Today’s agenda: Questions on Chapter 3

• Question #1: In Section 3.2, the author provides three approaches to the analysis of language variation and change. Provide a summary of each.

Social class approach

• Bill Labov’s work.
• Language variation and change is tied to social categories, particularly class.
• Example: Pronunciation of diphthongs on Martha’s Vineyard.

Bill Labov’s study of variation in pronunciation on Martha’s Vineyard

• Speakers on the island varied in their centralization of the diphthongs /ai/ and /au/ in why and now to [ɔɪ] and [ɔʊ], respectively.
• Labov collected data by interviewing informants from the island, talking generally about topics which would involve words with the desired vowels (like, right, etc.).
• He also got some recordings of school pupils reading texts.
• Some data from 1930s Linguistic Atlas of New England available.

Announcements

• Data collection for Exercise 3 on Homework #2.
• Morphology handout.
Labov’s study of Martha’s Vineyard

• The centralization feature was characteristic of people living on the island (as opposed to summer tourists), hence it was a regional feature.
• But within the island population, some residents frequently centralized, while others didn’t.

Labov’s study of Martha’s Vineyard

• People who lived Up-Island (strictly rural) centralized more than those who lived Down-Island.
• Centralization increased with age, peaking between 31 and 45 years.
• Students going to college with the intention of returning to the island centralized more than those who didn’t plan to go back.
• Ethnic minority groups such as Portuguese and Native Americans centralized more than other groups.

Labov’s study of Martha’s Vineyard

• Centralization on Martha’s Vineyard thus seemed like a marker of group identification.
• How closely speakers identified with the island, wanted to enter into the mainstream, saw themselves as Vineydars and were proud of it, was positively correlated with the degree of centralization.
• This became obvious when Labov partitioned his informants in terms of their attitude towards the island.

Centralization and attitude towards Martha’s Vineyard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>/əʊ/</th>
<th>/ɒu/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40 (Positive)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 (Neutral)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (Negative)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tbody>
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Social networks approach

• Lesley Milroy and James Milroy’ work, particularly on Belfast English in the 1970s.
• Three inner-city working-class communities:
  - Ballymacarrett (East Belfast; Protestant)
  - Hammer area (West Belfast; Protestant)
  - Clonard (West Belfast; Catholic)
Subjects

- In each of the three areas, there were 16 informants: 8 young people (18-25), and 8 middle-aged people (42-55)
- These were each divided equally between males and females.
- Data were collected in both Spontaneous Style and Interview Style.

Method: Social networks analysis

- Researcher is introduced as ‘a friend of a friend,’ hence no ‘observer’s paradox.’
- ‘An individual’s social network is the aggregate of relationships contracted with others, a boundless web of ties which reaches out through social and geographical space linking many individuals, sometimes remotely.’
- Networks are characterized in terms of density and multiplexity.

Method: Social networks analysis

- Each informant was assigned a ‘network strength score’ from 0-5 which measured their integration into local networks.
- A score of zero represented a person with few strong ties to the local community, whereas a score of 5 represented someone whose networks within the community were dense and multiplex.

Linguistic variables

- Deletion of [ð]: mo’er and bro’er
- [u] → [ʌ]: pull and shook
- Vowel backing: [æ] → [a]: man and hat

General results

- Individuals with highest network strength scores typically produced a higher percentage of vernacular forms.
- Men, in general, produced more vernacular forms than women.
- Younger men produced more vernacular forms than older men.
- Why?

Explanation

- Pressure to maintain the vernacular is likely to be strongest in small communities where almost everyone knows everyone else (a ‘dense’ network), and knows each person in the network in several capacities (a ‘multiplex’ network).
- Under these social pressures, speakers will prefer the solidarity expressed by use of the vernacular over the status they might gain by using a more standardised form.
Explanation

• In a dense, multiplex community, using the vernacular is construed as a symbol of loyalty to the community, whereas using standard forms is considered self-aggrandizing, artificial, and a way of disavowing association with the community and its values.

The third wave

• Penelope Eckert’s work.
• Sociolinguistic variation is not construed as a reflection of social identities and categories.
• Rather, the focus is on the linguistic practice in which speakers place themselves in the social landscape through stylistic practice.
• Language actually creates social meaning under this view.

The third wave

• At some initial stage, a population may become salient, and a distinguishing feature of that population’s speech may attract attention. Once recognized, that feature can be extracted from its linguistic surroundings and come, on its own, to index membership in that population.

The ‘populars’ and the ‘townies’

• In an ethnographic study of high-school girls in Bolton, in the United Kingdom, Moore (2004) witnessed a differentiation in the speech of girls who formed a rebellious group, the “populars.”
• In the course of a year, several of the populars moved off to engage in a more intensely wild lifestyle, as “townies.” In the process, they increased their use of nonstandard speech, as evidenced by their use of first- and third-person were (e.g., “I were drunk”).
• Whereas the populars’ use remained essentially the same, the townies’ use of the nonstandard form jumped from 25% to 48%. This social split brought about—and, one might say, was brought about by—the townies’ increasing use of nonstandard speech.

Question 2: The ‘observer’s paradox’

• Read Section 3.3 and define the observer’s paradox. List the ways that linguists use to minimize its effect.
  - Talk about personal topics.
  - Involve other family members or friends in conversation.
  - Record naturalistic data.
  - Use insider fieldworkers.
  - Choose a ‘cosy’ setting.
Ethnicity and language in the Arab world

• Question #3:
  How is ethnicity a relevant sociolinguistic variable in the Arab world? Discuss with reference to Jordan.

Jordanian and Palestinian dialects

• Early on, some Palestinians accommodated to the Jordanian linguistic variables, but Jordanians typically didn’t adopt the Palestinian Arabic features, even though Palestinian urban dialect was more prestigious. Why?
• Right now, the differences are becoming less, and it seems there is a ‘new dialect’ in the making.

Dialects within Jordan with regard to the القاف:

- Urban Palestinian dialect: [ʔ] (glottal stop)
- Rural Palestinian dialect: [k] (voiceless stop)
- Bedouin and rural Jordanian: [ɡ] (voiced stop)

Next class agenda

• Sociolinguistic variables continued: religion, urbanization, social class, others.
• Also read the section on ‘Leveling.’