

Language and Social Class

Linguistics 220: "Language and Society"

15 April 2003

Readings

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Readings

- Required
 - Mesthrie et al. (2000), Chapter 3
- Other
 - Trudgill (2001), Chapter 2
 - Wardaugh (1992), Chapter 2,6,7
 - Labov (1972)

Main Points

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Main Points

- Important Term(s)
 - linguistic insecurity
- Sociolinguistic investigation centers on variation in one (or more) linguistic feature which varies with respect to social groups

Business

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Business

- Don't forget to give me any experiment/talk tickets

Need replies from DoKyung Kim, Rebecca Nelson

Lecture

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What is the difference between the speech of the following characters?

- Robin Leach
 - British accent
 - standard variable use of 'to be'
- "Cletus" from "The Simpsons"
 - Southern US accent
 - "ain't"
 - invariant use of 'to be'
(*you's, he's, we's*)

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How to investigate sociolinguistic variation (one method)

1. Identify linguistic variation in a community
2. Gather data from sample of people
3. Analyze data with respect to relevant language feature
4. Ascertain correlations between linguistic variation and social groups

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Commonly investigated
sociolinguistic variables

- -in -ing
- nonprevocalic /r/
- backing of vowels
- verbal -s

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Fischer (1958): *-in/-ing*

- linguistic feature: use of *fishin'* vs. *fishing*
- observations
 - Girls use *fishing* more than boys
 - 'Model' boys use *fishing* more than other boys
- Conclusion: *-in* and *-ing* variation related to sex, class, personality, mood, and formality of setting

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Labov (1972): NY department store

- linguistic feature:
nonprevocalic /r/
- Methodology
 - Three department stores:
Saks, Macy's, S. Klein
 - Established social ranking
of stores
 - * advertising in NY Times
vs. Daily News
 - * price of advertised goods
 - elicit "fourth floor" twice
(casual, emphatic styles)

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from employee

- Results
 - overall, higher status uses
more nonprevocalic /r/
 - in emphatic style, lower
status tends toward higher
status

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Linguistic Insecurity

- speaker of a lower-prestige variety 'corrects' to a higher-prestige variety
- motivated by speaker's aspirations, etc.

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Other social class variation

- Eckert (1989): Burnouts use backed vowels
- Norwich & Detroit: lower-class speakers do not use verbal -s

- "She like him very much."
- "He don't know a lot, do he?"
- "It go ever so fast."

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Projects

- Project groups
- Project proposals by May 1st
(earlier is better!)
 - linguistic feature(s)
 - subjects
 - elicitation procedure and instrument
- Collect data by mid-May
- Analyze data
- Write paper individually
- Submit paper on May 29th

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References

Labov, W. (1972). The social stratification of (r) in new york city department stores. In *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, pages 43–54. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Mesthrie, R., Swann, J., Deumert, A., and Leap, W., editors (2000). *Sociolinguistics*. John Benjamins Publishing.

Trudgill, P. (2001).

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Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society. Penguin Books.

Wardaugh, R. (1992). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics, Second Edition*. Blackwell, Oxford, UK.