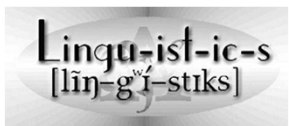


LNGT0101 Introduction to Linguistics



Lecture #19
Nov 16th, 2011

Announcements

- I will post HW#5 tomorrow. It'll be due after the Thanksgiving break.
- We won't be able to do LAP presentations. But if you find out something interesting about your LAP language, do let the class know.

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Continuing with the Language Myths

- Myth 1: The Meanings of words should not be allowed to change.

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Summary of our discussion so far: Linguistic egalitarianism

- There is no set of objective criteria that we can use to evaluate dialects or languages. It is quite irrational, then, to pass judgmental values on dialects.
- The standard-non-standard distinction is not linguistic. And there is no scientific sense in which the standard dialect is a more "correct" or "proper" way of speaking.
- Language attitudes are subjective and typically reflect people's judgment of the speakers of a linguistic variety rather than of the variety itself.

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So, ...

- It all comes down to *prestige*, a totally nonlinguistic concept.
- Linguistically, no dialect is inherently better or worse than another.
- Dialects are just **different** language varieties, and they are all rule-governed linguistic systems.
- Let's consider the linguistic features of African American English (AAE), for example.

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AAE Phonology

- *r*-deletion is pretty common in AAE, such that the following words are homophonous:

guard-god

sore-saw

- Some speakers also drop their [l] in coda position:

toll-toe

all-awe

help-hep

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AAE Phonology

- Word-final consonant cluster simplification is also common, when both consonants share the same voicing feature:
test → [tes] *hand* → [hæn]
 but *pant* [pænt] does not become [pæn]
- 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 [pæst] → [pæs]
- Evidence: "*hated*" is pronounced [heɪrəd] and does not become [heɪt].

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AAE Phonology

- Neutralization of [ɪ] and [ɛ] before nasals: Also common in many dialects, resulting in *pen* and *pin* being homophonous.
- Loss of interdental fricatives [θ] and [ð] word medially and word-finally: [θ] is replaced by [f], and [ð] is replaced by [v]:
mouth [maʊf]
brother [brʌvə]
- Word-initially, [θ] and [ð] become stops [t] and [d]:
think [tɪŋk] *the man* [də mæn]

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AAE Morphosyntax

- Double (or multiple) negatives:
You don't know nothin'.
I don't never have no lunch.
- Copula "be" deletion:
He nice.
You crazy.
- Habitual "be":
The coffee be cold. (= always)
He be tired out. (habitually)

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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
- Use of stressed "bin" as an auxiliary:
She bin married.
I bin known him.

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AAE is just another English variety

- So, as you can see, AAE differs from SAE in systematic ways, and in the same manner that other dialects of English differ from SAE.
- As usual, popular beliefs turn out to be rooted in irrationality and ignorance. Claims about the "deficiency," "incompleteness," and "illogicality," of AAE are simply ridiculous and in fact should be ridiculed when made.

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Unfortunately, though, most people just "don't get it"

- For a lot of people, there is indeed a "better" dialect.
- As a result, whether we like it or not, certain sociolinguistic patterns evolve, and are worthy of studying.
 - The standard-success association.
 - Linguistic insecurity.
 - Linguistic discrimination.

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1. Standard = Success

- As you should expect, one such pattern of behavior arises as a result of stigmatization of nonstandard dialects.
- Speakers of these nonstandard varieties are told that their dialects are wrong and inferior and that they have to learn the standard variety in school to become successful.

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Standard = Success

- That makes children who come from homes where nonstandard varieties are spoken at a disadvantage in school, because they need to make adjustments from the language they speak to the standard varieties they learn in class (an adjustment unnecessary for children who come from homes where standard varieties are spoken).

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Standard = Success

- Some make these adjustments and they become *bidialectal* speakers. Others become more or less fluent in the standard, but they retain their nonstandard dialect still. And yet some others master the standard dialect and reject the nonstandard altogether.
- Which adjustments are made depends on a number of factors, one of which is *prestige*.

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Prestige: Overt

- In sociolinguistics, a distinction is often made between ***overt prestige*** and ***covert prestige*** in the use of language varieties.
- Overt prestige is the one attached to a particular variety by the society-at-large, which defines how people should speak in order to be successful and gain status in society.

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Prestige: Covert

- Covert prestige, on the other hand, is what makes speakers of nonstandard varieties retain their dialects as a means to maintain their "belonging" to a particular community.
- Nonstandard varieties, despite being stigmatized, still persist, because their speakers use them as a marker of *group identification*.

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2. Linguistic insecurity

- Some speakers of nonstandard dialects become linguistically insecure.
- They tend to think that they produce more standard forms than they actually do. They also engage in too much ***hypercorrection***.
- The linguistic insecurity test.

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The linguistic insecurity test

Table 15.9 Items on the linguistic insecurity test given to New Yorkers

Token	Form 1	Form 2	Token	Form 1	Form 2
Joseph	[dʒɔwsɪf]	[dʒɔwzɪf]	length	[lenθ]	[lenθ]
catch	[kætʃ]	[ketʃ]	February	[febjuəri]	[febjuəri]
tomato	[təmeɪtə]	[təmatə]	ketchup	[kætʃəp]	[ketʃəp]
diapers	[daɪpəz]	[dajəpɪz]	escalator	[eskəleɪtə]	[eskjəleɪtə]
aunt	[aʊnt]	[ænt]	new	[nu]	[nju]
often	[ɔftən]	[ɔfən]	tune	[tju:n]	[tun]
garage	[gɑrɑdʒ]	[gɑrɑ:ʒ]	avenue	[ævənu]	[ævənju]
humorous	[hju:mərəs]	[jumərəs]	because	[bɪkəz]	[bɪkəz]
vase	[veɪz]	[vɑ:z]	half	[hæf]	[hɑf]

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3. Linguistic discrimination

- Linguistic profiling: An ad
- Excerpts from 'Do you speak American?':
 - John Baugh's study of linguistic profiling.
 - Discrimination in school: Ann Arbor, MI.
- On Monday, we talk a bit more about cases of linguistic profiling and ways to fight prejudice in that area. (Jeopardy with a new twist?)

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Next class agenda

- Finishing up our discussion of sociolinguistic variation.
- Language change. Chapter 11, pp. 488-509.

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