

LNGT0101 Introduction to Linguistics



Lecture #17
Nov 5th, 2014

Announcements

- Screening of *The Writing Code* this evening from 7 to 8pm. Room: Library 230.
- Things to take notes on while watching the movie:
 - What is the **rebus principle**?
 - What's a **syllabary**?
 - What kind of system is used in writing **Chinese**? What are its advantages? What are the disadvantages?

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Announcements

- Presentations on Monday on dialectal variation. Volunteers needed.
1. Language Myth 9: [‘In the Appalachians they speak like Shakespeare.’](#)
 2. [Is there a DC dialect?](#)
 3. [America’s ugliest accent?](#)

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Reminder of the paper course requirement (20%)

- Each student is required to write a **2000-word** paper on a linguistic topic of your choice, subject to the approval of the instructor.
- A 250-word paper proposal specifying the topic, aspects of linguistic interest, why you want to research it, and a list of at least 3 relevant references, is due on **Nov 10th**.
- The final paper itself is due by e-mail on Thursday **Dec 11th at 1pm**.

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Some possible topics

- Language and thought.
- Language and culture.
- Language and gender.
- Language and identity.
- Dialectal variation.
- Language endangerment.
- Language in the social media.

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Some possible topics

- Language and politics.
- Language and social justice.
- First language acquisition.
- Second language acquisition.
- Pidgins and creoles.
- Language change.
- Language evolution.

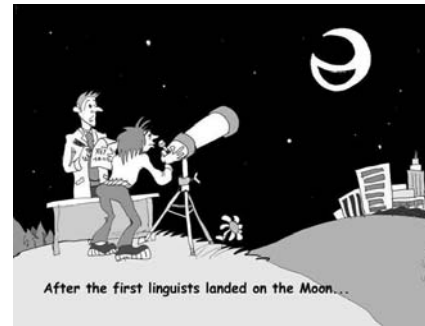
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Some possible topics

- Natural language processing.
- Sentence processing (Psycholinguistics).
- Language and the brain (Neurolinguistics).
- Sign language
- ...
- I will post the guidelines for formatting and citation by Monday.

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Lunar transcription!



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Mokilese

- Are voiced [i , u] and voiceless [i̥ , u̥] separate phonemes or different allophones of the same phoneme in Mokilese? State your evidence.

a. [pjsan]	'full of leaves'	g. [uduk]	'flesh'
b. [dupykda]	'bought'	h. [kaskas]	'to throw'
c. [pɨko]	'basket'	i. [poki]	'to strike something'
d. [kjsa]	'we two'	j. [pil]	'water'
e. [sɨpwo]	'firewood'	k. [apid]	'outrigger support'
f. [kamwəkɨtɨ]	'to move'	l. [ludɨuk]	'to tackle'

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Presentation and discussion

- Myth 20: *"Everyone has an accent except me."*

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Transition

- Monday's class marked the end of our discussion of the 'formal' components of language: phonetics/phonology, morphology, and syntax.
- Now, we start looking at linguistics areas where language interfaces with other systems.
- We have done this earlier when we talked about language and the brain and a little bit about child language acquisition.
- Starting today, we talk about language in social contexts, or what is called **sociolinguistics**.

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Sociolinguistics

- **Sociolinguistics** focuses on the study of the language of the speech community and linguistic 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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Linguistic variation

- Linguistic variation happens at several levels:
 - Phonological
 - Lexical
 - Morphological
 - Syntactic

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Language variation

<http://www.pbs.org/speak/ahead/change/vowelpower/vowel.html>

- **The Northern Cities Vowel Shift:** An excerpt from 'Do you speak American?' with Bill Labov.

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Northern Cities Vowel Shift

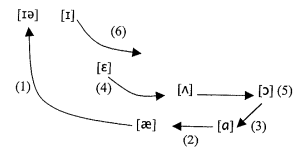


Figure 15.5 The Northern Cities Shift

First, the [ɛ] in words like *cad* was raised and diphthongized to become [ɪɔ]. Then, the [ɑ], as in *cod*, *Don*, *pop*, and *hot*, was fronted to become closer to [æ]. The [ɔ], as in *dawn* and *caved*, was then lowered to become more like [ɑ]. The [ɛ], as in *Kod*, was backed, which in turn pushed the [ɔ], as in *cod*, 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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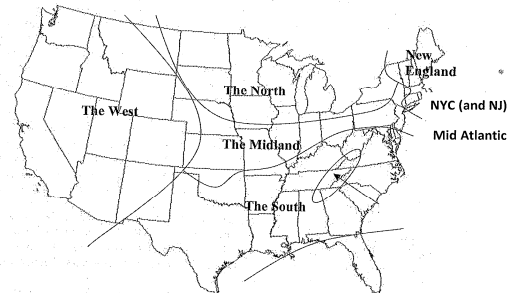
American English dialects disappearing?

- On July 4, 1960, the *Eugene (Ore.) Register-Guard* rang in Independence Day with a dire Associated Press report by one Norma Gahn headlined "American Dialects Disappearing."
- The problem, according to "speech experts," was the homogenizing effect of "mass communications, compulsory education, [and] the mobility of restless Americans." These conformist pressures have only intensified in the half-century since the AP warned "that within four generations virtually all regional U.S. speech differences will be gone."

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American English dialect areas

(3) Approximate dialect regions of the United States



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Linguistic variation

- There are several sociological variables that affect our speech, and sociolinguists are interested in studying linguistic variation that correlates 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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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 for American English dialects.
- 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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Next class agenda

- Read Myth 17 ("They Speak Really Bad English Down South and in New York City"), which is available online here: <http://www.pbs.org/speak/speech/prejudice/attitudes/>
- Read Myth 9: '[In the Appalachians they speak like Shakespeare.](#)'
- Read this article: [Is there a DC dialect?](#)
- Read this article: [America's ugliest accent?](#)

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