Announcements

• HW4 is posted on the class website. It is due a week from today (Nov 19th, in class, or by 5pm via e-mail).
• Reminders: On Wednesday we have Gusatvo Freire as a guest lecturer to talk about his work on first language acquisition. Please make sure you do the readings as given on the syllabus as background for his lecture.
• Also, on Wed we have screening of The Linguists.

Announcements

• On Monday Nov 19, we’re back in presentation mode. We’ll decide on Myths and presenters on Wednesday. (Remember, you have to do at least one presentation).

• I’m still grading your midterm, and you should get it back later this week via e-mail or in my mailbox.

Hopefully, good news!

Transition from last class

• Speakers vary in their use of language.
• One factor that leads to variation is region.
• Regional varieties of a language are what is typically referred to as dialects.
• Dialectal variation can be phonological, morphological, syntactic, or lexical.

Transition from last class

• Language attitudes towards a particular dialect are subjective, and typically reflect people’s judgment of the speakers of that dialect, and not of the dialect itself.
• Linguistically, all dialects are legitimate rule-governed speech varieties. Socio-politically, however, some dialects may be perceived as ‘less correct’ or ‘substandard.’
Today’s agenda

• Today we talk about another factor that relates to dialectal variation and engenders language attitudes: Ethnicity.
• We will do that with reference to African American English (AAE), talking about:
  - Its history
  - Its linguistic features
  - Attitudes towards AAE

‘Ethnic’ dialects and linguistic profiling

• Certain ethnic groups can have an identifiable dialect which serves as a solidarity/identification marker within the group.
• But such ‘ethnic’ dialects can also lead to negative consequences.
• John Baugh, a linguist from Stanford, studies linguistic profiling. This ad is based on his research. Linguistic profiling: An ad

‘Ethnic’ dialects and linguistic profiling

• Two points from the ad:
  1. There can be a relation between speech and ethnicity.
  2. As we have seen with regional dialects, there are attitudes towards ethnic dialects and they can have social consequences.
• We discuss this today with reference to African American English (AAE).

History of AAE

• A creole-based theory (pidgin, creole, decreolization). Evidence: similar features with West African languages (loss of interdental [θ] and [ð]; ‘be’ deletion; Gullah). Watch Section 9 from DVD ‘Do you Speak American? Up North.’
• An L2-based theory. Evidence: similarities with Southern English in vowel lowering (tin/ten; sing; thing) and monophthongization (‘right, time, like’).
• A unified theory.

AAE today

• Today, AAE is spoken by a large number of African Americans as well as speakers from other ethnicities. Also, not all African Americans speak AAE.

Attitudes towards AAE

• AAE has been stigmatized for two reasons:
  - First, because it’s a ‘dialect’ or ‘slang,’ not a language.
  - Second, because it is ‘incorrect,’ ‘improper,’ or ‘deficient’ English.
• Both claims are linguistically false. Let’s discuss how.
Attitudes towards AAE

• The ‘dialectal’ objection to AAE is false for two reasons:
  - First, because everyone speaks a ‘dialect.’
  - Second, because there is no clear ‘linguistic’ definition of what Standard American English (SAE) is.

What’s a language and what’s a dialect?

• One common answer is that dialects are speech varieties that are mutually intelligible.
• Any particular problems with the mutual intelligibility criterion?

Problem 1: Non-linguistic factors

• Some mutually intelligible varieties of the same language are treated as separate languages; the ‘Who do you think you are to speak my language?’ situation.
• When two mutually non-intelligible varieties are treated as dialects of the same language; the ‘Your language is my language; doesn’t really matter if I don’t understand a word you say’ situation.

Problem 2: The dialect continuum

• Variation among different dialects typically takes the form of a continuum, say, on a scale from 1 to 10, where closer points are more mutually intelligible than the farther ones:
  1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
• What would the status of points 5 and 6 be?

Language = D + A + N

• Max Weinreich is right:
  “A language is a dialect with an army and a navy.”

What is Standard American English?

• Some research studies show that a ‘prescriptive’ definition for what ‘standard’ is probably does not exist for American English.
Do English professors know what SAE is?

Table 15.8 Sample results: survey of English professors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Acceptability (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(as estimated by the English professors)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone volunteered but they all failed to appear (agreement error)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Austen now feels that it is necessary to partially clarify Frank Churchill’s relationship to Jane (split infinitive)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering how little satisfaction she obtained from it, it was just a waste. (stangling participles)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Standards’ vary across time and space

- Also, if ‘standard’ were defined in linguistic terms, how can a linguistic feature (/r/-lessness) be standard on one side of the Atlantic and nonstandard on the other side?
- And how can a negation marker (ain’t) be standard a century ago, but nonstandard now?

‘Standard’ is the ‘prestige’ variety

- A standard dialect is thus better understood in socio-political terms: It’s the dialect considered most prestigious by society, and it’s the one used in education, news media, and other formal contexts.

So, ...

- While it’s true that AAE is a dialect, so are hundreds of speech varieties that exist in the US. Besides, there is no clear linguistic definition of what ‘Standard American English’ is.
- What makes AAE (and other nonstandard dialects) stigmatized is not that it is a dialect, but that it is not a prestige dialect, which has nothing to do with its linguistic features, but rather with a history of attitudes towards African Americans.

And, most importantly, ...

AAE is rule-governed.

AAE Phonology: r-deletion

- r-deletion is pretty common in AAE, so that the following words are homophonous:
  - guard-god
  - sore-saw
- But not ‘great-gate’. Why?
- Can we write a formal rule for this?
AAE Phonology: l-deletion

- Some speakers also drop their [l] so that the following words are homophonous:
  - toll-toe
  - all-awe
  - help-hep

AAE Phonology: Consonant Cluster simplification

- In SAE ‘best kind,’ but not in ‘best arm.’
- In AAE, word-final consonant cluster simplification is more common, typically when both consonants share the same voicing feature:
  - test \( \rightarrow [\text{tes}] \)
  - hand \( \rightarrow [\text{hæn}] \)
- The simplification can also take place even if the next word starts with a vowel:
  - messed up \( \rightarrow [\text{mes} \lambda p] \)

AAE Phonology: Consonant Cluster simplification

- So, when an AAE speaker says
  I ‘pass’ the test yesterday
  they are not making a mistake in tense morphology. They’re simply simplifying the consonant cluster.
  - passed \( [\text{pæst}] \rightarrow [\text{pæs}] \)
- Evidence: “hated” is pronounced [heɪtɪd] and does not become [heɪt].

AAE Phonology: Interdental [θ] and [ð]

- Word-initially, [θ] and [ð] become stops [t] and [d]:
  - think \( [\text{tɪŋk}] \)  Predict: thin
  - this \( [\text{dɪs}] \)  Predict: the man
- Word medially and word-finally, [θ] is replaced by [f], and [ð] is replaced by [v]:
  - mouth \( [\text{maʊf}] \)  Predict: both
  - brother \( [\text{brʌva}] \)  Predict: mother

AAE Morphosyntax

- Double (or multiple) negatives:
  - You don’ know nothin’.
  - I don’ never have no lunch.
- Use of stressed “bin” as an auxiliary:
  - She bin married.
  - I bin known him.

AAE Morphosyntax

- Absence of possessive -s:
  - John hat; Byron car
- Absence of third person singular -s:
  - she talk; he sing
- Absence of plural -s after quantifiers:
  - three dog; some cat
Copula deletion and habitual ‘be’

- Copula “be” deletion:
  - He nice.
  - You crazy.
- Habitual “be”:
  - The coffee be cold. (= always)
  - He be tired out. (habitually)

AAE is just another English variety

- So, AAE differs from SAE in systematic ways, and in the same manner that any other dialect of English differs from SAE.
- In fact, AAE can enrich other dialects as well. In an article on Ebonics, the New York Times cited Richard Nixon’s use of “right on!” “Rip-off,” “chill out,” and “dis” are other popular borrowings.
- Claims about the “deficiency,” “incompleteness,” and “illogicality” of AAE are totally non-scientific and have no linguistic basis whatsoever.

So, why the negative attitude towards AAE?

- What are possible consequences for such negative attitudes?
  - Dialect in Schooling, the 1979 Ann Arbor Decision: Watch Section 10 from DVD ‘Do you Speak American? Up North.’

Solutions?

- The 1996 Oakland school board decision and reactions to it.
  - Jeopardy with a new twist: Watch Section 3 from DVD ‘Do you Speak American? Out West.’

Next class agenda

- Gustavo Freire’s presentation on his research on language acquisition by children.
- Please read Chapter 8, pp. 324-350. Some sections we already talked about earlier, so should be an easy read.

A take-home phonology problem from AAE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wat’jì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du:n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ra:m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raná</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ná:ní:n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ná:ní:n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A take-home phonology problem from AAE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table (2)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Standard English</td>
<td>gloss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θŋk</td>
<td>θŋk</td>
<td>'think'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pŋk</td>
<td>pŋk</td>
<td>'pink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pŋk</td>
<td>pŋk</td>
<td>'pink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θŋŋk</td>
<td>θŋŋk</td>
<td>'thank'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sŋk</td>
<td>sŋk</td>
<td>'sink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tŋŋ</td>
<td>tŋŋ</td>
<td>'sink'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tŋŋk</td>
<td>tŋŋk</td>
<td>'sink'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A take-home phonology problem from AAE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table (3)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Standard English</td>
<td>gloss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θŋŋ</td>
<td>θŋŋ</td>
<td>'thing'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sŋŋ</td>
<td>sŋŋ</td>
<td>'sing'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sŋŋ</td>
<td>sŋŋ</td>
<td>'song'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lŋŋ</td>
<td>lŋŋ</td>
<td>'long'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>