LNGT0101
Introduction to Linguistics

Lingu-ist-ic-s
[lɪŋ-gʷí-stɪks]
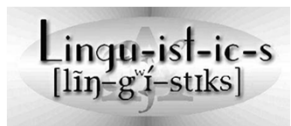
Lecture #16
Nov 7th, 2012

Please sit by your American English dialect area

(3) Approximate dialect regions of the United States
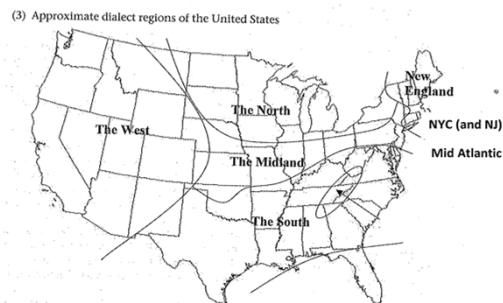
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Announcements

- Based on your responses to the doodle link, the screening of *The Linguists* is scheduled for Wed Nov 14 at 4:15-5:15. I will request this room, so we don't have to go anywhere else. I'll send a note about that once confirmed.
- Reminder: LAP proposal due this Friday at 3pm.

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Transition from last class

- Monday marked the end of our discussion of 'formal' components of language: phonetics/phonology, morphology, and syntax.
- Starting today, we look at linguistics areas where language interfaces with other systems.
- We have done this earlier when we talked about language and the brain.
- Today and on Monday, we talk about language in social contexts, or what is called *sociolinguistics*.

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Today's agenda: Sociolinguistics

- *Sociolinguistics* focuses on the language of the speech community and variation within that speech community.
- Sociolinguists are interested in several questions. Today, we focus on two.
  - How do speakers differ in their linguistic behavior?
  - What attitudes do speakers have regarding their own speech and others' speech, and why?

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Language variation

- We have already seen examples of linguistic variation in English (Bill Labov's study of Martha's Vineyard speakers' centralization of diphthongs, and the *Northern Cities Vowel Shift*).

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Language variation

- ***The Northern Cities Vowel Shift***: Another excerpt from 'Do you speak American?'

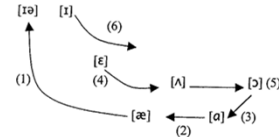7

Northern Cities Vowel Shift

Figure 15.5 The Northern Cities Shift

First, the [æ] in words like *cad* was raised and diphthongized to become [ɪə]. Then, the [ɑ], as in *cod, Don, pop,* and *hot,* was fronted to become closer to [æ]. The [ɔ], as in *dawn* and *cawed,* was then lowered to become more like [ɑ]. The [ɛ], as in *Ked,* was backed, which in turn pushed the [ʌ], as in *cud,* farther back. In parallel with the backing of [ɛ], [ɪ], as in *kid,* also moved back.

From O'Grady et al 2005, p. 511.

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Phonological variation

- We also did a questionnaire about phonological variation as part of HW3.
- There are several sociological variables that affect our speech, and sociolinguists are interested in studying linguistic variation correlated with these variables.
- What are some of the sociological variables that may correlate with linguistic variation?

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Variables affecting language use

- Region.
- Ethnicity.
- Socio-economic background.
- Education.
- Age.
- Gender.
- Register/Style
- Whether or not you know another language.

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Let's do another mini-questionnaire

- Remember that, in addition to variation in pronunciation, variation can be lexical, morphological, and syntactic.
- In the next few minutes, in your 'dialectal' groups, answer the questions on the mini-questionnaire, and report any interesting observations to class.
- We will then compare your results with Bert Vaux's dialect maps and information given there:

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American English dialect areas

(3) Approximate dialect regions of the United States

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Studying language attitudes

- Sociolinguists are also interested in studying speakers' attitudes about their own speech as well as the speech of others, and possible explanations we can rely on to make sense of the attitudes that emerge.
- One way to find out about such attitudes is to ask speakers to 'rate' dialects, as Dennis Preston did a few years ago.
- Before we look at his findings, I want us to do the same, again in your dialectal groups.

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Activity #1

- In your groups, use the dialect map and rate the US dialects on a scale from 1 to 10 in terms of **CORRECTNESS**.
- Think about where in the country you feel people speak **the most correct** form of American English. Where do they speak **the least correct** form?
- For the purposes of this exercise CORRECT ENGLISH is defined as the variety (or varieties) of American English that sounds the most acceptable to you. You can use all the other numbers between 1 and 10, and you can repeat a score as many times as you like. (Areas can tie.)

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Activity #2

- In your groups, use the dialect map and rate the US dialects on a scale from 1 to 10 in terms of **PLEASANTNESS**.
- **PLEASANT ENGLISH** is defined as the variety of American English that sounds **the most appealing** to you. Note that *appealing* can be different from *correct.* An appealing accent may sound charming, but you may not consider it good English!
- For this reason your scores for CORRECT ENGLISH in Activity #1 and PLEASANT ENGLISH in Activity #2 may be the same, or they can be different.

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Results from Dennis Preston's study

- http://www.pbs.org/speak/speech/mapping/map.html

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Next class agenda

- Language and ethnicity.
- Linguistic insecurity.
- Linguistic discrimination.
- Continue to read Chapter 10 through p. 452.

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