

Daniel Defoe
procedure

• Corpus-based study of a target corpus [*The Spectator*] relative to a reference corpus [the broader discourse community of periodical essay writers]

• Target corpus: 212 issues of the *Spectator* (October 24, 1711—Thursday, June 26, 1712) = 293,269 words

• Reference corpus: the essays subcorpus in NEET (*Review, Examiner, Guardian, Freeholder*; essay pamphlets by Swift, Astell) except the *Spectator* essays = 440,491 words
Keyness analysis

Investigation of ‘keyness’:

• a statistical indication of the significance of the word’s **unusualness** in a target corpus relative to a reference corpus

• Positive keywords: unusually frequent

• Negative keywords: unusually infrequent
Procedure using *AntConc*

Compare

– Frequencies in target corpus
– Number of running words in target corpus
– Frequency in reference corpus
– Number of running words in reference corpus

Cross-tabulate numbers

Apply statistical measure (Ted Dunning’s Log Likelihood test)
Spectator keywords

Positive keywords
• indicate highly unusually frequent occurrences of specific items in the Spectator by comparison with the broad discourse community
• mark lexical distinctiveness of Spectator in its broader discourse community
### Spectator keywords

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<td>150</td>
<td>320.970</td>
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<td>77</td>
<td>227.146</td>
<td>Hor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>3671</td>
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</table>
Spectator keywords

• (Mr.) Spectator is the paper’s speaking persona (eidolon)
• (Mr.) Spectator is the addressee of the letters to the paper
• self-reference aligns with the impression of gravity accorded to individuality or self-hood
• authority of Mr. Spectator is reinforced within the periodical itself by multiple roles
The SPECTATOR writes often in an Elegant, often in an Argumentative, and often in a Sublime Style, with equal Success; but how would it hurt the reputed Author of that Paper to own, that of the most beautiful Pieces under his Title, he is barely the Publisher? There is nothing but what a Man really performs, can be an Honour to him; what he takes more than he ought in the Eye of the World, he loses in the Conviction of his own Heart; and a Man must lose his Consciousness, that is, his very Self, before he can rejoice in any Falshood without inward Mortification. (No. 382. Monday, May 19, 1712.)
Mr *Spectator* instructs the *reader*:

- My learned *Reader will know* very well the Reason why one of these Verses is printed in *Roman* Letter; and if he compares this Translation with the Original, will find that the three first Stanzas are rendered almost Word for Word (No. 229. Thursday, Nov. 22, 1711.)
Spectator keywords

Proper names: *Milton; Horace*

As the first Place among our English Poets is due to *Milton*; and as I have drawn more Quotations out of him than from any other, I shall enter into a regular Criticism upon his *Paradise Lost*, .... I would always be understood to write my Papers of Criticism in the Spirit which *Horace* has expressed... (No. 262, Monday, December 31, 1711).
**Spectator structural keywords**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Objectification</th>
<th>Indefinite articles ((a, an)); definite article ((the))</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situatedness</td>
<td>Prepositions ((in, of, upon))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here and now</td>
<td>\textit{is} as key verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivity</td>
<td>Quantifier \textit{several} ((several passages, several parts, several years, three several sentences))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Relative pronouns ((which\ and \textit{who}\ rather than \textit{that}))</td>
</tr>
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</table>
• This *is* to give Notice, that the SPECTATOR has taken upon him to be Visitant *of* all Boarding-Schools, [*where* young Women are educated]; and designs to proceed *in the said* Office after *the same* Manner [*that* the Visitants of Colleges do *in* the two famous Universities of this Land]. All Lovers [*who* write to the SPECTATOR], are desired to forbear one Expression [*which* *is in* most of the Letters to him, either out of Laziness, or want of Invention, and *is* true of not above two thousand Women *in* the whole World]; viz. She has *in* her all [*that* *is* valuable *in* Woman. (No. 314. Friday, February 29, 1712.)
Spectator keywords

‘d’ orthographic variant in past-tense forms (season’d), passive participles (diversify’d), adjectives (good-humour’d, short-liv’d).

• visual stylistic indicator of printing practices adopted in the production of the periodical

• marks the imprint of the same printer for the duration of the Spectator’s production (Samuel Buckley)
# Spectator Negative keywords

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<td>23</td>
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<td>1315</td>
<td>131.79</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>113.294</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1399</td>
<td>97.659</td>
<td>or</td>
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</table>
observations

• Keyword analysis reveals the *Spectator*’s main topical and thematic concerns and provides evidence for a highly interactive format and rhetorical structure.

• Keyness distinguishes the *Spectator*’s linguistic and cultural practices from the broader essay discourse community.

• The linguistic character of the *Spectator* mirrors the special historical, cultural and material conditions of its production.
The *Spectator* and identity

- Is the identity of the *Spectator* different and separate from the identities of its key components, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele?
- What is the identity—the social image and roles—ascribed to the *Spectator* as a major social force in early eighteenth-century English periodical culture?
18th-century notions of identity

• An individual’s social sense of self that can change with circumstances and alterations in the environment across time (Addison, 1711)

• Human consciousness ensures that one’s self is constant throughout the inevitable changes that shape and mark the life of an individual over time (John Locke)

• Identity—the ‘I’—was thus continuity of experienced consciousness or memory (Porter 2003: 76)
procedure

Corpus-based study of the periodicals relative to *The Spectator*

• Target corpus: the periodical essays collected in NEET (165,000 words)

• Reference corpus: the *Spectator* essays (293,269 words)
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<td>67.679</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>65.596</td>
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</table>
Periodical press keywords

• Prevalence of 3rd person pronoun *they, their* marks concern with external events and actors
• secular national matters (*people, nation, kingdom, England, country*)
• religious matters (*clergy, church, religion*)
• the monarchy (*king, majesty, kingdom, queen, subjects*)
• government (*ministry, parliament, power*)
• politics (*rebellion, trade, party, treaty*)
This Day having been set apart by Publick Authority, to raise in us an Abhorrence of the Great Rebellion, which involved this Nation in so many Calamities, and ended in the Murder of their Soveraign; it may not be unseasonable to shew the Guilt of Rebellion in general, and of that Rebellion in particular which is stirred up against His present Majesty.

That Rebellion is one of the most hainous Crimes which it is in the Power of Man to commit, may appear from several Considerations. First, As it destroys the End of all Government, and the Benefits of Civil Society. Government was instituted for maintaining the Peace, Safety, and Happiness of a People.

(Freeholder XII, Monday, Jan 30, 1716; [aess007])
Addison and the Freeholder

- Launched in January 1716 to express support for George I against the Tories in the aftermath of the Jacobite rising in the autumn of 1715.
- ‘The design of the whole work has been to free the people’s minds from these prejudices conveyed into them, by the enemies of the present establishment, against the king and Royal family; by opening and explaining their real characters.’
The periodical press vs. *Spectator*

- Addison’s *Freeholder* (as an example of the periodical press) has a clearly party political and partisan project
- Radical contrast with the more generally cultural reformist agenda of the *Spectator*.
- The identity of the *Spectator* is markedly separate from the identities of its individual writers
observations

• The *Spectator* coalition includes men who pursued other projects and business relationships outside the *Spectator* project.

• The coalition occupies a place in and subscribes to the values of the periodical discourse community as a whole.

• The *Spectator* coalition produces a remarkably coherent and focused periodical.
observations

• Social networks and discourse communities are dynamic social structures as products of specific historical and material circumstances.

• Individuals (Addison) may participate in different projects as a function of different strategic alliances.

• Individuals exhibit practices and develop resources in line with the shared domains of activity.
Relationships among concepts

Social ties connecting individuals in multiple contexts

Individuals engaged in joint enterprise, sharing negotiated practices

SC members may also participate in discourse communities (e.g. academic writers; tabloid journalists)
Periodical discourse community

**Spectator Coalition (1711-1712)**

- Buckley
- Lillie
- Baldwin
- Tonson
- Steele
- Joseph Addison
- Swift
- Pope
- Prior
- LMWM
- Congreve
- Wortley
- Freind
- Defoe
- Manley

**Addison social network**
Joseph Addison and his circle c. 1711

- Joseph Addison
- Richard Steele
- Alexander Pope
- Jonathan Swift
- Matthew Prior
- Sarah Churchill
- Edward Wortley
- Lady M W Montagu
- Charles Montagu
- William Congreve
- Delariviere Manley
- Mary Astell
Selected references: social networks

http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/methods/publications/snacourse/snacourseweb.html#menutable
ESRC Introduction to Social Networks Analysis


Selected references: other terms


Selected other references

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http://www.londonlives.org

http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/atlas/index.jsp

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