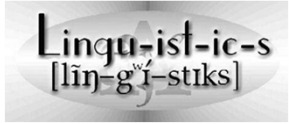


LNGT0101 Introduction to Linguistics



Lecture #17
Nov 9th, 2011

Announcements

- If you don't hear from me about your LAP proposal, then you're good to go.
- Presentations on Monday:
 - Myth 2: Some languages are just not good enough.
 - Myth 4: French is a logical language.
 - Myth 11: Italian is beautiful; German is ugly.
 - Myth 6: Women talk too much.
- Reactions to *The Linguists*?
- Any questions?

Transition from last class

- Short clips from 'Do you speak American?' with Dennis Preston and Bill Labov.

Sociolinguistics

- *Sociolinguistics* is the study of language in social contexts. It focuses on the language of the speech community and variation within that speech community.
- There are several sociological variables that affect our usage of language, and sociolinguists are interested in studying linguistic variation correlated with these variables.

So, ...

- What are some of the sociological variables that may correlate with linguistic variation?

Variables affecting language use

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

Do you speak American?

- <http://www.pbs.org/speak/ahead/change/vowelpower/vowel.html>
- *The Northern Cities Vowel Shift*: Another excerpt from 'Do you speak American?'

Northern Cities Vowel Shift

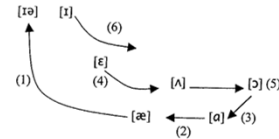


Figure 15.5 The Northern Cities Shift

First, the [æ] in words like *cad* was raised and diphthongized to become [ɛ]. Then, the [a], 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 [a]. The [ɛ], as in *Ked*, was backed, which in turn pushed the [a], as in *cad*, farther back. In parallel with the backing of [ɛ], [ɪ], as in *kid*, also moved back.

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

The language-dialect distinction

- Sociolinguists focus on linguistic diversity internal to speech communities. One such case of linguistic diversity is dialectal variation.
- So, what's the difference between a language and a dialect?
- For sociolinguists, dialects are mutually intelligible varieties of a language that differ in systematic ways.

The language-dialect distinction

- So, if one of you grew up in New England and another one was born and raised in Georgia, you're still able to understand one another, despite differences in the language variety each of you speaks.
- We say you both speak two *dialects* of the same language, that is, English.

The dialect continuum

- But the mutual intelligibility diagnostic does not work all the time, however.
- First, dialectal variation can be thought of in terms of a *dialect continuum*, say, on a scale from 1 to 10:
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
- Each two adjacent dialects on the scale are mutually intelligible, but as we move leftward, differences increase and mutual intelligibility decreases, and by the time we reach dialect 10, dialect 1 becomes mutually non-intelligible with dialect 10.

The dialect continuum

- Consider this quote from Stephen Anderson in one of the articles on the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) website:
"Suppose you were to start from Berlin and walk to Amsterdam, covering about ten miles every day. You can be sure that the people who provided your breakfast each morning could understand (and be understood by) the people who served you supper that evening. Nonetheless, the German speakers at the beginning of your trip and the Dutch speakers at its end would have much more trouble, and certainly think of themselves as speaking two quite distinct (if related) languages."

The dialect continuum

- The problem then is where we can draw the line. Thinking of dialectal variation in terms of sharp and clear break points is obviously an oversimplification.

Non-linguistic factors

- The second problem with the mutual intelligibility criterion is that other nonlinguistic considerations “override” it.
- This happens in two scenarios:
 - (1) When two mutually intelligible varieties of the same language are treated as separate languages, and
 - (2) when two mutually non-intelligible varieties are treated as dialects of the same language.
- Both scenarios are attested.

Who do you think you are to speak *my* language?

- Think of the recent evolving of “Serbian”, “Croatian”, and “Bosnian” languages in the former Yugoslavia.
- We also have Macedonian and Bulgarian, rather than, say, Macegarian. Or maybe Buledonian.
- And Hindi and Urdu, rather than, say, Hindurdu or Urdindi.
- And the list goes on.

Your language is *my* language; doesn't really matter if I don't understand a word you say

- On the other hand, we find the exact opposite scenario in a country like China, where political and cultural unification requires Cantonese and Mandarin to be talked about as “dialects” of Chinese, even though they are mutually non-intelligible.

Your language is *my* language; doesn't really matter if I don't understand a word you say

- Same situation seems to hold for many of the Arabic dialects in the Middle East, though there the picture is obscured by the use of the so-called Modern Standard Arabic among educated speakers.
- But the Arabic of a Bedouin in Saudi Arabia is mutually non-intelligible with the Arabic of a farmer from Morocco. Still, because of historical, religious, cultural, and political reasons, Arabs like to think of themselves as speaking the same language.

Language = D + A + N

- D for “dialect,” A for “army,” and N for “navy.”
- Max Weinreich was right:

“A language is a dialect with an army and a navy.”

That said, ...

- The mutual intelligibility criterion does work in so many other situations, and that's where sociolinguists do most of their work on language variation.
- In what follows, we discuss how mutually intelligible varieties of the same language differ in systematic ways from each other.

Idiolect, accent, and variety

- Before we do that, let me introduce three terms that are also frequently used in the sociolinguistic literature: *idiolect*, *accent*, and *variety*.
- An **idiolect** is an individual's unique way of speech. Since no two people speak in the same way, we say that each one of us has an idiolect.

Idiolect, accent, and variety

- An **accent** is a person's distinctive way of pronouncing words, which is typically associated with a particular region, e.g., a Boston accent, a Brooklyn accent, or a British accent. It is also often used for the pronunciation of non-natives speaking a foreign language.
- Finally, the word "*variety*" is typically used as a convenient cover term for linguistic systems, whether these are distinct languages, or dialects, or even individual differences among speakers.

So, how do dialects differ?

- Remember what a language is?
Yes, **Language = Lexicon + Grammar**.
- Dialectal variation is therefore expected in both components: In the lexicon (lexical), as well as the grammar (phonological, morphological, and syntactic). And again the variation is rule-governed and follows from general principles that regulate human language.

Dialectology: dialect maps

- The study of variation among dialects is called *dialectology*, and dialectologists typically represent this variation on dialect maps or dialect atlases, like the *cheese map* in the textbook.

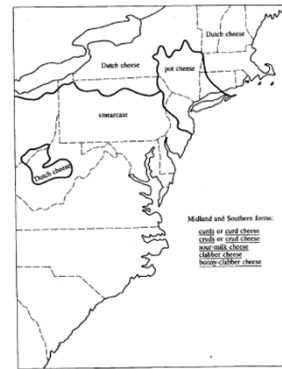
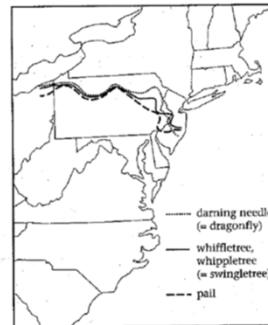


Figure 10.1 A dialect map showing the isoglosses separating the use of different words that refer to the same cheese. (From *Basic Linguistics of the United States*, 4th ed., 1981, University of Michigan Press, copyright © 1981. Reprinted with permission of University of Michigan Press.)

Dialectology: dialect maps

- A line drawn on a map indicates a difference in a linguistic feature in the areas on both sides of the line. A line of this sort is technically referred to as an *isogloss*. A bundle of isoglosses may correspond to a *dialect boundary*.

(2) Bundling of three northern isoglosses



Copied from the *Language Files*, Ohio State University Press.

Reproduced by permission from the University of Michigan Press from Carver, *American Regional Dialects* (1987), p. 12 (original source *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States*, 1949, fig. 5A).

(3) Approximate dialect regions of the United States



Copied from the *Language Files*, Ohio State University Press.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGxlxOcS-tE>

Dialectology: dialect maps

- Let's conduct an in-class dialectal variation mini-questionnaire.
- Let's compare these results with Bert Vaux's dialect maps and information given there:
<http://www4.uwm.edu/FLL/linguistics/dialect/maps.html>

Next class agenda

- More discussion of a few more Language Myths.
- Continue to read Chapter 10 through p. 452.