

Title: The substance of style: Gender, social class and interactional stance in /s/-fronting in southeast England

Abstract: This paper proposes an empirical method for the quantitative analysis of stance-taking in interaction. Building on recent conceptualisations of stance as the primary building-block of variation in language style, we describe how to implement an analysis of stance within a variationist framework via an examination of the particular speech activities within which stances are embedded (Kiesling 2009) combined with a consideration of the specific interactional goals these activities achieve (Brown & Levinson 1987). We illustrate our proposals with an investigation of variation in /s/-quality in the speech of cast members from two British reality television programmes. Examining nearly 2000 tokens of /s/ in over 6 hours of recorded speech, we demonstrate how different acoustic realisations of /s/ in the sample correlate with the level of “threat” of a given speech activity, and we argue that this interactionally-based analysis provides a better explanatory account of the patterns in our data than an analysis based on large social categories would. Through this paper, we therefore hope to contribute not only to the development of a more robust method for examining stance in quantitative sociolinguistic research, but also to help clarify the relationship between stances, speech activities and speaker identities more broadly.

Keywords: style, stance, stance accretion, language variation, /s/-fronting, southeast England

Running Title: The substance of style

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1 Introduction

2 The study of stylistic variation, or patterns of intra-speaker variation in language use that are
3 correlated with shifts in audience, topic and/or context, has a long history in sociolinguistic
4 theorizing (e.g., Bell 1984; Bell 2001; Eckert & Rickford 2001; Coupland 2007). In this time,
5 researchers have moved from an understanding of style as a relatively fixed attribute of
6 speech situations (as defined by audience, formality, etc.) to one in which style is viewed as a
7 semiotic tool with which speakers can enact dynamic representations of self within particular
8 interactional contexts (e.g., Bucholtz 2009; Eckert 2012). The reconceptualisation of style in
9 this manner has pushed us to move beyond treating style as an explanation for variable
10 linguistic practice (i.e., speaker X uses style Y because she is in situation Z; Coupland 2007)
11 to asking what function the use of a style performs for a speaker at a given moment (i.e., *why*
12 *that, in that way, right now?*; Schegloff & Sacks 1973; see also Woolard 2008). Addressing
13 this question requires us to dig beneath the surface of the different styles we observe in order
14 to identify their component parts and, in so doing, understand how “variation is made
15 meaningful, and embedded, in social interaction” (Coupland 2007: 178).

16 Kiesling (2009) has argued that this empirical goal can be achieved by couching our
17 analyses of language style within a framework of stance-taking, or an examination of the
18 linguistic strategies speakers use to construct orientations to the content of their talk, and to
19 the more durable identities and activities indexed through that talk (Du Bois 2007; Jaffe
20 2009). Kiesling’s arguments in this regard are premised on the notion that “styles” essentially
21 represent ways of speaking associated with particular types of activities (and with the types of
22 people who most often engage in those activities). Thus, in Kiesling’s view, a “formal” or
23 “working-class” style actually refers to the type of speech indexically associated with
24 engaging in “formal” or “working-class” practices (see also Ochs 1992). He goes on to argue
25 that these styles/speech activities are comprised of a regular and coordinated *repertoire of*

1 *stances*, which serve to give these styles their indexical force. In other words, Kiesling claims
2 that the reason specific activities are associated with particular speech styles is because
3 engaging in those activities involves adopting a specific set of coordinated stances, and that it
4 is the adoption of these stances that the relevant speech style serves to index. Stance, for
5 Kiesling, is thus the basic building-block of stylistic variation.

6 Kiesling's conceptualisation of style as stance provides us with a powerful theoretical
7 framework for modelling how stylistic variation accrues social meaning that speakers can
8 then subsequently recruit when making interactional moves. Nevertheless, and as Kiesling
9 notes, this conceptualisation brings with it various methodological difficulties. Paramount
10 among these is the issue of how to integrate an analysis of stance into the structural confines
11 of quantitative sociolinguistics. While it is fairly straightforward to devise an exhaustive list
12 of stylistic attributes potentially at play in a dataset, "there is no single list of stances and
13 even one stance can be slightly different for different people" (Kiesling 2009: 173). This is a
14 problem for a variationist stance analysis, given the method's reliance on the establishment of
15 objective investigative parameters that are comparable across speakers. In this paper, we aim
16 to contribute to the development of a quantitative approach to stance that balances a
17 conceptualisation of stance as a dynamic and emergent property of interactions with the
18 exigencies of variationist methods. We do so by building on Kiesling's (2009) own proposal
19 to code for stance indirectly by focusing on the (relatively objective and comparable) list of
20 *speech activities* in which speakers engage. We enhance Kiesling's suggested approach by
21 introducing additional parameters derived from Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of
22 politeness so as to more fully represent the interactional dynamic at play in our data.

23 In the remainder of this paper, we illustrate our proposed method with an interactional
24 analysis of /s/-fronting in the speech of cast members from two British reality television
25 programmes. We begin in the next section with a brief summary of research on variation in

1 /s/-quality as a sociolinguistic feature, before introducing the details of our corpus and the
2 results of a previous analysis that examined the distribution of /s/-fronting across broad social
3 categories (Levon and Holmes-Elliott 2013). We then lay out the limitations of the category-
4 based interpretations and outline our method for a more detailed interactional investigation.
5 We conclude by presenting the results of this interactional analysis, along with a brief
6 discussion of their wider implications.

7

8 2 Background

9 2.1 Sibilant variation, gender and social class

10 We focus in this paper on a sociophonetic study of /s/-variation as it is correlated with social
11 class, gender and conversational context, and how these patterns can be further understood
12 within a larger interactional framework. Previous research has demonstrated that the
13 differences in the articulatory and acoustic properties of male and female /s/ productions are
14 often of a degree that cannot be accounted for by physiological factors alone (Flipsen et al.
15 1999; Munson 2007; Fuchs & Toda 2010). These findings suggest that, in some
16 communities, speakers make strategic use of variation in /s/ production to achieve particular
17 sociolinguistic goals (e.g., to index gender). Recent studies have further indicated that the
18 indexical associations of /s/ can extend beyond gender to interact with additional social
19 categories; for instance, ethnicity (Pharao et al. 2014) and social class (Stuart-Smith 2007).

20 In articulatory terms, the voiceless alveolar sibilant /s/ is produced by bringing the
21 tongue up towards the alveolar ridge, enough to impede air-flow without stopping it. The
22 result is a strident sibilant fricative achieved through accelerated air-flow passing through the
23 front cavity of the oral tract and over the front teeth (Heffernan 2004: 74). The articulation of
24 /s/ is variable along a front-to-back cline: /s/ can be produced with a fronter, more dental
25 articulation, or a backer, more post-alveolar articulation, where the resultant /s/ may be more

1 auditorily [ʃ]-like (Catford 1988: 86). This variation has been correlated with a range of
2 acoustic properties and a number of different measures have been employed to examine the
3 feature. Spectral peak and spectral moments analysis (e.g. centre of gravity; standard
4 deviation; spectral skew; and kurtosis) are most commonly associated with the analysis of
5 variable /s/-quality (Linville 1998; Flipsen et al. 1999; Jongman et al. 2000; Stuart-Smith
6 2007; Munson 2007; Körkkö 2015).

7 In the present analysis we adopt spectral peak as the measure of /s/-variability.
8 Spectral peak measures represent the frequency (in Hertz) at which the /s/ frication noise
9 exhibits the greatest energy (as measured by spectral amplitude). Hughes and Halle (1956)
10 demonstrated that peak frequency is inversely related to the length of the front cavity, (the
11 space in front of the point of impeded air-flow) such that shorter front cavities result in higher
12 peak frequencies while longer front cavities result in lower peak frequencies. Degree of /s/-
13 fronting in articulation can therefore be measured acoustically by peak frequency, with more
14 fronted tokens of /s/ associated with higher peak frequency values (Stevens 1998; Jongman,
15 et al. 2000). Due to the tendency for women, on average, to have smaller vocal tracts than
16 men, it generally follows that they also have higher average peak frequencies for sibilant
17 articulation. This phonetic generalization has been borne out by a number of studies on the
18 acoustics of /s/ (e.g., Schwartz 1968; Johnson 1991; Flipsen et al. 1999; Jongman, Wayland
19 and Wong 2000).

20 However, as touched upon previously, many studies have reported differences
21 between male and female /s/ values that are greater than those predicted by anatomical factors
22 alone; /s/ provides a resource through which speakers may index aspects of their gender.
23 Research has further demonstrated that the sociophonetics of /s/ are not limited to gender and
24 the variable patterning of /s/ has been shown to correlate with additional social categories.
25 For example, in Stuart-Smith's (2007) analysis of /s/ in Glasgow she found that all speakers

1 showed consistent gender patterning, with women's peak frequency values on average 2500
2 Hz higher than men's. This pattern broke down, however, among younger working-class
3 women, whose peak frequencies were significantly lower than the other women's and non-
4 significantly differentiated from the men's. Stuart-Smith interprets this pattern as evidence of
5 how young working-class women in Glasgow use variation in /s/ production to 'distance'
6 themselves from their middle-class counterparts. According to this account, /s/-variation
7 carries both gendered and class-based meaning and may therefore be recruited by speakers in
8 the strategic construction of identity.

9

10 2.2 /s/ in Southeast England

11 The results of studies such as Stuart-Smith's provided the context and motivation for our
12 initial exploration of /s/-variation in southeast England. Specifically, we sought to investigate
13 the extent to which this variation may be constrained by gender and/or social class. To do
14 this, we examined patterns of /s/ variation across two British reality television shows, which
15 we use as a proxy for social class:

- 16 • *The Only Way is Essex* (TOWIE), based in Essex in the suburbs east of London. This
17 show represents a more traditional working-class, East End, Cockney accent; and
- 18 • *Made in Chelsea* (MIC), based in the hyper-affluent district of Chelsea in west
19 London. This show represents an upper middle-class Standard Southern British accent
20 (not unlike Received Pronunciation).

21 Both shows are so-called "engineered reality" television programmes that follow a group of
22 twenty-somethings in their day-to-day lives. While the scenarios on the shows are
23 (obviously) staged, the interactions between cast members are not scripted, and the cast
24 engage in spontaneous, naturally occurring speech. However, it is important to note that, as

1 with any data collected via this method, a number of caveats relating to its validity are
2 pertinent.

3 Foremost among these is the issue of representativity, both in terms of the
4 communities and social categories we make inferences about, and also in terms of the extent
5 to which the corpora accurately reflect interactions typical of the respective communities. In
6 reference to the issue of the communities themselves, we do not claim that the members of
7 the cast of either TOWIE or MIC are necessarily representative of speakers from Essex or
8 Chelsea generally, or even all Essex or Chelsea speakers of a particular age, gender, level of
9 education or socioeconomic status, etc. However, we do suggest that analysing data from
10 these speakers is instructive with regards to our research objectives: an investigation of class
11 and gender in southeast England.

12 In both shows aspects of gender and class are not only highly visible but the central
13 driving mechanisms of the narratives. The primary focus of both shows is relationships, both
14 romantic and platonic, and how these dramatically intersect. The shows are vastly
15 heterosexual (there is one openly gay male in TOWIE and one bisexual male in MIC¹, both
16 of whom did not feature in our corpus). In this sense the shows provide good examples of the
17 Eckert's (2011: 85) broader "heterosexual market" where "gender and sexuality are not so
18 much individual properties as social arrangements, and the relation between either of them
19 and sociolinguistic variation lies in the dynamics that unfold in those social arrangements".

20 In order to frame the interpersonal drama, both programmes rely on a series of staged
21 activities. The specific pursuits are almost invariably stereotypes of British class-based
22 behaviours. For instance, the Chelsea men are filmed shooting, rowing and playing polo,
23 meanwhile the women ride horses, attend fashion premieres and shop in high-end boutiques.

¹ This is the case for the first 2 seasons of TOWIE and MIC, the cast of participants has since changed for both shows.

1 In contrast, the TOWIE men box, play football and manage nightclubs while the women run
2 salons and go clubbing. Clearly, both shows have been designed in order to promote
3 heightened gendered and class-based behaviours among the cast members. While we concede
4 that this may reduce the generalisability of our results to the wider population, these extreme
5 presentations would suggest that if there are in fact gender- and class-based patterns of
6 variation to be found, this data would be a likely place to uncover them. Indeed, stereotypes
7 such as the Chelsea based ‘Sloan Ranger’ or the ‘Essex Girl’ are evidence of the
8 *enregisterment* of these communities (e.g. Johnstone, Andrus and Danielson 2006: 78). The
9 availability of these stereotypes, and their associated behaviours, makes them ripe for
10 commodification through so-called ‘reality’ television. The participants are equipped with the
11 resources necessary to embody the enregistered personae, and ‘perform’ a stylised dialect,
12 while the audience knows enough in order to recognise and decode these cues.

13 The second issue of representation relates to the nature of the actual speech data. A
14 valid criticism of the data could be that, due to the presence of the cameras and the artificial
15 staging of the activities, the style of speech elicited is performative, stylised and unnatural.
16 However, as observed by Schilling-Estes (1998), to some extent speech is always self-
17 conscious and performative. We therefore suggest that although the data may be highly
18 performative this does not undermine its classification as naturally-occurring speech.
19 Furthermore, the fact that all speakers were subject to the same level of artificiality helps to
20 mitigate any interpretive problems we may encounter. While the data we analyse may not
21 represent the full range of the speakers’ sociolinguistic and stylistic repertoires, the consistent
22 artificiality of context does at least provide a level of control.

23 One final issue, and one that we cannot readily discount, is how the selective editing
24 of the show may affect the variability and the spread of types of speech acts which feature in
25 the final cut. This issue is particularly relevant for our distributional analysis of speech

1 activity types (see below) as they occur across different speech contexts (i.e. mixed or single-
2 sex talk). Crucially, this means that we cannot, for instance, make a claim that women engage
3 in x-type of speech activity more than men, or more when they talk to men compared to when
4 they talk to women as this could be an artefact of how the show was edited. There may, for
5 instance, have been a conscious decision on the part of the shows' producers to include more
6 confrontational exchanges between men and women as compared to in women-only
7 situations. While this means we cannot necessarily make inferences about the interactional
8 character of mixed versus single-sex talk, performing an interactional analysis will still
9 enable us to examine how /s/-variation patterns across the unfolding discourse and the
10 interaction types more generally.

11 With these caveats in mind, our analyses of /s/-variation are based on the speech of
12 central cast members in both shows. In total, we extracted 88 usable scenes from the first two
13 seasons of both programmes (approximately 6.5 hours of recorded speech) involving 24
14 different speakers (9 men and 15 women). Scenes were taken from high definition
15 downloaded files of the programmes and were only selected if they did not contain any music
16 or other background noise. The recordings were transcribed and then processed via automatic
17 segmentation using the University of Pennsylvania's Forced Alignment and Vowel
18 Extraction (FAVE) suite (Rosenfelder et al. 2011). As it has been shown to correlate well
19 with the front-back dimension of /s/ quality (see above), acoustic measures of peak frequency
20 were calculated automatically from time averaged spectra using Praat (a proportion were then
21 also hand-checked). This resulted in a corpus of 1,988 /s/ tokens of for analysis. The tokens
22 were coded for a number of both social and linguistic factors based on previous analyses of
23 /s/. In order to control for phonetic effects, the preceding and following phonetic contexts
24 received detailed phonetic codes which were collapsed into broader categories during the
25 analysis. Tokens were also coded for stress (stressed or unstressed) and duration. Finally,

1 tokens were also coded for show (MIC or TOWIE, which we use as an approximation of
 2 social class), speaker sex (female, male) and speech context (i.e. whether the speech took
 3 place in a mixed- or single sex group).

4 The data were analyzed via linear mixed-effects regression models in R (with Speaker
 5 and Word included as random factors). Analyses were stepped down from full models that
 6 included all factors and interactions. The best model demonstrated that the external factors
 7 gender and show (i.e., class) were the most prominent factors to constrain /s/-variation and
 8 far out-weighed any linguistic constraints. Further, these analyses demonstrated a significant
 9 interaction between gender and show, indicating that speakers in TOWIE versus MIC treat
 10 /s/-variation somewhat differently.

11

Table 1. Significant constraints on /s/ variation in MIC as reported in Levon & Holmes-Elliott (2013).

Fixed Effects	Estimate	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	p-value
(Intercept)	6663.2	211.6	31.45	0.000
Sex (male)	-1232.5	301.4	-4.09	0.001
Context (single-sex)	-391.6	190.0	-2.06	0.038
Following (pause)	216.2	207.8	1.04	0.299
Following (round C)	-1557.9	341.4	-4.56	0.000
Following (V)	370.7	126.4	2.93	0.004
Sex : Context	-181.1	242.5	-0.75	0.455

Number of observations: 756; Groups: Speaker (12), Word (237); Log likelihood: -6578.23

12

13 Table 1 presents the results of our analysis of /s/-variation among MIC speakers only. There,
 14 we see that there is a significant effect of speaker sex ($p = .001$), with men predicted to have
 15 peak frequency values over 1200 Hz lower than women. A difference of 1200 Hz is
 16 comparable to differences in /s/ peak frequencies across sexes that have been reported
 17 previously in the literature, and can be taken as indicative of both physiological differences
 18 between female and male speakers and an additional “gender effect” whereby women and

1 men exaggerate sex-based differences in creating gendered articulations of /s/ (e.g. Fuchs and
 2 Toda 2010). Importantly, this difference of 1200 Hz among MIC speakers is consistent
 3 across single- and mixed-sex talk, as evidenced by the lack of a significant interaction
 4 between gender and speech context ($p = 0.455$). Instead, we find an independent main effect
 5 of speech context, such that all MIC speakers (i.e., both women and men) produce
 6 significantly backer articulations of /s/ in single-sex, as compared to mixed-sex, talk ($p =$
 7 0.038).

8
 Table 2. Significant constraints on /s/ variation in TOWIE as reported in Levon & Holmes-Elliott (2013).

Fixed Effects	Estimate	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	p-value
(Intercept)	6327.9	198.8	31.84	0.000
Sex (MALE)	-1580.5	269.4	-5.87	0.000
Context (SINGLE-SEX)	597.9	269.4	3.31	0.001
Following (PAUSE)	152.1	245.1	0.62	0.535
Following (ROUND C)	-369.3	327.8	-1.13	0.260
Following (V)	385.3	131.0	2.94	0.005
Sex : Context	-711.4	250.1	-2.85	0.005

Number of observations: 1242; Groups: Speaker (12), Word (284); Log likelihood: -11193.84

9
 10 Results for /s/-variation in TOWIE are somewhat different than what we find in MIC
 11 (see Table 2). Among TOWIE speakers, we once again find a sex effect, with TOWIE men
 12 predicted to have peak frequency values nearly 1600 Hz lower than TOWIE women ($p =$
 13 0.000). Unlike in MIC, however, the TOWIE sex effect is conditioned by a significant
 14 interaction with speech context ($p = 0.005$). Pairwise comparisons indicate that this
 15 interaction effect is driven entirely by TOWIE women. In mixed-sex talk, TOWIE women
 16 have observed average peak frequency values just over 2200 Hz higher than the TOWIE
 17 men's. In single-sex talk, in contrast, TOWIE women have observed average peak frequency
 18 values over 3300 Hz higher than those of TOWIE men, a fifty percent increase compared to

1 the difference among TOWIE speakers in mixed-sex talk and almost double the difference
2 found in MIC. As already noted, this increase is driven entirely by the TOWIE women.
3 Among TOWIE men, we find no differentiation across speech contexts, with roughly the
4 same peak frequency values in mixed and single-sex talk (4920 Hz versus 4961 Hz,
5 respectively). TOWIE women, in contrast, show an increase in observed average peak
6 frequency values from 7135 Hz in mixed-sex to 8116 Hz in single-sex contexts. This increase
7 indicates that TOWIE women produce significantly fronter articulations of /s/ when speaking
8 to other TOWIE women, as compared to when speaking to TOWIE men.

9 In an earlier discussion of these aggregate findings (Levon and Holmes-Elliott 2013),
10 we argued that the results suggest that /s/-variation is used strategically by both MIC and
11 TOWIE speakers, though in decidedly different ways. In the MIC data, we find two
12 independent patterns: a consistent differentiation of /s/ quality by speech context, whereby
13 single-sex talk is associated with backer articulations of /s/ than mixed-sex talk; and a
14 significant differentiation by speaker sex, where MIC men produce backer articulations of /s/
15 than MIC women. While we have no direct evidence for it, we are inclined to argue that both
16 of these patterns are indicative of strategic uses of /s/-variation. In the case of the context
17 effect, we hypothesize that there is something about the framing of single-sex talk in MIC
18 that encourages both women and men to produce backer articulations of /s/, though based on
19 the aggregate analyses discussed thus far, we are unable to comment on what that framing
20 may be. In terms of the sex effect, we follow previous research (e.g., Strand 1999; Fuchs and
21 Toda 2010) in arguing that the difference in peak frequency observed is greater than would
22 be expected from a purely anatomically-based account, and thus lends initial support for the
23 notion that MIC speakers use /s/ to help construct gendered presentations of self. That /s/ can
24 do such gendered work is more strongly supported by our findings among TOWIE speakers,
25 where we find a significant interaction between gender and speech context. We have argued

1 previously (Levon and Holmes-Elliott 2013) that the TOWIE women's use of significantly
2 frontier articulations of /s/ in single-sex talk is part of the way in which they construct class-
3 based formulations of femininity. While this interpretation allows us to account for the
4 findings presented in Table 2, it does not provide with a complete understanding of why it is
5 that /s/-variation can fulfil this function. Overall then, the broad categorical analysis of /s/
6 among MIC and TOWIE speakers summarized above allows us to identify potentially
7 interesting patterns, but falls short of providing us with the empirical information necessary
8 for coming to a robust interpretation. For this reason, in this paper we augment our earlier
9 analysis with one that examines /s/-variation within the specific discourse in which it occurs.
10 Put simply, our goal is to investigate what speakers are doing at a conversational level in
11 relation to their variable productions of /s/ so as to enable us to better understand how /s/-
12 variation participates in achieving those interactional aims, and ultimately *why* we find the
13 category-linked patterns described above.

14

15 3 Methodology for an Interactional Approach to /s/

16 3.1 Stance and speech activities

17 To help us achieve an interactional analysis of /s/-variation in our data, we adapt Kiesling's
18 approach to coding for stance and style since it provides a clear method for operationalizing
19 stance in a replicable and objective fashion. According to Kiesling's original formulation,
20 utterances are coded based on the type of speech activity they are being used to achieve.

21 Stance is not directly coded for, but is instead implicit in the speech activity coding, thus
22 helping to preserve the replicability of the schema. For example, in a series of multiparty
23 conversations recorded among a group of female co-workers in Pittsburgh, Kiesling and a
24 collaborator identify a range of distinct speech activities in which the women engage. These
25 included "commiserating", or "alignment with other speakers but expertise not asserted";

1 “questioning”, or “alignment of other as expert, requests for advice, and admissions of
2 uncertainty”; and “gossiping”, or “evaluative talk about non-present others” (Kiesling
3 2009:182-3). Kiesling finds that these different activities are indeed associated with different
4 patterns of language use (e.g., variable /aw/-monophthongization and /l/-vocalization) and
5 argues that the reason for this is grounded in the different sets of stances each of these
6 activities is associated with. Ultimately, Kiesling identified too many different speech
7 activities to allow for a robust quantitative examination across all of them. He therefore
8 collapses these activities into larger “activity type” categories, where each activity type
9 represents the basic ends (or goals; e.g., Hymes 1974) of the activities in question (see Figure
10 1). Kiesling identifies three basic speech activity types: *social activities*, which include
11 “commiserating”, “gossiping” and “joking”; *information activities*, which include
12 “questioning” and “information sharing”; and *discourse management activities*, which
13 including (speech) facilitation and discussion of the local speech context. Like the speech
14 activities he identified previously, Kiesling also finds strong correlations between these
15 activity types and patterns of variable language use.

16

17 [INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

18 Figure 1. Kiesling’s (2009) interactional coding scheme for speech activities

19

20 Like Kiesling, we also use “speech activity” as our primary methodological construct,
21 and code all 1,988 tokens of /s/ in our dataset according to the speech activity type in which
22 they occur. Due to the interactional nature of our data, we were forced to modify Kiesling’s
23 schema in two ways. First, we created additional categories of speech activities in order to
24 accommodate certain elements of conflict/confrontation and elevated levels of personal
25 disclosure in the interactions we examine. These new activities include “expert direction”, for

1 situations in which speakers instruct interlocutors how to perform a particular action of
2 activity; “alignment”, or talk that simply serves to build social solidarity in a given
3 interaction; and two activity categories for speech during situations of interactional conflict or
4 confrontation: “challenge/confrontation”, to represent the behaviour of the challenger, and
5 “hedging” for a speaker’s attempts to justify prior behaviour in response to a challenge. After
6 having added these additional speech activity categories, we also came to realise that we
7 needed a more nuanced division between the large activity types, i.e., one that went beyond
8 Kiesling’s original three-way split between discourse management, informational and social
9 activities. We therefore also added an extra pragmatic aspect to the schema, which ranks
10 speech activities along two pragmatic dimensions based on Brown and Levinson’s (1987: 61)
11 theory of “face-threat”. Our modifications to Kiesling’s schema are represented schematically
12 in Figure 2 and described in more detail below.

13

14 [INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

15 Figure 2. Schematic representation of our interactional coding scheme. Modifications to
16 Kiesling’s (2009) original schema are in boldface.

17

18 3.2 Details of the Modified Scheme: Face-Threat

19 Apart from the addition of four new speech activity categories, our main modification to
20 Kiesling’s approach is the introduction of the pragmatic dimension of face-threat to our
21 approach. *Face* refers to a person’s presentation of self: “the public self-image that every
22 member wants to claim for himself, consisting of two related aspects, *negative face*: the basic
23 claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction i.e. freedom from imposition
24 ... [and] *positive face*: the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’” (Brown &
25 Levinson 1987: 61). Face-threat, therefore, involves the potential for a speech act to damage

1 an interlocutor's preservation of a positive public image. In order to calculate the force or
2 "weightiness" of potential face-threat, Brown and Levinson (1987:74-7) identify three crucial
3 factors: (1) social distance between interlocutors, (2) relative pragmatic power, and (3)
4 ranking of the imposition implied by the speech act. For our data, as all the interlocutors are
5 well-acquainted and the interactions casual and informal, social distance was not relevant.
6 However, we incorporate the other two factors, *degree of imposition* and *relative power*, in
7 our coding.

8 So that it was possible to generate statistically robust measures, we aggregated the
9 fully articulated speech activity categories (i.e., the 18 categories listed in Figure 2) into a
10 three-way distinction by broader activity type. Borrowing from Kiesling, we used a *discourse*
11 *management* versus *informational* versus *social* speech activity distinction. This distinction
12 correlates with Brown and Levinson's (1987: 77) notion of degrees of imposition: as face is a
13 social construct, it follows that speech activities with primarily social goals pose a higher
14 threat to face than an informational exchange, which in turn poses more threat than the
15 relatively neutral discourse management category. The second, related, modification in our
16 scheme allows us to incorporate Brown and Levinson's (1987) *pragmatic power* factor. In
17 order to understand what this dimension captures, it is necessary to return to the new speech
18 activity categories we identified at work in our data. As mentioned already, due to the nature
19 of the shows in our corpus, we needed to devise a number of new speech activity codes to
20 cover disagreements of various types. However, we realised that new categories became
21 masked once the more detailed coding categories were collapsed into the broader three-way
22 split. For example, maintaining Kiesling's original three-way distinction would have meant
23 that exchanges which involved *challenges and confrontations* as in (1) and (2), would have
24 been coded as possessing the same degree of potential face-threat as Rosie's *alignment*, and
25 Amber's *personal evaluation* in (3).

1

2 (1) *Well you're obviously seeing someone so just leave me alone don't talk to me again*
3 *and when I'm out talking to people don't start giving it to me* (Amy, TOWIE:3)

4 (2) *Hate you so much James, just fucked up my life so much* (Lydia, TOWIE:27)

5 (3) Amber: *I love this Mimi coat*

6 Rosie: *oh it's so nice*

7 Amber: *so cute isn't it?*

8 Rosie: *yeah I love the detail* (Rosie & Amber, MIC:1)

9

10 From a pragmatic perspective, the different speech activities in (1)-(3) involve different
11 levels of face-threat. Here, challenges and confrontations possess a high level of potential
12 threat, while alignment and personal evaluation possess a relatively low level. However, in
13 the original coding scheme with just a three-way distinction between activity type, this
14 pragmatic difference is lost. The distinct levels of pragmatic power at work in our data can be
15 further illustrated through a comparison of a *gossip* activity in (4) with a *personal disclosure*
16 in (5).

17

18 (4) *It was so funny right, he was like "I love this girl so much" and everyone was like*
19 *"aw" and I was like "oh my gosh, Mark is being really emotional" and he was like "I*
20 *really love her, I've shagged glamour models in Miami" and I was like "oh Mark's*
21 *back in the room"* (Lydia, TOWIE:32)

22 (5) *They turned round and they said, erm, we've heard that, that James has got with*
23 *another girl* (Lydia, TOWIE:34)

24

1 The operative difference between (4) and (5) is that in gossip, the interlocutors are revealing
2 something about, or discussing, a non-present third party, as (4) shows when Lydia is talking
3 about Mark. During personal disclosure, however, what is revealed is about the speaker
4 herself and often relates to something they do not necessarily want to divulge. This is the case
5 in (5), for example, where Lydia is confiding to her mother that she has heard rumours that
6 her boyfriend, James, has been unfaithful. In order to capture the distinction between these
7 different types of activities (e.g., confrontation as compared to alignment or gossip as
8 compared to personal disclosure), we implement an additional two-way distinction between
9 those activity types in which pragmatic “power” is immediately at issue in the interactional
10 context and those where it is not (or is to a lesser degree). We refer to those speech activities
11 in which power differentials play an important role as “threatening” activities and those for
12 which it does not as “non-threatening”. With the introduction of the threatening/non-
13 threatening divide, our modified coding scheme identifies five different activities types for
14 analysis, as depicted in Figure 2. (See the Appendix for examples of the fully articulated
15 model).

16

17 4 Interactional Findings

18 The 1,988 tokens of /s/ analyzed previously were coded according to the speech activity
19 based coding scheme described above. New linear mixed-effects regression models were then
20 built (in R) to examine the effect, if any, of speech activity on observe peak frequency values.
21 As before, these models were stepped down from full models that included all interactions of
22 both preceding and following phonological environment, Show (MIC or TOWIE) and Sex,
23 with Speaker and Word as random effects. An initial examination of the data revealed that
24 tokens of individual speech activities were not evenly distributed across speech contexts, thus
25 precluding our ability to include both Speech Activity (Discourse Management; Information

1 Non-Threatening, Information Threatening, Social Non-Threatening and Social Threatening)
 2 and Speech Context (Mixed-Sex, Single-Sex) as predictors in the same model. To overcome
 3 this, we chose to include Speech Activity in our regression analyses, and to then verify our
 4 findings by replicating our analyses on mixed-sex and single-sex tokens separately. In all
 5 cases, regression results were perfectly replicated in both speech contexts. For this reason, we
 6 describe our results for both speech contexts together. We return to the issue of the uneven
 7 distribution of speech activity types across contexts in our discussion below.

8
 Table 3. Interactional analysis of /s/ variation in MIC.

Fixed Effects	Estimate	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	p-value
(Intercept)	7382.01	550.94	13.35	0.000
Sex (MALE)	-2504.2	664.19	-3.74	0.000
Activity (INFO.NT)	-48.07	622.39	-0.07	0.946
Activity (INFO.T)	-1141.3	611.49	-1.86	0.064
Activity (SOCIAL.NT)	-933.83	529.28	-1.76	0.079
Activity (SOCIAL.T)	-917.17	539.36	-1.69	0.091
Following (PAUSE)	245.84	207.97	1.27	0.201
Following (ROUND C)	-1607.98	341.45	-4.702	0.000
Following (V)	373.25	123.58	3.02	0.000
Sex : Activity (INFO.NT)	562.13	741.2	0.754	0.451
Sex : Activity (INFO.T)	1688.05	761.31	2.217	0.027
Sex : Activity (SOCIAL.NT)	1242.26	642.65	1.955	0.043
Sex : Activity (SOCIAL.T)	1205.91	645.35	1.968	0.042

Number of observations: 756; Groups: Speaker (12), Word (237); Log likelihood: -6535.81

9
 10 As in the aggregate, group-based findings outlined above (see Tables 1 and 2; see also
 11 Levon and Holmes-Elliott 2013), the results of the interactional analysis reveal that variation
 12 in /s/ peak frequency values is primarily conditioned by external, social factors. Specifically,
 13 analyses demonstrate that /s/-variation is constrained by a complex three-way interaction
 14 between show, sex and speech activity. For ease of presentation, we consider the results for
 15 each show separately before turning to a more general discussion of all of our findings. Table
 16 3 presents regression results for the interactional analysis of /s/-variation in MIC. There we

1 see that, as before, men have significantly backer articulations of /s/ across-the-board ($F_{(1, 14.38)} = 22.36, p < 0.000$). We also find an additional significant interaction between speaker
2 sex and speech activity ($F_{(4, 738.73)} = 2.51, p = 0.04$). This interaction is depicted graphically in
3 Figure 3, with black bars representing average peak frequency values for women and grey
4 bars for men. We see in Figure 3 that men do not vary /s/ peak frequencies greatly across
5 speech activities, with average peak values of between 5000-5500 Hz across speech types.
6 Women, in contrast, show a wider range, with average peak values going from a high of
7 nearly 8000 Hz when engaged in discourse management speech, to a low of 6400 Hz when
8 engaged in social speech activities. This observation is confirmed by within-group analyses
9 of the effect of speech activity among women and men separately, which demonstrate that
10 speech activity is not a significant constraint on men's peak frequency values ($F_{(4,315.84)} =$
11 $0.771, p = 0.545$) though it is for the women's ($F_{(4,403.68)} = 2.679, p = 0.031$).

13

14 [INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

Figure 3. /s/ peak frequencies in MIC across speech activities.

15

16 Subsequent pairwise comparisons of the MIC women's data, moreover, indicate that
17 the operative difference among speech activities (indicated by the dashed line in Figure 3) is
18 between discourse management and non-threatening information activities, on one hand, and
19 threatening information and both threatening and non-threatening social activities, on the
20 other. In other words, there is no significant difference in /s/ peak frequency values for MIC
21 women when they are engaged in discourse management as compared to when they are
22 transmitting non-threatening information (with average values of 7996 Hz and 7218 Hz,
23 respectively). In contrast, MIC women produce significantly backer articulations of /s/ when
24 transmitting threatening information (6309 Hz), and when engaged in both non-threatening
25 (6515 Hz) and threatening (6449 Hz) social activities. This finding is important because it

1 appears to indicate that MIC women associate different /s/ qualities with distinct interactional
2 goals or “ends”. When their aim in an interaction is to engage in activities like discourse
3 management or the transmission of non-threatening information, a more fronted /s/ is used.
4 Conversely, when their goal is instead to engage in more personal and/or “threatening”
5 behaviour (see discussion above), a backer /s/ is used. This seems to suggest that variation in
6 /s/ quality is itself associated with a particular indexical value, arranged primarily along a
7 continuum from less threatening (fronter /s/) to more threatening (backer /s/) speech. It may
8 also suggest that, on some level, MIC women are aware of this indexical meaning, and thus
9 recruit /s/-variation to help them achieve specific interactional goals.

10

11 [INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE]

Figure 4. Distribution of speech activities across contexts for MIC women.

12

13 We mention above that the occurrence of the different types of speech activities was
14 not evenly distributed across mixed- versus single-sex contexts. It is instructive to return to
15 this point here, and see how it relates to the findings for speech activity. Recall from the brief
16 description of our earlier aggregate findings that, in MIC, talk in single-sex contexts was
17 associated with significantly backer articulations of /s/ than talk in mixed-sex contexts. Both
18 in previous discussions of this finding (e.g., Levon and Holmes-Elliott 2013) and above, we
19 offer no interpretation of this result other than to say that it may form part of a “mixed-sex”
20 or “single-sex” style among MIC speakers. This is not a particularly satisfying interpretation,
21 as it provides no explanatory mechanism for why single-sex speech would be associated with
22 backer articulations of /s/, for example. When, however, we examine the distribution of
23 speech activities across contexts, a potential interpretation of this earlier finding emerges.
24 Figure 4 presents the distribution of speech activities (in different shades of grey) across
25 speech contexts (mixed-sex talk on the left of the plot, and single-sex talk on the right) for the

1 MIC women. In Figure 4, we see that in mixed-sex contexts 89% of the /s/ tokens we analyse
2 occur when speakers are engaged in threatening information, threatening social and non-
3 threatening social activities. In single-sex talk, in contrast, the proportion of tokens in these
4 activities increases to over 96%. What this means is that, at least in the current sample, the
5 MIC women engage in a greater proportion of “threatening” speech activities in single-sex
6 talk than they do in mixed-sex talk ($\chi^2 = 7.93$, $p = 0.007$). Since we know that these more
7 “threatening” speech activities are associated with significantly backer articulations of /s/ (cf.
8 Figure 3), the fact that these activities occur more frequently overall in single-sex talk allows
9 us to account for the earlier finding with respect to /s/-variation across contexts. Put another
10 way, the speech context effect that we identified previously falls out directly from the pattern
11 of variation across speech activities, and thus provides us with a principled explanation for
12 why it is that we find a difference in /s/ quality across mixed- versus single-sex contexts. In
13 short, that difference can be reduced to a distinction between “threatening” versus “non-
14 threatening” activities and the uneven distribution of these activities types across contexts.
15

Table 4. Interactional analysis of /s/ variation in TOWIE.

Fixed Effects	Estimate	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	p-value
(Intercept)	7141.48	269.83	26.47	0.000
Sex (MALE)	-2495.24	372.03	-6.71	0.000
Activity (INFO.NT)	425.99	436.09	0.98	0.323
Activity (INFO.T)	-11.11	430.00	-0.026	0.979
Activity (SOCIAL.NT)	-389.44	252.65	1.541	0.123
Activity (SOCIAL.T)	-881.96	264.3	-3.34	0.001
Following (PAUSE)	23.32	256.15	0.09	0.928
Following (ROUND C)	-297.89	335.91	-0.89	0.376
Following (V)	423.51	132.19	3.21	0.003
Sex : Activity (INFO.NT)	-480.04	609.83	-0.79	0.431
Sex : Activity (INFO.T)	160.02	543.09	0.295	0.768
Sex : Activity (SOCIAL.NT)	561.17	340.12	1.65	0.089
Sex : Activity (SOCIAL.T)	899.72	347.17	2.59	0.009

Number of observations: 1242; Groups: Speaker (12), Word (284); Log likelihood: -10557.1

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Turning to /s/ variation in TOWIE (see Table 4 and Figure 5), we once again find a significant interaction between speech activity and sex ($F_{(4, 1159.81)} = 2.465, p = 0.043$). As we can see in Figure 3, this interaction is a result of the fact that men's /s/ peak frequency values show no significant differentiation across speech activities ($F_{(4, 607.3)} = 0.746, p = 0.561$) whereas women's do ($F_{(4, 600.31)} = 2.615, p = 0.031$), with women's values ranging from an average of just over 6300 Hz for threatening social activities up to an average of over 7200 Hz for threatening information activities. Subsequent pairwise comparisons within the sample of TOWIE women's speech indicate that the five speech activities cluster into three significantly different groups (as indicated by the dashed grey lines in Figure 3): discourse management and both threatening and non-threatening information activities (with an average peak frequency value of 7190 Hz), non-threatening social activities (6861 Hz) and threatening social activities (6376 Hz). This pattern echoes our findings among MIC women - TOWIE women make use of progressively backer articulations of /s/ as speech activities become more inherently "threatening". Though these findings point to a slightly different subdivision of the pragmatic space than was evident among the MIC women, the observed pattern of /s/ variation among TOWIE women broadly replicates the earlier result and can be taken as indicative of a more general association between "threatening" speech and a more backed /s/ quality.

[INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE]

Figure 5. /s/ peak frequencies in TOWIE across speech activities.

As before, it is useful to consider whether this speech activity finding can help elucidate the results of our earlier aggregate analysis, in which TOWIE women were found to

1 use significantly frontier articulations of /s/ in single-sex contexts. Figure 6 presents the
2 distribution of TOWIE's women speech activities across mixed- and single-sex talk. There,
3 we see that in mixed-sex talk, the least "threatening" activities (discourse management and
4 information transmission) comprise 20% of tokens, whereas in single-sex talk that proportion
5 increases to 30%. Conversely, the most "threatening" activity (threatening social speech) is
6 involved in 54% of tokens in mixed-sex contexts, but in only 18% of tokens in single-sex
7 speech. In fact, the majority of tokens in mixed-sex conversations are of the most threatening
8 variety, whereas the same activity represents a minority of tokens in TOWIE women's single-
9 sex speech. Overall, the general pattern is one in which TOWIE women engage in more
10 "threatening" speech in mixed-sex environments than they do in single-sex ones ($\chi^2 = 89.5$, p
11 < 0.000). It is therefore the case that, once again, the speech activity results provide us with
12 an explanatory mechanism for the previously observed context effect. In short, the reason that
13 we find higher average peak frequency values among TOWIE women in single-sex contexts
14 is because there are proportionally fewer "threatening" speech activities in those contexts
15 than in mixed-sex talk, and these less "threatening" activities are themselves associated with
16 significantly higher /s/ peak frequencies. Consequently, in both TOWIE and MIC, our prior
17 suggestion that /s/ variation is linked to different contextual norms at work in single- versus
18 mixed-sex talk (Levon and Holmes-Elliott 2013; see also Takano 1998; D'Arcy &
19 Tagliamonte 2010) can now be recast in a more robust explanatory framework of variation
20 across speech activities (cf. Kiesling 2009).

21

22 [INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE]

Figure 6. Distribution of speech activities across contexts for TOWIE women.

23

24

25

1 5 Discussion

2 The primary goal of this paper has been to provide a more robust account of the indexical
3 properties of variation in /s/ quality for MIC and TOWIE speakers. We were motivated to
4 explore this issue in an effort to achieve a better understanding of the findings of our previous
5 aggregate analyses (Levon and Holmes-Elliott 2013). In that earlier work, we demonstrated
6 that /s/ quality is significantly constrained by speech context (in MIC) and by the interaction
7 of sex and speech context (in TOWIE). We were unable, however, to provide an explanation
8 for that pattern beyond claiming that fronted versus retracted /s/ may form part of a
9 contextual style, such that the norms of single-sex contexts encourage the use of backer
10 articulation of /s/ for MIC speakers and fronter articulations of /s/ for TOWIE women. While
11 it succeeds in capturing the observed patterns of variation, this interpretation does not posit a
12 theory of *why* the feature patterns as it does, nor is it able to account for the observed
13 differences between MIC and TOWIE women. We argue that in order to fill in these gaps in
14 our understanding, we need to move below the level of aggregate, group-wide patterns, and
15 explore how /s/ variation is embedded in discourse. To achieve this, we adapt Kiesling's
16 (2009) schema for the quantitative analysis of variation as a function of speech activity. We
17 suggest that this interactionally-focused analysis allows us to uncover the indexical "missing
18 link" in our previous study, and ultimately to come to a better and more comprehensive
19 understanding of what /s/ means for our speakers and, hence, why it patterns in the way it
20 does.

21 The principal finding of our interactional analyses is that, in MIC and TOWIE,
22 variation in /s/ quality is strongly correlated with the level of "threat" in a given utterance.
23 As we note above, we define levels of interactional threat according to Brown and Levinson's
24 concept of what they term the "weightiness" of a face-threatening act. For Brown and
25 Levinson, the relative amount of threat associated with a given speech act is the product of

1 three culturally-specified factors: the *social distance*, in terms of familiarity versus
2 unfamiliarity between individuals involved in the interaction; the *power relations* between
3 the individuals - whether the relations are more or less symmetrical; and the *degree of*
4 *imposition* of a given face-threatening act. Since social distance is not at issue in the sample
5 we examine here (all interactants are well-acquainted with one another and all recorded
6 interactions are familiar and informal), our coding schema focuses on differences in the
7 power relations and degree of imposition of individual speech activities. The three-way
8 division (which we borrow from Kiesling 2009) between discourse management activities,
9 information activities and social activities correlates with the relative degree of imposition of
10 different speech acts under the assumption that each of these categories represents a
11 successively more intimate or interpersonally “imposing” type of talk. Our further division
12 between threatening and non-threatening information and social activities then attempts to
13 capture Brown and Levinson’s power dimension, and to reflect the fact that certain types of
14 information/social activities are potentially “weightier” than others.

15 Overall, the results of the interactional analysis serve to validate our interpretation of
16 Brown and Levinson’s model. We demonstrate above how more threatening activities are
17 associated with backer articulations of /s/ for both MIC and TOWIE women, and show that
18 defining the level of threat of an activity requires consideration of both power relations and
19 the degree of imposition involved. We further identify differences in the way MIC versus
20 TOWIE women sub-divide the pragmatic space, with each group appearing to “weight” the
21 relative threat of speech activities somewhat differently. In MIC, women appear to divide the
22 pragmatic space into two primary types of activities: those that involve both little imposition
23 on a speaker’s face and symmetrical power relations (i.e., discourse management and non-
24 threatening social activities) versus all others. The former (less threatening) activities are
25 associated with significantly higher /s/ peak frequencies, whereas the latter (more

1 threatening) activities are associated with lower ones. For TOWIE women, the same general
2 correlation between threat and /s/ quality holds, with the only difference being the location of
3 the boundary between perceived levels of interactional threat. In comparison to the MIC
4 women, the TOWIE women's pragmatic space is more articulated and reflects a three-way
5 divide between activity types that generally involve little to no social imposition (discourse
6 management and information), those that involve social imposition but are not associated
7 with differential power relations (non-threatening social) and those that involve both social
8 imposition and asymmetric power relations (threatening social). Taken together, the results
9 for MIC and TOWIE therefore demonstrate a consistent indexical correlate for variation in /s/
10 quality across all speakers (i.e., level of threat of the speech activity) while simultaneously
11 illustrating the way in which this broader indexical pattern is implemented differently across
12 the two communities of speakers, such that what counts as a more "threatening" type of
13 speech (and hence what gets associated with backer articulations of /s/) is determined at the
14 local, culturally-specific level.

15 Our introduction of Brown and Levinson's model of threat and our focus on variation
16 across speech activities thus allows us to address the unanswered questions of our prior
17 analysis of /s/ variation in this dataset. In particular, we have shown that the reason that we
18 find significantly different /s/ qualities in mixed- versus single-sex speech is because of the
19 different distributions of the speech activity types across these contexts. For MIC women,
20 who have backer articulations of /s/ in single-sex talk, we discover that they engage in
21 significantly more threatening speech activities when speaking with other women than when
22 speaking with men. TOWIE women, in contrast, who have fronter articulations of /s/ in
23 single-sex talk, engage in fewer threatening activities with other women and significantly
24 more when speaking to other men. In both cases then, the context effect and the differences in
25 /s/ quality between MIC and TOWIE women are shown to be the direct result of similar

1 patterns of variation across speech activities. This result is important not only because it
2 provides us with a more nuanced and principled analysis of the current dataset, but also
3 because it serves to underscore the importance of examining patterns of variation beyond the
4 level of the group in order to develop an understanding of the indexical meanings of variable
5 forms. As Kiesling (2009: 172) claims, “stance is the main interactional meaning being
6 created and it is a precursor, or primitive, in sociolinguistic variation.” Our analysis of
7 variation across speech activities (which we define, following Kiesling, as fixed repertoires of
8 stances) lends support to this claim, and points to the need to scrutinise the function that
9 variation plays as it unfolds in discourse.

10 At the same time, we would caution against an overly strong conceptualization of
11 variation as stance-taking, or a focus on socially meaningful language as a series of
12 necessarily intentional moves made by a speaker. While it is clear that stances and activities
13 are the ultimate locus of sociolinguistic meaning, we would also argue that particular stances
14 “calcify” into more enduring styles (Bucholtz 2009) and that it is these enregistered styles
15 that speakers draw on in interaction. In the context of our dataset, for example, we are not
16 arguing that TOWIE women make an intentional decision to produce backer articulations of
17 /s/ in order to help materialise a more “threatening” persona. Rather, we suggest that, via a
18 process of stance accretion (Du Bois 2002; Rauniomaa 2003; Eckert 2012), a backer /s/ has
19 become an enregistered part of the TOWIE women’s “threatening” style and that it is this
20 style that speakers choose to deploy in particular contexts. In a certain respect then, we find
21 ourselves returning to our previous argument that the variation in /s/ quality that we find is
22 indeed due to differences in language style. The key distinction between that argument and
23 the current one, however, is that we now have an explanation for why those stylistic
24 differences exist, and a principled account of where they come from in the first place.

1 As Brown and Levinson (1987: 281) note, “language usages are tied to strategies
2 rather than relationships, although relationships will be characterized by the continued use of
3 certain strategies.” We argue that, at its core, the meaning of /s/ variation in our dataset is
4 essentially strategic in nature – it is a signal of different levels of interactional threat. We do
5 not say this to imply that MIC and TOWIE women actively select specific articulations of /s/
6 in interaction. Instead, we suggest that MIC and TOWIE women design their speech at the
7 level of inter-personal relationships, recruiting speech styles that they consider appropriate
8 for more versus less threatening encounters. Variation in /s/ quality, and the level of threat it
9 can index, is certainly a part of these styles. But we argue that rather than representing a
10 recognized resource that MIC and TOWIE women actively draw upon to present interactional
11 threat, /s/ variation is better conceived of as a “semiotic hitchhiker” (Mendoza-Denton 2011),
12 part of a broader style that MIC and TOWIE women deploy in culturally-specific ways.

13

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1 Appendix

Activity Category	Level of threat	Speech Activity	Example		
Social	No threat	Commiserating/alignment	Were you upset? (Millie, MIC:30)		
			well I reckon as soon as the bar's up and running and you've sorted things up with Lucy I reckon we should go on holiday (Arg, TOWIE:37)		
		Gossip	Mark's gonna be there isn't he? He'll be there with his new girlfriend Lucy (Amy and Sam, TOWIE:6)		
			So earlier when I went to give the books to Francis, he was in a meeting and I kind of ended up telling Agne about Francis and Fred sharing her (Rosie, MIC:21)		
		Joking	You look like something out the Godfather! (Mark, TOWIE:39)		
			How's the white jeans crew going? (Spencer, MIC:27)		
		Personal evaluation	Francis could be good for this because essentially he doesn't make any jewellery (Mark Francis, MIC:4)		
			You look nice (Kirk, MIC:3)		
			Threat	Personal disclosure	I think kinda when I knew that I was feeling guilty about it I knew that it was because I really like you (Hugo, MIC:25)
					When I'd gone, he messaged me being like "I'm really confused I don't know what's going on" (Caggie, MIC:24)
Challenge/confrontation	What you doing? I've been calling you all day and you've not answered your phone (Lydia, TOWIE:10)				
	That's true, but why beat around the bush? (Francis, MIC:2)				
	That's very honest of you but also very selfish (Caggie, MIC:11)				

		Hedging	This is what it is. I wanted her to DJ in my club. Yeah? (Kirk, MIC:3)
			If you're implying this is a date (Amber, MIC:2)
Informational	No threat	Expert information	Mark it's a sixties night, Frank Sinatra, Rat Pack, it's that sort of era (Arg, TOWIE:39)
		Expert teaching	you're better to shower than you are to bath but don't exfoliate cos you're gonna get it all off but for your birthday the tan'll be brilliant. (Amy, TOWIE:4)
		Expert direction	Obviously I won't need you on the actual event cos I'll be looking after everything so you can go back home and get your dresses when it's done (Lauren, TOWIE:25)
			Tell me what happened (Caggie, MIC:30)
Information sharing	I think I'm gonna go out in it tonight (Cheska, MIC:7)		
	Threat	Information question	So, what you right handed? (Kirk, TOWIE:46)
		Questioner/request	So how do you know Spencer? (Millie, MIC:32)
			You know I've done it, I could have done it a lot earlier but I didn't want to be out of order, what do you reckon? (Mark, TOWIE:39)
		Information sharing	So honey, Paloma's my new assistant so I'm gonna let her be in charge today (Amy, TOWIE:16)
			Like, he dropped me home (Millie, MIC:8)
			Then drove across Pamplona, ran with the bulls (Jamie, MIC:29)
Discourse Management	No threat	Local context	It's opening in a couple of days (Arg, TOWIE:12)

			Lovely Maria here who's pinning me in (Amber, MIC:36)
		Clarification	(Spencer's coming with a friend – Hugo) Friend? (Millie, MIC:32)
		Facilitator	Evening evening you guys, how are you? (Spencer, MIC:32)
		Other	Yeah, yeah (Caggie, MIC:30)

Discourse management

Local context

Clarification

Facilitator

Other

Informational

Expert information

Expert teaching

Information sharing

Information question

Questioner

Social

Commiserating

Gossip

Joking

Personal evaluation

Discourse management

Local context
Clarification
Facilitator
Other

Informational

Expert information
Expert teaching
Expert direction
Information sharing

Information question
Questioner

Social

Commiserating
Alignment
Gossip
Joking
Personal evaluation

Hedging
Personal disclosure
Confrontation

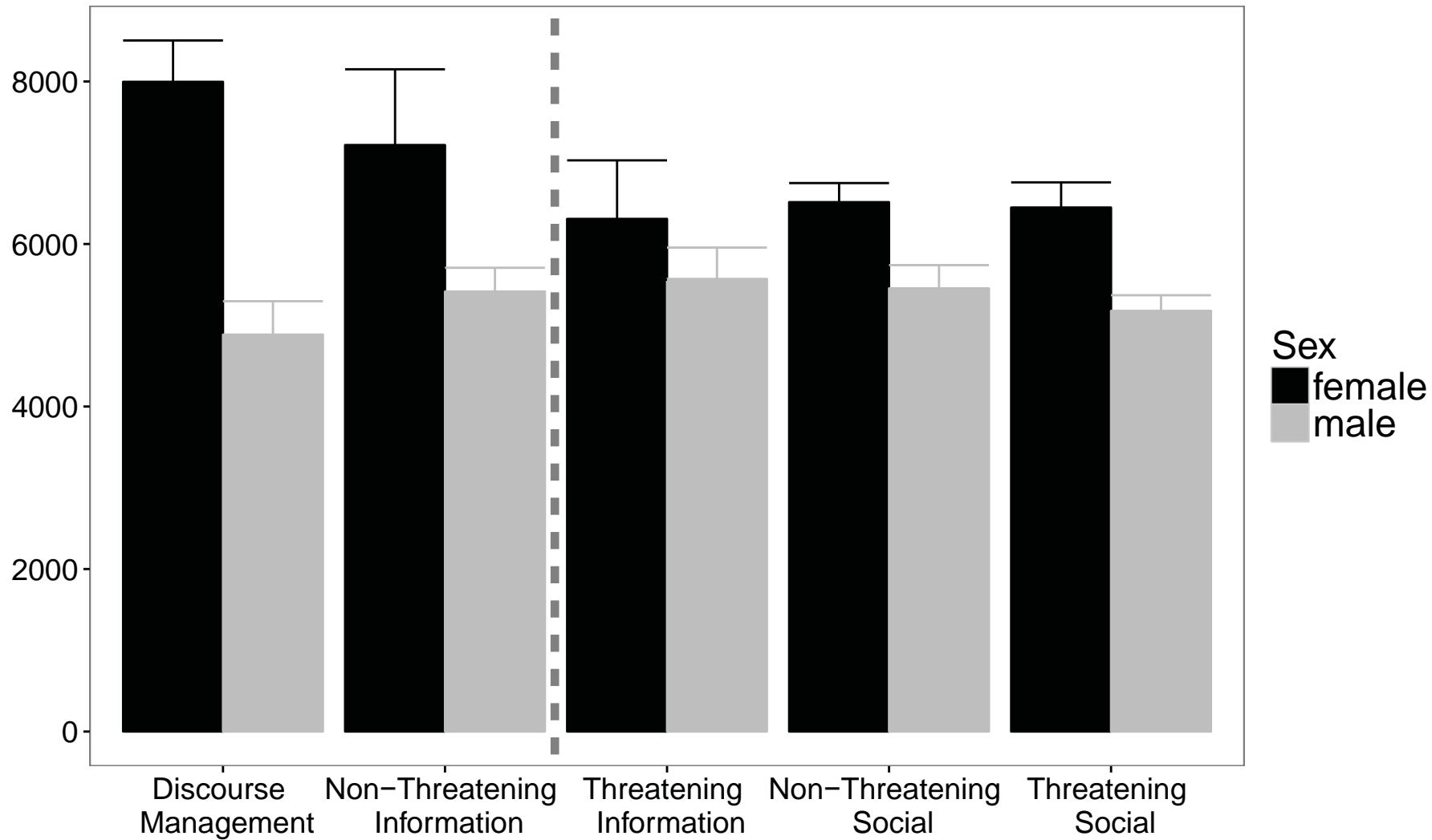
Less

pragmatic power

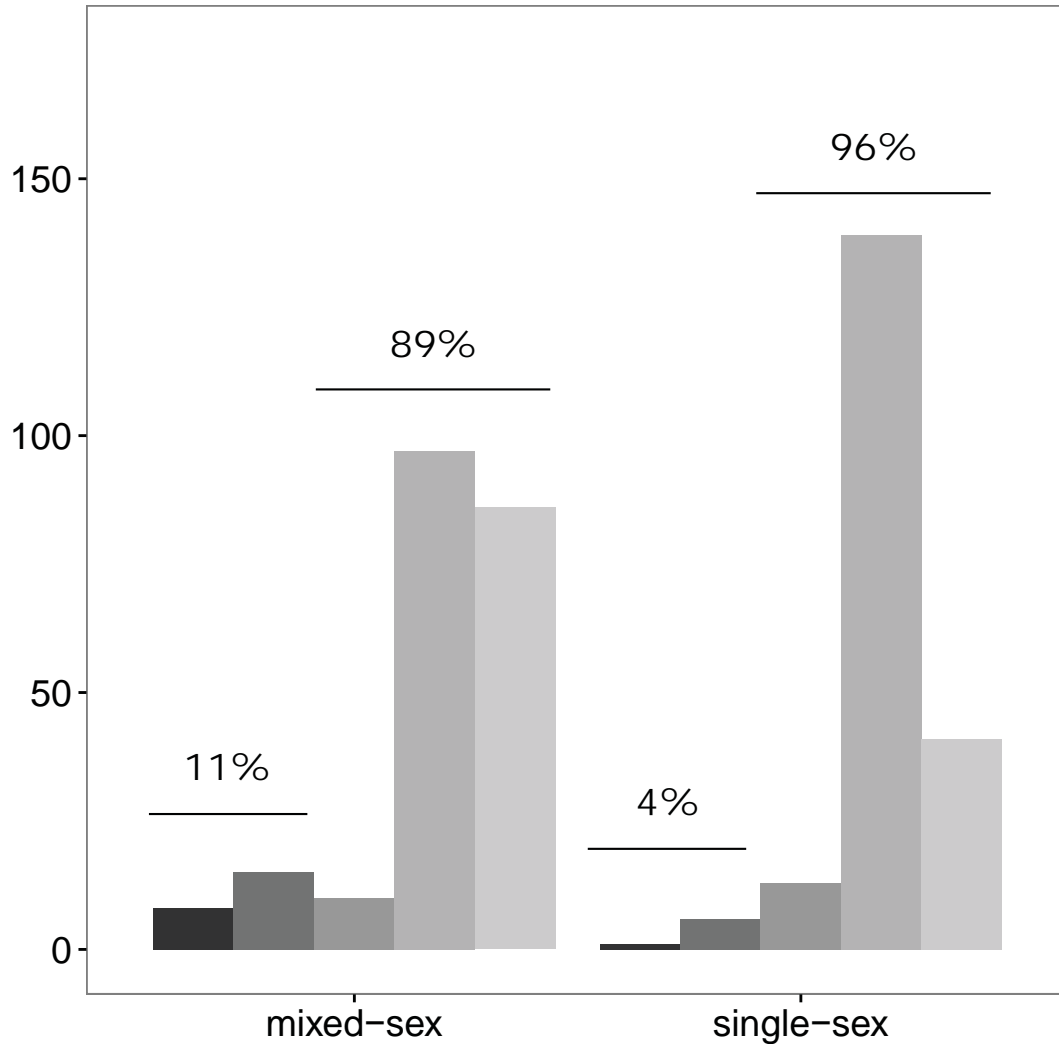
Degree of imposition

Less

More

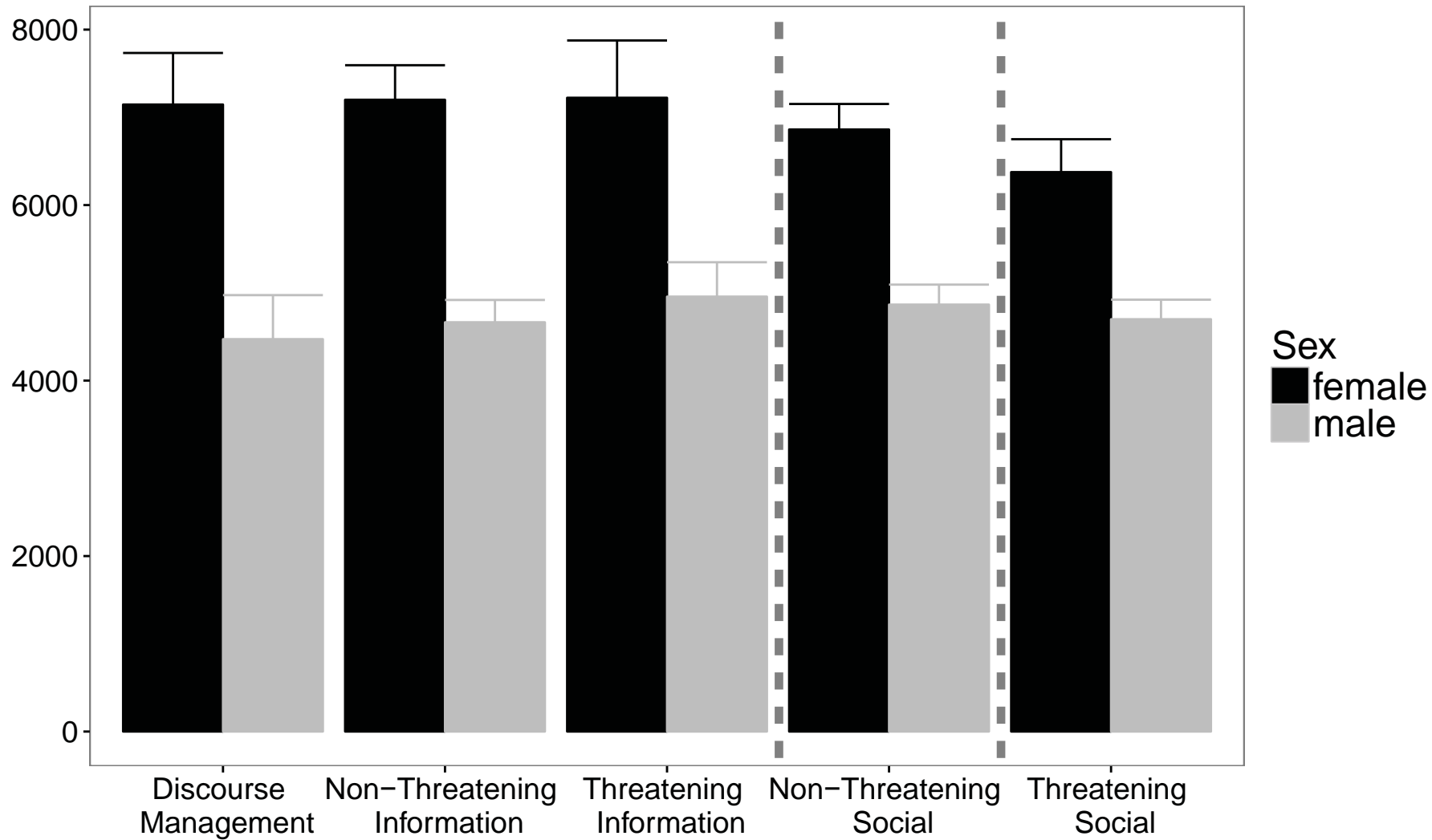


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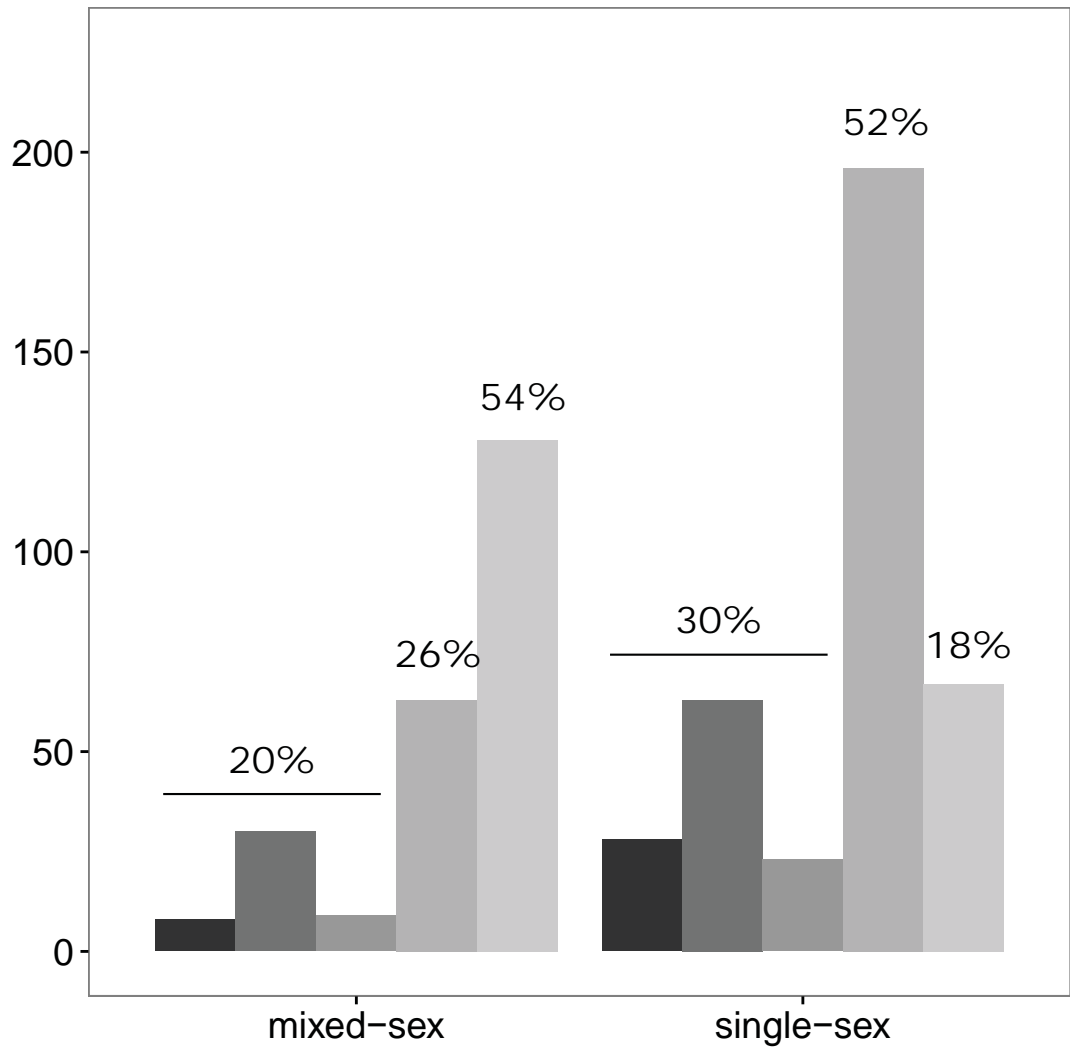


Speech Activity

- Discourse Management
- Non-Threatening Information
- Threatening Information
- Non-Threatening Social
- Threatening Social



of tokens



Speech Activity

- Discourse Management
- Non-Threatening Information
- Threatening Information
- Non-Threatening Social
- Threatening Social