Chapter 3

Social Dialectology

‘us’ vs. ‘them’
Funny...?
Speech Community: Defined

Some kind of social group whose speech characteristics can be described in a coherent manner
SC: Key Elements

- Social group
  - “INs” & “OUTs”
- Shared ‘norms’
- Shared language(s)
- Shared linguistic values
- Of interest to someone...
  - (cf. “If a tree falls in the woods...”)

Perceptions of Speakers

- Members of SC may not be aware of any linguistic ‘glue’ holding them together
- Solidarity factors may include:
  - Social
  - Cultural
  - Political
  - Ethnic
Fischer (1958):

...people adopt a variant not because it is easier to pronounce but because it expresses how they feel about their relative status versus other conversants’
Labov (1972)

Language contains systematic variation which can be characterized and explained by patterns of social differentiation within speech communities
Wardhaugh (2000):

“The variation we see in language must partly reflect a need that people have to be seen as the same as certain other people on some occasions.”

...Wardhaugh...
Vocabulary I

- Sociolect
- Ideolect
- Informant
- Field method
- Observer’s paradox
- Linguistic Variable (c.f. Marker... )
Social Variation

- Caste societies
  - India
  - Old Japan
  - Old Europe

- Modern Western Society
  - Similarities?
  - Why study linguistics of social class?
  - Attempts made to quantify class...
Dave’s Soapbox

Stereotypes:

- Useful: Tendencies of a group
- Dangerous: Assumptions about individuals
Vocabulary II

- Vernacular
  - Inherent variation
- African American Vernacular English
  - Ebonics
- Prestige
- Hyper-correction
  - Linguistic Insecurity
- Minimal pairs
  (*source/sauce not minimal pair for me.*)
Application

- How would you try to place individuals according to their social position in the SC Upstate community? What factors would you consider to be relevant and how would you rate each? What class designations would seem appropriate?

- **Consider:** What did Fischer & Labov do?
- **Optional:** Where would you place yourself?
Homework

- Identify a research project you could carry out this semester. Include:
  - Research Question
  - Hypothesis
  - Implementation Strategy

*Review the studies in text... Simplify and extrapolate*

- Read: 92-95; 102-112; *(skim 95-102)*
Field Methodologies

- Rapid Anonymous Surveys (Targeted Elicitation)
  - *Labov’s NY Department Store*
- Sociolinguistic Interviews
  - *Labov’s Harlem Gangs*
- Telephone Surveys
- Written/Electronic Surveys
  - *Not discussed in the text...*
Contributing Factors (partial...)

- Socio-economic class
- Style/Register
- Race/Ethnicity
- Gender/Sexuality
Labovs in the Making...

Your research designs...
Jocks, Burnouts, & Others

- Jocks ≈ College Prep
  ≈ Target ‘Prestige Dialect’

- Burnouts ≈ Blue Collar Futures
  ≈ Target ‘Local Dialect’

- Others ≠ Solidified Substratum

*Cf. comment on stereotypes...*

What’s surprising about this?
Upper Class

- Relatively small group
- Hard to access
- Minor differences b/n U & UM classes
- U class characterized by
  - Prosodic & lexical features
  - Linguistic security (vs. insecurity)
- U vs. UM = status... M vs. W = class
AAVE Features

- Omission of *s* in third person singular
- Zero possessive
- Zero copula
- Pronominal appositive
- Multiple negatives
- Cluster simplification *phonological*
Linguistics in Action

- Law
  - Detecting
  - Prosecuting
  - Defending

- Business
  - Marketing
  - User-behavior

- Education
  - 1st Language
  - 2nd Language
  - General Pedagogy

- Computers
  - Voice recognition
  - Usability
For Tomorrow

Chapter 6
184 – 196
(Sections 6.1 – 6.3)