

If “speech convergence phenomena are motivated by an individual’s motivation to be socially accepted or identify with a particular social group (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 71–72, as cited in Babel, 2012)”, it is then needed to question both identity and social categories.

Departing from an ontological understanding of the subjects, post-structuralist social theories and interactional sociology have defined both identity and social categorization as activities, that is, something one recurrently performs (Butler 1990). Since social categories are dynamics necessarily molded by power and domination relationships, and since there is no pre-discursive (or pre-social) identity (Dorlin 2008), our identity performances are continuously negotiated between social norms and individual agency, through interaction.

In addition, social categories and identities are frequently referred to as binary (male or female, black or white, upper or lower class, etc.), while post-structuralist approaches have explored the multiplicity of norms coexisting for a given social category, as well as the multiplicity of the stances one can adopt toward a given norm.

Lastly, the social categories at stake in an interaction are always multiple, constitutive to each other, and intertwined in a non-cumulative way, as the theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991, Bilge 2010) and consubstantiality (Kergoat 2012) have shown. Therefore, when an individual displays phonetic convergence or divergence, how do we interpret the social horizon s.he is converging or diverging with? Through the example of gender, I will discuss in this talk the possibility of understanding convergence and divergence as normative or subversive processes. I will suggest that convergence is involved in the making of a situated identity rather than being motivated by this identity.