

## LNGT0101 Introduction to Linguistics



Lecture #20  
Nov 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011

## Announcements

- Very good work on the midterm overall. Average score is 189/200. so, thanks.
- Any interesting findings in the dialectal survey interview on HW5, for those how have already started working on that?

2

## Summary of our discussion last week

- The presence of standard vs. nonstandard dialects in speech communities often gives rise to several sociolinguistic patterns.
- One is the standard = success pattern, and the associated notion of prestige.
- Another is linguistic insecurity for some speakers of nonstandard dialects.
- A third is linguistic discrimination.

3

## 3. Linguistic discrimination

- Excerpts from 'Do you speak American?':
  - John Baugh's study of linguistic profiling.
  - Discrimination in school: Ann Arbor, MI.
- Fighting prejudice against nonstandard dialects:
  - Jeopardy with a new twist.

4

There's more to nonstandard features  
than meets the eye.

5

## Labov's study of Martha's Vineyard

- Speakers on the island varied in their centralization of the diphthongs /aɪ/ and /aʊ/ in *why* and *now* to [əɪ] and [əʊ], respectively.
- The centralization feature was characteristic of people living on the island (as opposed to summer tourists), hence it was a *regional* feature.

6

**Labov's study of Martha's Vineyard**

- But within the island population, some residents centralized, while others didn't.
- Labov investigated the factors that might be involved in this variation. His study showed that several variables were at play here.

7

**Labov's study of Martha's Vineyard**

- People who lived Up-Island (strictly rural) centralized more than those who lived Down-Island.
- Centralization increased with age, peaking between 31 and 45 years.
- Students going to college with the intention of returning to the island centralized more than those who didn't plan to go back.
- Ethnic minority groups such as Portuguese and Native Americans centralized more than other groups.

8

**Labov's study of Martha's Vineyard**

- Centralization on Martha's Vineyard thus seemed like a marker of **group identification**.
- How closely speakers identified with the island, wanted to enter into the mainstream, saw themselves as Vineyarders and were proud of it, was positively correlated with the degree of centralization.
- This became obvious when Labov partitioned his informants in terms of their attitude towards the island.

9

**Centralization and attitude towards Martha's Vineyard**

Persons	/əɪ/	/əʊ/
<b>40 (Positive)</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>13 (Neutral)</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>6 (Negative)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>

10

Sometimes, things are a bit more complex.

11

**Nichols (1983)**

- A study of linguistic behavior in an African-American community in Georgetown County in South Carolina.
- After several months living there, she described the sociolinguistic situation as:
  - “a speech continuum which ranges from an English creole known as *Gullah* or *Geechee* on the one end, to a variety of Black English [AAE] in the center, to a regionally standard variety of English at the other end.”
- Of the three, Gullah, is the most local and least prestigious.

12

### Nichols (1983)

- Nichols studied how frequently speakers use the following Gullah terms in their speech:
  - a. the pronoun **ee**, e.g., *Miss Hassel had – ee had all kinds of flowers.*
  - b. the word **fu**, used to mean 'to', e.g., *I come fu get my coat.*
  - c. the preposition **to**, used to mean 'at', e.g., *Can we stay to the table?*

13

### Nichols (1983)

- Observations: Older men and women used Gullah terms generally.
- Among the younger women and men, there was a sharp difference. Beginning at age 10, males used more Gullah than females.
- Can we explain these patterns?

14

### Nichols (1983)

- Men, both young and old, take construction jobs, which require little education but pay well. On the job, they use Gullah for interaction and group identification.
- Older women primarily worked as farm day laborers or maids, where interaction is again with coworkers.
- Younger woman, by contrast, are taking up jobs in the tourist industry, as sales clerks, mail carriers, and school teachers, hence need a higher level of education and interact with speakers of Standard English.

15

### Nichols (1983)

- Nichols' study thus shows that we cannot isolate gender as the only factor leading to differences in standard language use. In Georgetown County, it is also the economic opportunities afforded women and men that shape their language usage.

16

### Some further aspects of sociolinguistic diversity

17

### Styles (aka Registers)

- Style or register refers to the kind of language that one uses in a particular situation. It is a kind of "situational dialect."
- One can distinguish two major styles of speech: formal and informal, with a range of styles in between forming a continuum.
- One characteristic of informal style is the use of **slang**. What are some slang words you know?

18

## Jargon

- Jargon or argot refers to the technical language used in a particular domain.
- For example, in this course we used a lot of linguistic jargon, e.g., *head, complement, parameter, wh-in-situ, morpheme, constituent*, etc.
- Computer jargon: *CPU, RAM, ROM, modem, hacking, virus, download*, etc.

19

## Taboo words and euphemisms

- Some words are considered **taboo** and are not to be used, at least not in the presence of "polite company." That's why you have to \*\*\* them in writing and bleep them on TV.
- The presence of taboo words leads to the creation of so-called **euphemisms**, expressions that are used to avoid a taboo word.  
*"pass away" or "pass on" for "die"*  
*"funeral directors" for "morticians"*

20

## Sociolinguistic variation due to bilingualism or multilingualism

21

## Code-switching

- Another pattern of sociolinguistic behavior is **code-switching**, where bilingual speakers typically move back and forth between two languages in their speech.
- Code-switching is common in places where more than one language is used, e.g. Canada, Switzerland, the US, many African countries, etc.

22

## Examples of code-switching

- a. *Acadian French-English*  
 Pis, elle est toute seule, comme c'est ('well, it is all alone as if it's) in the middle of nowheres.
- b. *Puerto Rican Spanish-English*  
 Why make Carol *sentarse atras pa' que* ('sit in the back so') everybody has to move *pa' que se salga* ('for her to get out')?
- c. *Fongbe-French*
- |         |     |     |     |           |         |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----------|---------|
| médjé   | lé  | nɔ  | ɔ̀b | gravement | blesés. |
| someone | pl. | HAB | be  | seriously | hurt    |
- 'Some are seriously hurt.'

23

## In Kenya: Swahili, English, and Luidakho

- (1) Interviewer: Unapenda kufanya kazi yako lini? Mchanaau usiku?  
 Nurse: As I told you, I like my job. Sina ubaguzi wo wote kuhusu wakati ninapofanya kazi. I enjoy working either during the day au usiku yote ni sawa kwangu. Hata family members w-angu wamezoea mtindo huu. There is no quarrel at all. **Obubi bubulaho.** Saa zengine kazi huwa nyingi sana na there are other times when we just have light duty. **Valwale vanji,** more work; **valwale vadi,** hazi kidogo.
- (2) Interviewer: When do you like to work? Days or nights?  
 Nurse: As I told you, I like my job. I have no difficulty at all regarding when I do work. I enjoy working either during the day or at night, all is OK as far as I'm concerned. Even my family members have gotten used to this plan. There is no quarrel at all. **There is no badness.** Sometimes there is a lot of work and there are other times when we just have light duty. **More patients,** more work; **fewer patients,** little work.

24

### Code-switching is rule-governed

- Code-switching does not produce a “broken” language. The process is still governed by the rules of each language.

25

### Code-switching is rule-governed

- In Spanish NPs, for example, the adjective usually follows the noun (unlike in English NPs):
    - My mom fixes green tamales. Adj N
    - Mi mamá hace tamales verdes. N Adj
  - In a code-switching situation a bilingual Spanish-English speaker may produce:
    - My mom fixes tamales verdes.
    - Mi mamá hace green tamales.
- but not:
- \*My mom fixes verdes tamales.
  - \*Mi mamá hace tamales green.

26

### Next class agenda

- Language change: Read Chapter 11, pp. 488-509.

27