DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 183 001 FL 010 931

AUTHOR Christian, Donna; Wolfram, Walt
TITLE Exploring Dialects. Dialects and Educational Equity.
INSTITUTION Center for Applied Linguistics, Arlington, Va.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Nov 79
CONTRACT 400-78-0057
NOTE 26p.; For related documents, see FL 010 928-932
AVAILABLE FROM Center for Applied Linguistics, 1611 North Kent Street, Arlington, VA 22209 ($2.50)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS American English; *Dialects; Elementary Secondary Education; *Grammar; Language Attitudes; *Language Patterns; Language Usage; *Language Variation; *Nonstandard Dialects; *Pronunciation; Regional Dialects; Social Dialects; Sociolinguistics; Standard Spoken Usage; Vocabulary

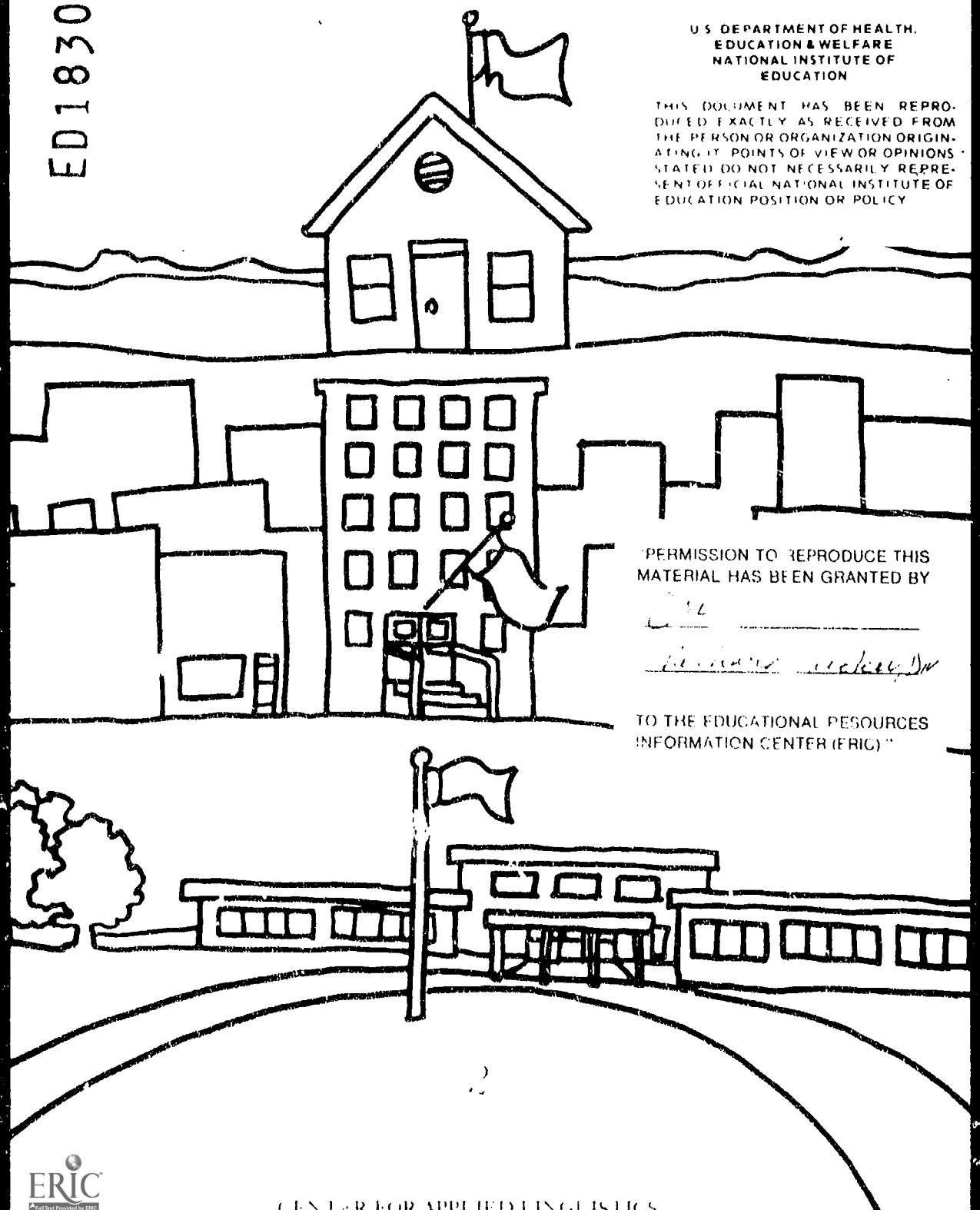
ABSTRACT

An understanding of dialect differences goes beyond the recognition that people talk differently; it concerns the way dialects differentiate themselves, the main differences in the patterns, and the method of discovering the patterns of various dialects. This booklet is intended for those who need to know more specific information concerning the patterns of English dialects, and who wish to begin exploring dialect differences on a first hand basis. Accordingly, the following issues are dealt with: (1) observing language patterns, finding out about dialects spoken in the community in which one lives, and how teachers can look more closely at the dialect differences that might be influencing what is happening in their classrooms; (2) a method of looking at particular dialect patterns; (3) pronunciation differences in terms of regional and social dialects; (4) grammar differences, especially suffixes, verb usage, and negation; (5) vocabulary differences; and (6) the investigation of culturally defined language use patterns, a topic that in some ways goes beyond the basic questions of dialect diversity. Scattered throughout the text are indications for further reading, and a list of references is provided at the end.
(Author/AMH)

DIALECTS AND EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Exploring Dialects

Donna Christian and Walt Wolfram



CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Dialects and Educational Equity

Language inevitably plays a central role in education. It is used as a means of transmitting information and is an essential ingredient in the development and evaluation of particular educational skills. In addition, language is a vehicle of social identification as people react to one another based on the way they speak. The importance of language in education, coupled with its social significance, makes it a key factor in the struggle for educational equity.

Over the past two decades, a great deal of research has been undertaken on language diversity in American English, particularly among the economically impoverished and ethnically and socially isolated members of our society—those groups who speak what has been labeled "nonstandard English." Research on these varieties has raised some fundamental social and educational issues—matters that cannot be ignored by those vested with the responsibility of educating *all* students. ***Dialects and Educational Equity*** attempts to address some of these issues on the basis of what is currently known about language variation.

Our concern is the dissemination of information relevant to the needs of practitioners, and the format of this series is designed to highlight this orientation. Each booklet is arranged in a question answer format, with the questions representing the kinds of issues raised by practitioners in surveys, workshops, and discussion groups and the answers based on current research information addressing the concerns. The first two booklets, ***Dialogue on Dialects*** and ***Exploring Dialects***, address preliminary concerns about dialect differences while the booklets, ***Speech Pathology and Dialect Differences***, ***Reading and Dialect Differences***, and ***Language Arts and Dialect Differences***, address more specialized educational issues. At the end of each discussion in the booklets, certain other readings are suggested for those who may wish to pursue more information on a particular topic.

Practitioners and researchers in the areas of specialization considered have guided the development of these publications from the initial planning to the final products. In addition, staff consultants at the Center for Applied Linguistics, Roger W. Shuy and Peter A. Eddy, advised on many phases of the project. Lance Potter, of our staff, researched many topics of relevance, and Marlene Zack attended to the fine details of typing the original booklets. Finally, Diane Barrosh, of the Publications Program at the Center for Applied Linguistics, developed the layout and edited the final manuscript. Our appreciation is extended to these individuals, as well as the many anonymous practitioners who originally brought our attention to the issues discussed here.

Donna Christian
Center for Applied Linguistics

Walt Wolfram
University of the District of Columbia
& the Center for Applied Linguistics

This publication was prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare under contract no 400-78-0057 The opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect NIE position or policy, and no official endorsement by NIE or HEW should be inferred

November 1979

Published by the Center for Applied Linguistics
1611 North Kent Street Arlington Virginia 22209

Printed in the U.S.A.

Contents

Preface

An understanding of dialect differences goes considerably beyond the simple recognition that people talk differently. This recognition is just the starting point for exploring the nature of these differences. Many people are interested or need to go beyond the superficial perception of dialect differences to see how the patterns of language work themselves out in the varieties of English. These people want to know how dialects differentiate themselves, what the main differences in the patterns are, and how to go about discovering the patterns of various dialects for themselves.

This booklet is designed to take the reader beyond the casual level of curiosity about dialects; it is intended for those who need to know more specific information concerning the patterns of English dialects—those who wish to begin exploring dialect differences on a first hand basis. In surveys, workshops, and discussions, many people have asked the kinds of questions about dialects represented here. In addition to those people who expressed these concerns, we are indebted to several individuals who commented on an earlier draft of this booklet. Ralph Fasold (Georgetown University), Bill Leeme (Howard County School System), and William Hall (Center for the Study of Reading) have given us valuable comments that guided our revision of the earlier text.

Donna Christian
Walt Wolfram

OBSERVING LANGUAGE PATTERNS

Realistically, we must admit that different dialects carry different social values. Because of these values, some speakers may be put at serious disadvantages in certain situations, such as school or employment. Can anything be done to eliminate the inequities that are associated with dialect difference?

There are two possible ways of dealing with inequities due to dialect differences. One would be to eliminate the differences between dialects, the other would be to change the negative attitudes toward some dialects that are the source of the inequities.

Elimination of dialect differences is not a practical solution since variation is an inherent characteristic of language. Consider, for example, one small feature of pronunciation of the English language: the vowel sound in a word like *time* or *my*. Imagine how these words would be pronounced by someone from Ohio, compared to someone from Texas, Georgia, West Virginia, New Jersey, or California. To go even further, think about the same words spoken by an Australian, a West Indian, someone from London, a Cockney speaker, or someone from India. In each case, the words would be English words, with English pronunciations, but they would sound quite different. The existence of variation is a basic fact about language, and the use of certain variable features in language to mark members of certain social groups is a basic fact about society. These principles are not likely to yield to efforts to change them.

The other possibility, eliminating the misconceptions about the significance of dialect differences, involves working at the level of people's language attitudes. Our language attitudes are shown by the reactions that we have to different language patterns. As children acquire their native language, they also acquire a set of attitudes about what is good and what is bad in language usage. These beliefs then develop into a set of opinions used to judge people by the way they speak. Language attitudes are generally shared by the members of a cultural group, leading to a common evaluation of certain language patterns and the people who use them.

The problem with language attitudes arises when stereotypes and other misconceptions which have no basis in reality are allowed to influence opinions and judgments about someone, leading to various adverse effects. There are a number of common misconceptions about nonstandard dialects which have been observed. Nonstandard dialects are often thought to be unsystematic or incomplete versions of the standard one. Speakers of these dialects are sometimes mistakenly judged to have cognitive handicaps or [illegible] to have lower language development. All of these [illegible] It is important to try to deal with language at[illegible] that may result from them. One critical situation [illegible] language attitudes can influence their expectations [illegible] been shown to affect student achievement [illegible] affect the quality of education some students receive.

How can language attitudes be changed?

[illegible] in the development [illegible] for the [illegible] misconceptions about language [illegible] some dialects. Attitudes [illegible] demonstrated that such attitudes [illegible] implications of language attitudes [illegible] especially important

How can someone go about finding out more about the dialect(s) spoken in the community in which they live? Is it possible for someone who's never studied linguistics to do that?

Anyone can become a language observer simply by listening more closely to the speech of those around them. In fact, most people are already good observers of language, in a selective way. That is, many people will notice features in the speech of others, but what they notice and how they interpret their observations is filtered through their attitudes and assumptions. For example, adults may notice that a child "drops the g's" at the ends of words like *going* or *running*, but will most likely fail to realize that they do the same thing. It is very hard to monitor your own casual speech, so you will often assume certain things happen because of what you feel is good or bad about language usage.

A good way to learn more about the dialect of a particular community is through direct observation. This is akin to the collection of data for a linguistic study, but a rigorous scientific study need not be aimed for. Reports of dialect studies should also be a helpful guide and source of supplementary information. Such studies of community language patterns have shown the need to consider both social and linguistic factors in order to understand the patterns involved. These should not be overlooked even in a more casual study since a distorted view of the linguistic situation might be obtained otherwise. Careful observation of the speech patterns of community members, taking into account important social factors, is the most important step in describing a dialect.

There are a number of different areas in which dialect patterns can be noticed. They may involve features of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or more general aspects of language use. When comparing two groups for similarities and differences, alternant patterns (i.e. where one group does one thing and the other group does another) can usually be found in each area. They can be documented by examples from the speech of members of the groups involved.

What social factors should be considered?

Studies of language differences have found significant variation between groups identified on the basis of age, socioeconomic status, sex, ethnic group membership, and geographical region. For instance, speakers in the 40 to 60 age group will use certain language patterns that are different from a group of teenagers. In some cases, this is because teenagers adopt certain language patterns that are characteristic of their age level and the use of these patterns diminishes as they get older. Slang words are a good example of this transitory stage in an individual's language development, and there are various pronunciation and grammar features as well. In other cases, the differences between the age groups stem from different language patterns that have been acquired and will be maintained more or less throughout an individual's life. In a North Carolina community, for example, members of the older age group were found to pronounce words like *water* and *tour* without an *r* sound at the end. The younger speakers, on the other hand, consistently used an *r* on the ends of such words. This situation is typical of areas where the language patterns of the community are changing, since older groups are reflecting the speech patterns they acquired as children, and the younger ones show the pattern that is being acquired more currently. Age can, in this way, be an important factor to consider when examining the language pat-

terns of a community, since differences typically exist between age groups. This means that characteristics of children's language in a community should not be inferred from the speech of adults only, but that a balanced picture of the dialect should be based on the speech of members of different age groups.

The other social factors—socioeconomic status, sex, ethnicity—can operate in similar ways within a community so that linguistic and social differences are often found to correlate. (Region as a social factor usually distinguishes between communities in different geographical areas.) In addition, the dimension of style in speech has proven to be significant in investigations of language patterns. Speakers control a range of patterns from which they choose, depending on how formal they think the situation is. With an intimate friend, someone might say something like *whatcha feel like doin'*, with a casual acquaintance it might be *what do ya feel like doin'*, and in a formal context, the sentence might sound like *what do you feel like doing*. This is an example of how pronunciation might change according to different styles, but you can also observe differences in grammar and vocabulary. The most regular patterns have been found to occur in the more casual patterns of speech where there is less attention to the language forms being used.

So, in observing language patterns, it is important to keep in mind the social factors that interface with differences in language forms. While it will be instructive to sample a range of styles if that is possible, the best one for observing the natural language patterns of a community is the casual mode.

Teachers have to deal a lot with language and language-related matters in their daily lives in the classroom. How can they look more closely at the dialect differences that might be influencing what's happening in their classrooms?

In fact, teachers, because of the work they are called on to do, often want to know more about the language patterns of the community from which their students come. They can look in detail at the actual speech of their students in the classroom for one source of data. This may seem like a difficult task, given all the other things to be accomplished in the course of a day, however, with language at the base of so many classroom activities, it can be most enlightening. It is also important to investigate situations outside the school context as well where language is being used by students and other members of the community. This will provide a more balanced picture of the dialect. Although it will be useful for teachers to examine speech patterns in a general way, they will most likely have identified certain features that they have noticed in some students' speech. For instance, a structure that occurs in the writing of a student may be of interest. The teacher can observe the student's speech patterns to determine if the structure is part of the spoken dialect.

How can you tell if a language difference is a real speech or language disorder or is simply part of the dialect of the student?

In order to distinguish disorder from difference, one measure that can be relied upon is the set of community norms. If the speech patterns in question match the ones used in the community from which the students come, then they do not reflect a language disorder. They are language differences that may deserve further investigation through observation. If, on the other hand, the speech of a student does not seem appropriate for the community, then the student may have a genuine language disorder. This topic is treated much more extensively in booklet number 3, *Speech*

Pathology.) The feature about which the question of difference versus disorder is raised may have to be examined quite thoroughly before a decision on its status is reached.

One important point should be kept in mind while observing the language of students, particularly those who speak nonstandard dialects. Given the orientation of schools to standard English usage, it would be easy for a teacher to interpret the differences from standard English in students' speech as "mistakes." This should be carefully avoided. Dialect differences that may be noticed are **not** instances of poorly learned grammar or retarded language development; they are the products of rules which are just as regular and systematic as the rules of standard English. In fact, the observer will not know exactly how these features should be used unless the rules involved have been figured out or are known. Some features a teacher may not know how to use at all.

Suggested Readings

A Pluralistic Nation, edited by Margaret A. Lourie and Nancy Conklin, provides a collection of articles that deal with dialects and educational issues. Within these, there is considerable information provided about specific dialects, as well as discussions of their social significance. This volume can be consulted for a more detailed treatment of many of the issues raised in this first section. The question of the impact of information about dialects is addressed by Roger W. Shuy in "The Study of Vernacular Black English as a Factor in Educational Change." For those interested in how a technical study of a dialect community might be conducted, a detailed report of how a large scale investigation was done can be found in *Field Techniques in an Urban Language Study*, by Roger W. Shuy, Walt Wolfram, and William K. Riley. The topic of social factors in language variation is covered in detail in the fourth chapter of Walt Wolfram and Ralph W. Fasold's *The Study of Social Dialects in American English* ("The Social Variable").

LOOKING AT PARTICULAR PATTERNS

Suppose you notice a particular language item that one person or several people seem to use repeatedly. Is it possible to check out that one item without going through the whole process of looking at all the dialect patterns?

The most reasonable approach to the investigation of dialect differences is a systematic, organized study of particular structures. In fact, when too many features are examined at the same time, a real danger exists for both professional and non-professional students of language. The common technique used by linguists is to select a particular structure, investigate that structure in detail, and then move on to the investigation of another structure. While this approach imposes certain limitations in terms of an overall description of a variety, it increases the potential for an accurate description of particular features.

The first steps in testing for different language items are really quite simple. Although linguists may be able to write formulas to describe certain rules, and they may have some detailed experience to govern how they approach their investigation

of language structures, anyone can make significant observations about language patterns. The procedure begins when an item in the speech of someone (including ourselves) is noticed. For example, in the context of a southern school setting, we may hear some children using forms like *He home today* or *You out*. Our attention is drawn to the fact that other speakers might use *He's home today* or *You're out* in these contexts, and we decide to investigate this structure further. We start listening to other children in natural speech situations, such as the playground or in the hallway (in order to get a casual style of speech). Basically, we can listen for these structures anywhere that language is used in a natural way. Our further investigation suggests that these forms are not just a "slip of the tongue," since they are found in the speech of other community members. This indicates that we are dealing with a language pattern that deserves a closer look. We start writing down on three by five cards some of the examples we hear in the natural use of language. It is particularly important to write down examples rather than rely solely on memory. It allows us to look back at the data and gives us ideas as to the organization of specific patterns.

Once you observe a particular structure, what else do you look for?

There are several basic questions which guide all linguistic analyses. In terms of dialect differences, the investigation focuses on (a) what forms occur in other dialects (technically called a **correspondence**) and (b) the kinds of structures in which the form occurs. With this in mind, let's return to our examples of *He home today* and *You out*. With reference to the correspondence of forms, we observe that the dialect in question does not use a form where standard English might use *IS* or *ARE*. In other words, the sentences *He home today* and *You out* would correspond to *He's home today* and *You're out* in a comparable style of standard English. Our first question, then, is answered fairly simply for this variety—the difference lies in the presence of certain forms of the verb *be* as opposed to their absence. (In other cases, the correspondence can be between two distinct items or sets of items, rather than a relationship of presence or absence.)

The second question is a little more difficult because it requires looking at the language context surrounding this form. The question for this dialect structure is **Where can a speaker manifest the absence of be?** At this point, we turn to our examples and start examining exactly where the absence of *be* does **not** occur. Along the way, we make certain hypotheses that we check with the data. This involves testing ideas about how a pattern works against the data and reformulating them if necessary. It is probably easier to show here what we mean by looking at some data that might be found on our observation cards. Suppose the following examples of the absence of *be* occur:

He in the store now	*He at school*
They always be messing around	*They not here*
We in the house today	*She taking medicine*
She not home now	*You all messing around now*
You not today	*We at school don't mess around*
We not playing outside	*He gonna do it I know he is*

On the basis of these examples, it seems to the speaker that *be* can be absent when it occurs before *in* and *not* in standard English. When we start looking at the examples for *school*, *here*, *taking*, and *gonna*, we find that the different forms of *be* takes, we find that the pattern is less consistent than it appeared at first. We may initially note that absence occurs only where *be* would appear as a contracted form. But is there any case where it is absent when the sentence would be something like *He wants to be home* (i.e., no ex-

amples such as *He wants to home*) or *He should be here now* (i.e. no examples like *He should here now*). This means that the pattern is limited to certain constructions, namely the conjugated forms of *be*.

Continuing the search for further restrictions, we notice that there are no examples of *be* absence when it would occur in standard English as *was* or *were*, that is, in the past tense. We look at our data closely, checking out this hypothesis. This restriction turns out to be supported by the data. The absence of *be* thus appears to be limited to present tense, conjugated forms.

We look further. Can we limit it more? We can consider the subjects that occur. An examination of the data shows no cases of absence with the pronoun *I* as subject. Is this just an accident or is this a real pattern governing this rule? From our data, it appears that it might be a genuine pattern, but in order to verify it we probably will need more examples with *I*. We may have to start listening again, taking down examples with *I*. As we do this, we collect numerous examples, such as *I'm first, I'm taking it home*, etc. The fact that the verb form always appears when the subject is *I* leads us to conclude that absence can correspond to *IS* or *ARE*, but not *AM*.

We could go on, and there are some more details of conjugated *be* absence which actually would be included in our final analysis. The important point here is that we systematically proceed, making a hypothesis and checking it with the data. We must be willing to let the rule emerge from the actual data rather than our first impression.

What if you don't seem to have enough data to answer certain questions which come up about an item in the course of your observation? What do you do then?

Invariably, certain questions do come up which weren't anticipated in the original observations. With tape recorded speech samples, we can simply go back and note certain things we didn't look at previously. With observations made in other ways, we may need to collect more data. In our example with *be*, we needed to go back and look for cases with the pronoun *I* very closely, to see if any absence of *AM* occurred. As it turns out, this case demonstrates an important point about observing forms. **When looking for a pattern, you can't look only at those cases in a dialect which are different from another dialect.** In order to get an accurate picture, you must look at the aspects of similarity as well as differences between them. So we really have to look at all kinds of cases with *be* in order to find the pattern of *be* absence.

Sometimes, the sources of data used do not provide enough instances of a particular structure. For example, suppose we don't have enough potential cases of *be* with *I* to come to a conclusion about whether the absence of *AM* takes place or not. We notice that most of the conversations which serve as the data do not involve first person singular forms. In a case like this, some supplementary data can be useful.

One way of getting certain types of structures is to ask leading questions – questions that might have the potential for certain structures to occur. So, we might simply ask some personal questions that would be expected to be answered in the first person ("What project are you working on in shop?"). This strategy doesn't guarantee the use of certain structures, but it has been used successfully in a number of different studies.

It is also possible to devise strategies to elicit certain forms quite directly. Certain types of word games have been created that utilize this technique. The idea is to set up a frame so that the response should contain one of the forms in question. For example, if we wanted to see what happens to *be* verbs when the subject is *I*, we might set up a simple task of changing a stimulus sentence in non-first person to first person

in the response. Speakers from the community can be oriented to the task using sample items unrelated to the forms in question (e.g., "Here are some sentences that I want you to change like this. I will give a sentence like *He went to the store* and you say *I went to the store, too*"). Then they are presented some stimulus sentences with the form in question (e.g., Stimulus: *They going to the game*. Response: *I'm going to the game, too*). These games are not particularly difficult to construct, and they can give access to some forms important for the description. However, it is important to use this kind of information only as supplemental data, since this "word game" situation doesn't always give the same results as ordinary speech. In hand with other data, however, this direct elicitation of structures can make an important contribution to our understanding of particular features.

" How do you know when you get enough information? It seems like you can just go on and on getting more information, but you have to stop somewhere.

The problem of deciding when you have enough data is difficult for anyone undertaking analysis. Basically, you want enough data to get to the point where additional data doesn't add anything particularly new to the understanding. As a guiding principle, some researchers use about 45 minutes to an hour of free conversation as the basis for an adequate sample of natural speech for one speaker. At least a practical cut off point of five speakers in a given social category (e.g., middle class urban Black teenaged males, rural White Appalachian females over 60, etc.) is sometimes used as a basis for studying the social parameters of speech. Obviously, these amounts may not always be appropriate, but they are typical of data bases that have resulted in some fairly representative studies.

Suggested Readings

A more detailed discussion of how linguistic patterns can be investigated is given in "Field Methods in the Study of Social Dialects," the third chapter of Wolfram and Fasold's *The Study of Social Dialects in American English*. This provides a detailed discussion of the methods used to obtain casual speech data, as well as some alternative ways of obtaining data. Methods for investigating regional differences are described by Roger W. Shuy in *Discovering American Dialects* as well. For the most part, descriptions of particular dialects or dialect features contain at least a brief description of how the data were obtained and analyzed.

PRONUNCIATION DIFFERENCES

Dialects seem to differ considerably in terms of how words are pronounced. How widespread are pronunciation differences?

Pronunciation differences are probably the major key to the regional dialects of English. For the most part these differences are related to the pronunciation of certain vowel sounds. Vowel differences are particularly crucial in distinguishing regional dialects, while consonant differences are often significant in terms of the social dialects.

However, regional and social differences cannot be divorced from each other in pronunciation; they go hand in hand in the establishment of different dialects.

Although differences in pronunciation are widely recognized in our society, they are not always thought of in terms of particular "rules of pronunciation." Popular labels such as "drawl," "twang," "nasal," and "flat" are sometimes used as cover terms for different regional pronunciation patterns. In most cases, these labels are used to describe an overall impression rather than any particular pattern of pronunciation.

What are some of the major vowel differences in the dialects of English?

Several different vowel patterns stand out in terms of regional variation in American English. One prominent pattern involves the vowels in words like *time* and *boil*. In northern dialects, the "long *i*" in words like *time*, *side*, and *pie* is actually the rapid production of two vowel sounds, one something like the vowel *ah* (dictionary ä) and another something like the sound of *ee* (dictionary ē). The second vowel sound glides off the first, so that *time* is produced something like *täēm*, *pie* as *päē*, and *side* as *säēd*. In some southern dialects (or dialects of southern origin in the North), the ē gliding vowel may be eliminated. Pronunciations such as *tam* for *time*, *sad* for *side*, and *pa* for *pie* reflect this difference (although the actual quality of the *a* may vary considerably from dictionary *a* of *bat* to ä of *father*). This pronunciation tends to be less prominent when the following consonant is voiceless (like *t*, *ch*, *k*, *f*), so that it would be more common in a word like *side* than in one like *sight*. In the same way, the *oy* glides of *boy* and *boil* may be eliminated in some southern dialects, giving a pronunciation like *bȯ̂* *tȯ̂* (using the dictionary open ȯ̂) and *bȯ̂l*, respectively. The elimination of the glides with the ä and ȯ̂ is a fairly well established characteristic of many dialects of English in the South, and one of the characteristics usually included under the label of a southern "drawl."

Another vowel pattern showing regional variation is the difference between the *i* sound (as in *bit*) and the *e* sound (in *bet*). Before a nasal sound such as *n*, the difference between these vowels may be eliminated in some southern dialects. This means that items like *pen* and *pin* and *tin* and *ten* would actually be pronounced the same by these speakers.

The vowel differences mentioned above show variation along a southern/northern dimension, but there are vowels which show different kinds of geographic distribution. One of the vowels most sensitive to regional variation is the "open *o*" (dictionary ȯ̂) in items such as *law*, *on*, *water*, *caught*, etc. This vowel shows a range of variation, from the ä of the vowel in *father* to the *o* of *boat*, or even the *oo* (dictionary ü̂) of *book* (as in the Philadelphia pronunciation of *water* (something like *wüûter*). This vowel is probably the most variable in American English regional dialects. The front vowel in items such as *bad* or *ran* is also quite sensitive to regional variations. The range of pronunciation difference here is somewhat more subtle than that for the open *o* of *law*, but it shows considerable regional variation nonetheless. The occurrence of this vowel before *r* is particularly sensitive to regional variation, as indicated in how dialects arrange to them pronunciations of words such as *Mary*, *marry*, and *merry*. Dialects may range from a blurring of pronunciation of all three items to the distinct pronunciation of each.

Other vowel patterns can come from the influence of another language, such as Black varieties of English influenced by the historical use of Spanish or a native American Indian language. A typical case of this kind of influence is the use of the *ē* (*beet*) and *i* (*bit*) vowel pattern as found in some Cuban communities in the Southwest. In these cases, the vowel of *bit* would be pronounced as the vowel of *beet*, so that there would be no contrast in the *e* and *i*.

If the vowel differences are linked mostly with regional dialects, what features of pronunciation are related to different social dialects?

Consonants are probably more prominent than vowels in distinguishing social dialects of English. However, consonant differences intersect with regional patterns of variation, just as regional vowel differences intersect with social differences. Three areas of pronunciation differences relating to consonants have been widely described: the *th* sounds, *r* and *l*, and consonant blends. There are many other consonant differences as well. Other works can be consulted for more detail.

th sounds. Probably the most widely recognized social difference in consonant usage is the pronunciation of *these, them,* and *those* as the stereotypic *dese, dem, dose*. At the beginning of the word, the *th* may be pronounced like *d*, a stop consonant. The *th* sound of *think, thank,* and *throw* is different from the *th* of *these* (the *th* in *think* is voiceless, while the *th* in *these* is voiced). The voiceless *th* may be produced something like a *t* (*tink, tank, trow*) although it is not exactly the same. In general, the *d* for *th* in *these* is more common than the *t* for *th* in *think*. An interesting research finding about *d* for *th* is the fact that various social groups actually differ in how frequently this pronunciation is used rather than its total absence of presence. Middle class groups may use this pronunciation to some extent in casual speech while working class groups simply use it more often. This research finding counters the popular stereotype that working class speakers **always** use *d* for *th* and middle class standard English speakers **never** do. A number of pronunciation differences are actually manifested in this way across social classes in our society.

In other positions within a word, the *th* may take on different pronunciation characteristics. In the middle or at the end of a word, the *th* of *author* or *tooth* may be pronounced as *f*, as in *aufor* or *toof*, in words like *brother* and *smooth*, *v* may occur (*brovuh, smoov*). This pronunciation is most typically found in working class Black communities, with the *f* pronunciation more common than the use of *v*.

***r* and *l*.** A number of regional and socially significant pronunciations are also found in the *r* and *l* sounds. After a vowel, the *r* may be lost, and an *uh* like vowel (schwa or dictionary *u*) may take its place. The *ca* or *four* pronunciations for *car* and *four* are typical of this variation. In southern areas, the so-called "*r* less" pronunciation of a word gives *Cə'ol* for *Carol* or *sto'y* for *story*. The *l* following a vowel may behave like *r*, so that words like *table* and *Bill* may be pronounced something like *tabu* or *Biu*. And in some instances, the *l* may be lost completely, including the *l* before *p* (*hep* for *help*) or *f* (*set* for *self*). These *r* and *l* differences are linked for the most part with region and thus tend to carry more social significance in northern urban areas than in a southern context.

consonant blends. One feature of pronunciation that has been studied fairly extensively in several communities concerns the blending of consonants at the end of words. Consonant blends in words like *west* (*st*), *find* (*nd*), and *act* (*kt*) may be reduced to a single consonant, as in "*wes' fin*" and "*a' fer*." For all social groups, the final member of the blend may be absent when the next word begins with a consonant. Thus many standard English speakers will say things like "*wes'side fin*" *cats*, or "*ac' perfect*" in casual speech. There is considerable difference in the loss of final consonant when the following word begins with a vowel, however. Structures like "*wes'end, fin' apples*" and "*ac' cent*" would be much more typical of working class than middle class speech. Consonant blend reduction is particularly prominent in working class Black communities.

This pattern does not affect all blends at the end of a word. It is limited to those ended in a stop such as *t, d, k,* or *p*, and only takes place with certain combinations

of these blends. So it does **not** affect items like *sense* or *waltz*, which do not end in a stop combination (they end in an *s* sound), nor does it affect items like *col. jump, thank*, or *gulp* where the first consonant is *l* or *m* or *n* and the final member *t, k*, or *p*. Finally, it should be noted that this rule affects words in which the consonant blend is formed by the addition of the *ed* suffix as well as those where it is a part of the "base word." So, an item like *missed*, formed with an *st* blend as in *mist*, or *talked* (actually pronounced as *talkt*) or *banned* (pronounced *band*) would be affected by this rule, making them *mis', talk'*, and *ban'*.

Are there pronunciation differences between dialects other than consonants and vowels?

There are certainly other pronunciation differences in addition to simple consonant and vowel patterns. For example, there are some aspects of pronunciation which may affect a whole syllable. Syllables that are not stressed within a word may be eliminated. In casual speech, practically all speakers of English show this pattern to some extent, as indicated in pronunciations such as *'cause* for *because* and *'bout* for *about*. This rule, however, may be extended considerably beyond these kinds of items, affecting items ranging from *'lectricity* for *electricity* and *el'phant* for *elephant* to *'tatoes* for *potatoes* and *'member* for *remember*.

How about expressive features of speech? It seems like you can really tell people apart by the way their voice sounds, like where they put emphasis and how musical their way of talking is.

Characteristics such as "voice quality" and "inflection" are often mentioned in popular discussions of social and ethnic differences in English dialects. Although such references are often vague and impressionistic, more specific reference to voice quality may include qualities such as voice "raspiness," high and low pitch ranges, and general resonance. To a large extent, these qualities may be quite individualistic. However, some features such as voice raspiness may also be molded by community norms. For example, a stylized use of raspiness among Black males has been suggested in some preliminary studies.

Other characteristics have received a bit more attention, but the research base is still not exhaustive. Several studies have suggested that the range between high and low pitch used in Black communities is greater than that found in comparable White communities. This, of course, would be a culturally learned behavior, and totally unrelated to biological race. One study also suggests that women in American society typically have a greater pitch range distributed over a sentence than do men. This kind of pitch distribution over a sentence is what is commonly meant by the popular reference to "inflection," although linguists refer to this as **intonation**. Here again, the research evidence is not definitive.

It is also possible for the rhythm or "beats" of syllables in a sentence to vary. English typically gives extra prominence to the stressed words in a phrase and tends to "rush together" the other syllables. So, in a phrase such as *He went to the store*, *went* and *store* might get greater prominence than the other parts. Other languages may give an equal beat to each of the syllables in the sentence, as in *He went to the store*. This gives the impression of "choppiness" to the speaker who has learned the conventional English timing system. Dialects of English influenced by other languages with this timing system may adopt such a difference in their rhythm; others influenced by Spanish and those spoken in American Indian communities in the Southwest may also have this quality.

It is safe to say that current knowledge of pronunciation is much more extensive with respect to basic consonant and vowel patterns than it is with respect to the more "expressive" aspects of pronunciation. Much more research is required in this area in order to come to firm conclusions about the exact role of these factors in dialect differences.

Suggested Readings

A more comprehensive treatment of pronunciation features is given in Chapter Six of Wolfram and Fasold's *The Study of Social Dialects in American English*. Information on pronunciation features of specific dialects is also available, including "Phonological Features" in *Appalachian Speech* by Walt Wolfram and Donna Christian, and "The Sounds of Black English" by William Moulton. There are also numerous articles on particular pronunciation features included in the journal *American Speech*.

GRAMMAR DIFFERENCES

How do dialects differ in areas other than pronunciation?

Differences between dialects are also found in aspects of grammatical usage. Grammar in this sense refers to the structure of words and sentences in the language. For example, the addition of *s* to a verb form to mark agreement with certain types of subjects (*it walks* compared to *they walk*) is a grammatical process, as is the change in word arrangement to signal the difference between a statement and a question (from *You are going* to *Are you going?*).

Differences between dialects in the area of grammar are generally more noticeable socially than those in pronunciation. Studies have pointed out that nonstandard grammatical features more often carry social stigma than pronunciation. Pronunciation differences tend to be more readily tolerated, particularly regional "accents."

In terms of the overall system of English, the areas of difference between standard and nonstandard dialects are relatively few. To a large extent, the grammatical systems of all dialects of English are the same. There are certain areas, though, where divergence is likely to occur. One of the places where a great deal of variation is found is in the use of suffixes (short forms that attach to the ends of words). The language has a much more limited set than it once had, but there is still considerable diversity among dialects in their use of suffixes. These suffixes indicate certain grammatical meanings on verbs, nouns, and to a lesser extent, adjectives and adverbs. And incidentally, research on the history of English indicates that variation in the use of these grammatical markers is not a recent development (existing in England long before settlement of the United States).

It seems as if there are a number of differences among dialects in how verbs are used. What happens to suffixes on verbs?

Some dialects show a pattern where certain suffixes may be absent on verbs where they would be expected in standard English. Less often, suffixes may be used in places where they would not be expected in standard English. Fluctuation in the use of suffixes can be explained more fully in terms of specific suffixes.

Several of the suffixes affect verbs in the standard English gramm[illegible] well as the nonstandard English system. One is the **-ed suffix** which is used to mark past tense on verbs in cases like *they walked* and *they have walked*. This ending may be absent, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the dialect in question. As reported in the last section, however, this difference is really in the area of pronunciation, although it affects a grammatical form. It has been found that all speakers will occasionally omit this particular suffix in a sentence like *Yesterday they walk' four miles*. In some socially defined dialects, the suffix may be absent more frequently, and in cases like *Yesterday they walk' a lot*, it is more noticeable. This higher frequency and wider distribution of usage gives the impression that speakers of these dialects "drop the ending of words," and has even led some people to claim that such speakers do not know what past tense is. Research has amply demonstrated, however, that this is a common pronunciation feature. In some dialects, the process is used more frequently than in others, but the past tense ending does occur in at least some instances and so it is "known" by the speakers.

The other suffix that affects verbs is the -s, used in the present tense to mark agreement with certain subjects **(third person singular present tense -s)**, as in *the dog barks* or *the child plays*. In the speech of members of working class Black communities, this suffix may be absent, so that *he go* or *she have a car* may be used. Some absence of this suffix has also been noted for members of American Indian communities, although it is typically more limited than the absence in Black working class communities.

One very widespread feature related to the use of this present tense suffix is *don't*. Even in varieties of English which show no other nonstandard usage of the third person -s suffix, *don't* may be used with subjects which in standard use would call for *doesn't*. This results in sentences like *She don't know* and *He don't like it*.

One further process documented in studies of English dialects relates to the use of the -s verbal suffix for the present tense. In some Appalachian and southern communities, the suffix has been found on items with plural subjects as well as with singular subjects, as in *my friends likes it* and *people comes over*. The -s tends not to be used if the subject is a pronoun (*they*) according to research evidence collected so far. With other subjects, the ending may be used to varying extents, depending on the individual speakers.

Do other suffixes get treated differently by various dialects, or is it just the ones on verbs?

Other suffixes are involved in patterns of difference between dialects, although the endings that pertain to verbs tend to have more extensive differences. In the case of nouns, one of the suffixes affected is the **plural**. In working class Black communities, absence of the plural -s suffix has been observed in phrases like *two card* or *all these book*. In some southern or Appalachian dialects, the plural suffix may be absent with nouns that signify weights and measures, particularly when a numeral is used, as in *three mile to the county line*. There are also irregular plurals in English nouns which do not take the -s but which form the plural in some other way (*feet, sheep*). Some speakers, in working class, southern and Black communities include these nouns in the regular pattern, so that they may say *two foots* or *many sheeps*, for example.

The other suffix that [illegible] with nouns is the **possessive -s ending**. Several nonstandard patterns relate to possessives, although none are very frequent in occurrence. Some speakers in the working class Black communities show absence of the

-s ending in possessive construction, using *my friend book* as a correspondence for the standard *my friend's book*. A characteristic observed in some Appalachian speech is the use of the forms *your'n* and *our'n* in places where the standard form is *yours* and *ours* (*his'n* and *her'n* occur as well).

For adjectives and adverbs, the suffixes that have nonstandard alternant usages are the **comparative** (*-er*) and the **superlative** (*-est*) markers. In the standard pattern, these endings are used typically with words of one or two syllables (*stronger, friendlier*). For some words with two syllables, and all words with three or more syllables, the patterns call for the use of *more* and *most* preceding the word rather than the suffix (*more efficient, most foolish*). For some speakers, this pattern differs in that the suffixes may be added to words that go with *more* or *most* in the standard patterns, resulting in forms like *beautifuler, awfuliest*. There are also some irregular forms in the standard pattern that may be treated differently (for example, *bad/worse/worst*). Forms like *baddest, gooder, worser* have been observed in use. Studies of numerous dialects have documented forms like the ones mentioned here, indicating that nonstandard patterns for comparative and superlative formations are not restricted to any particular group.

Speakers of some dialects use verbs differently, but not just in the way that they end the words. Are there other differences in verb usage beyond the patterns of suffixes?

Three of the more important areas of difference with respect to verbs relate to some aspects of tense marking, agreement marking, and some special characteristics of the use of the verb *be*.

An earlier discussion focused on the role of the *-ed* suffix to indicate past tense. Some verbs in English, however, do not take this suffix for their past tense forms. These are the **irregular verbs** of English and they form the past tense in a variety of ways, for instance, the standard pattern for *know* is *knew* and *have known*; for *come*, it is *came* and *have come*. Certain dialects do not follow the standard patterns. In many working-class communities, differences in the way irregular verbs form the past tenses have been noted, including the following patterns.

Regularization	*They growed a lot* (*theared, knowed*)
Exchange of participle and simple past forms	*I seen it* (*a one sunk*) *I have seen already* (*broke, saw*)
Unmarked forms	*I give it away already* (*come, eat*)
Different irregular forms	*They brung it* (*drug* for *dragged*)

Some of these forms occur with high frequency among speakers from working-class communities; others occur more rarely or have been found to be more regionally concentrated.

One restricted aspect of tense involves the absence of the auxiliary verb *have*, especially but not *been* as *I been there before*. This pattern actually results from a pronunciation rule which does not use the *-ve* after *have* has been contracted to the *'s* of *has* at that form (*I've seen*). Another feature that has been found in some working-class communities is the additional use of *done* to signal completion of an action, as in *I done the work already* or *They've done eaten it*. This should not be confused with the past participle form of the verb *do*, even though the forms are identical. One is a main

verb *(I've done it)* while the feature in question here modifies other verbs *(I've done sold it)*. This is a good example of an additional distinction that can be made in certain working-class dialects that does not have a direct correspondence in standard dialects.

The **agreement marking** systems (for verbs and their subjects) of various dialects are often found to differ as well. We already discussed agreement as related to the third person singular *-s*. Another area of agreement involves the *be* verb forms. The standard pattern for *be* retains many agreement distinctions that are no longer made with other verbs (*I am, it is, you/we/they are, I/it/was, you/we/they were*). In many working-class dialects the agreement pattern allows the use of *is* and *was* with plural subjects (*the dogs is, they was*). This feature in the agreement pattern for *be* is quite common, and it has been observed in many communities.

Other characteristics pertain directly to the *be* verbs. A use of the verb form *be* has been noted in working class Black communities that, like *done*, seems to indicate an additional distinction. This is found in sentences like *Sometimes they be nice*, where the verb form indicates an activity that takes place habitually (it happens at various intervals over a period of time). The use of **habitual *be*** must be distinguished from constructions which look similar, but where this particular meaning distinction is not involved. Observations of these language patterns have indicated that structures like *They be here tomorrow* and *They be here if they could* result from the absence of the auxiliary forms *will* and *would*, respectively, and are different from the "habitual" use of *be*. According to a number of investigators, the habitual use of *be* has only been noted in the speech of working-class Black speakers.

Another characteristic pertaining to *be* should be mentioned before concluding this discussion. This is the widely noticed absence of the form of *be* in certain cases like *She not going* or *They nice* which affects the patterns of usage of the verb forms *is* and *are*. This feature was discussed in considerable detail in the section on Language Patterns, but one additional point is interesting. The absence of *are* has been documented as a pattern in many southern and Black working-class communities, while the absence of *is* has been found mainly in Black communities.

It's clear that the list of potential differences between dialects pertaining to verbs is quite extensive. Are there differences in other areas that are as significant?

There are certainly other differences that are equally as significant in terms of social acceptability and extent of use among dialects of English. One area is the variation associated with patterns of **negation**. The use of sentences negated in more than one place is a widely noticed and widely commented upon pattern. Most studies of dialects in working class communities note the patterns found in sentences like *We didn't go nowhere, They couldn't find no food*, and *It don't never run good*. These have been described in comparison with the standard pattern which allows one negative to occur. In these cases, the negative form is attached to both the verb and the indefinites (*nowhere, no*) or adverbs (*never*). In other words, the forms which can carry negation are made to agree with each other. In some southern and Black communities, constructions like *Couldn't nobody see it* have been noticed. Such inversion is also a possible feature related to negation in English, but it has been observed much less often among speakers.

Another common but highly stigmatized feature of negation among working class dialects is the use of *ain't*. This form is used to correspond to standard English *is, are, am, has*, and *have* in their negative versions, in cases like *They ain't here* and *I ain't*

found it. An interesting pronunciation variation on this form is the use of *hain't* by some Appalachian speakers. Despite the highly negative attitude often expressed toward *ain't*, it persists in widespread use, and is likely to be noticed in observations of many speech communities.

In looking at the speech patterns of a community in terms of grammatical features, then, the areas to check are suffixes, verb usage, and negation. Will this give a good basis for comparison of dialects and the description of grammatical patterns?

While these topics cover the more extensive areas of diversity among dialects of English, any observation will undoubtedly yield many more potential differences for a particular inventory. The following is a list of some of the other areas where dialect differences have been observed in various studies, along with examples of those features mentioned.

1. *Verbs*
   - a prefix: I was *a goin'* home
   - double modals: I *might could* do it.

2. *Pronouns*
   - relative clauses: There's a man ___ lives down the street. (absence of *who*, relative pronoun)
   - use of *which* like a conjunction: They gave me a cigar *which* they know I don't like cigars.
   - personal pronouns as subjects: *Me and him* went. (use of object form)
   - reflexives: He found it *hisself* (also *theirself*)
     She did it *her own self* (split reflexive)
   - subject repeat: I bought *me* a new car. (nonreflexive)
   - plural forms of *you*: *you all, you guys, youse, you'uns*

3. *Adjectives*
   - *them* for *those*: Give me some of *them* candies.
   - *these here, them there*: *These here* cookies are delicious.

4. *Questions*
   - indirect questions: I asked them *could they* come too. (inverted pattern like direct questions)
   - use of *no* as a tag question: They ate dinner already, *no*?

Suggested Readings

Grammatical features are treated in depth in Wolfram's and Fasold's *The Study of Social Dialects in American English* (Chapter Seven). Descriptions of grammatical patterns of specific dialects are also available. Chapter Five of Wolfram and Christian's *Appalachian Speech*, and Chapter Four of *English in Black and White* ("V.P. Is Its Grammar?") by Robbins Burling, are good sources to consult for Appalachian English and Black English, respectively. Treatments of particular features are often fairly technical, but works like *Language in the Inner City* by William Labov, can provide important detail when needed.

VOCABULARY DIFFERENCES

It is easy to notice when people use words differently or use different words for the same thing. How do these kinds of variations fit into the picture of dialect differences in English?

Most Americans can readily cite cases where the word for an item in one region differs from that used in another. When travelers return home from a visit to New England talking about how *tonic* is used where other areas might use the term *soda pop, pop,* or *soda,* or when northerners mention how a southerner uses *carry* in the sense of accompanying, as in *He carried her to the movies,* they are referring to basic vocabulary differences. These differences are some of the clearest indicators of certain regional dialects that exist in the U.S. Vocabulary differences can affect all classes of language structures, including nouns (e.g., *soda pop/tonic*), verbs (e.g., *carry/take*), prepositions (e.g., *sick to at in my stomach*), adjectives (e.g., *right smart fella*), and adverbs (e.g., *fell plumb asleep*). There are at least several thousand differences of these types which have been catalogued in various studies of American speech forms.

Vocabulary differences may affect a range of topics, including such things as food, shelter, work, play, and the weather. In rural areas, expressions for the land, animals, crops, and farming apparatus are particularly sensitive to regional and local differences, so that there are more extended vocabulary differences associated with rural than with urban living.

The vast majority of vocabulary differences in regional varieties of English are considered neither good nor bad—they are typically viewed as quaint curiosities. There is little social value associated with saying *spigot* versus *faucet, pail* versus *bucket,* or *grinder* versus *sub*—these are simply accepted as part of the normal regional variation of English. There are, however, some items which have been stereotyped as vocabulary differences carrying social values. So, the use of *ain't* or irregular verb uses such as *brung* as a past form may be held as vocabulary differences which are socially stigmatized. In reality, they are part of a pattern of grammatical rule differences, where certain types of negatives can be formed with *ain't* and irregular verbs take different forms in various varieties of English.

What about people who misuse vocabulary items, like some of the things that Archie Bunker says. For example, he might say something like "I don't think the soldiers who ran away to Canada should get amnesia" or "He's the prosecuting eternity." Don't these vocabulary differences carry negative social connotations?

Certainly, such kinds of vocabulary uses carry low social esteem as a type of *malapropism.* The use exemplified above (*amnesia* for *amnesty, eternity* for *attorney*) seems to result when two words sound reasonably similar. In many cases, the less familiar word is replaced by the more familiar, similar sounding word.

In many cases a malapropism may be stimulated by situations in which a person feels the need to use more formal, educated language. The classic example is the worker-class person who attempts to use a more formal middle class, educated style of speech in one of the ways which the speaker is not entirely comfortable. Although these have been stereotyped as "Bunkerisms," they are based on genuine language situa-

tions. The negative connotation is related to the fact that the person is making the pretense of being educated and not being successful at it. These vocabulary differences are really very different from the genuine regional differences we were discussing above.

Where does slang fit into the picture of vocabulary differences?

Popular references to the term *slang* are fairly common. This term seems to be used in several different senses, as typified in the following examples:

(a) They don't speak standard English, they just use slang.

(b) Teenagers today use a lot of slang words, like "dude," "chick," and "far out."

(c) Basketball players have their own slang, like "rebo," "jumper," and "chucker."

In some instances, slang is used to refer to any variety of English that is not standard English. So, a variety such as that spoken by inner city Blacks or that spoken by rural Appalachian Whites might be referred to as a slang dialect. This sense is illustrated in sentence (a) above.

Slang is also used to refer to certain word or phrase uses which have a strong connotation of informality, particularly as they are compared with the words they replace. Referring to a man as a "dude" or a woman as a "chick" includes this sense of informality. These uses generally have a short life span, arising quickly and falling just as quickly into disuse. Most typically, they are associated with the teenage and early adult years in a person's life. This interpretation of slang is probably the most widely used one, and certainly cuts across different dialects. However, those dialects that are associated with a sense of informality would probably be expected to have more items designated as slang than those which carry a more formal connotation.

Finally, slang has been used to refer to a specialized vocabulary associated with a particular field of activity, profession, or trade. Reference to a specialized vocabulary such as that used by playground basketball players, or a specialized vocabulary of dock workers typifies this usage. In some cases, it may refer to secret vocabularies, such as that of professional thieves or prostitutes. This is the usage illustrated in (c).

Linguists tend to shy away from the use of the term slang, although the one sense in which they sometimes use it is that illustrated by (b) above. Even here, however, there can be much disagreement over what words should be designated as slang. While there may be near consensus on some words (e.g., "chick," "dude," "far out"), there are many other items where the classification is much more indeterminate (e.g., "math" for "mathematics," "dumb" for "goof," "fired" for "terminated"). As a result, linguists will sometimes use the term, but only with a number of qualifications.

Suggested Readings

Vocabulary differences have been addressed in a number of reports on regional dialects of English. The work of many people has gone into compiling a *Linguistic Atlas of the United States*, and a significant component of this investigation is vocabulary. Among the reports available is Hans Kurath's *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States*. A concise treatment of vocabulary variations is given in *Dialects of American English* by Carroll E. Reed. A number of specific vocabulary features are discussed in the articles included in *Readings in American Dialectology*, edited by Harold B. Allen and Gary N. Underwood. The journal *American Speech* also provides descriptions of interesting vocabulary items on a continuing basis. A widescale survey

of regional vocabulary entitled "Dictionary of American Regional English," under the direction of Frederic G. Cassidy, is nearing completion, and publications from this project should provide much more extensive information on current differences.

LANGUAGE USE DIFFERENCES

When you think about the way people in certain groups talk, it seems like there are differences that go beyond pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Do various dialect groups have other differences related to language that can serve to identify them?

Language use as cultural behavior can encompass a wide range of patterns and it is not limited to pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary differences. To understand the communication processes within a particular group, investigators seek to find out what kinds of speech behavior are appropriate in what situations. This may involve the use of particular linguistic forms (e.g., when you should say *please*) or more general rules for interacting (e.g., when you should keep quiet). For example, the rules for appropriate behavior within a cultural group may specify who should speak first when a man and a woman meet. If the woman is supposed to start the conversation, according to the rules of a culture, then it would be considered inappropriate for the man to speak first (and other interpretations might also be attached to such behavior).

There may also be particular language forms or language patterns that are called for in certain situations. These may approach the quality of a ritual. For example, in some cultures, there may be ritual-like behaviors that are appropriate responses to death, as in what you should say (or do) to console family members, how you should conduct ceremonies around the event and what should be said then, and so on. Studies of behavior among cultural groups in this country have demonstrated that such patterns exist in all cultures.

What are some of the differences between dialect groups in these patterns of language use?

A few of the patterns discovered can be mentioned here as examples of what might be encountered in a comparison of language use among various groups. A number of discussions of problems in education in various American Indian communities have indicated that the children seem reluctant to participate in the classroom. Investigators who have examined this situation from the community perspective have noted that there appear to be different rules of language use that are in conflict. In the community, from which the children come, they learn that in many situations involving adults and children, the children may observe but should not participate in any active way. It has been suggested that these different patterns of verbal participation that have been learned in the cultural context of the home community may account for the way the children interact in the classroom. This behavior is often misinterpreted by those in the classroom who do not share the cultural background of the Indian children. This is an example of differences between groups in patterns which determine how, when, and if language should be used in various situations.

Other differences between groups lie in particular styles or forms of language use. Some of these are so clearly established that they have been given labels by members of the community, and they may be quite ritualistic in nature. Very specific rules may govern how the language forms are put together. For example, a form of verbal behavior among members of certain Black communities that has been widely described is known as "sounding." This game of insults, also known in some places as "signifying" or "playing the dozens," usually involves groups of young males and builds from a fairly low key starting exchange to a point of considerable verbal creativity by the contestants. The insults traded usually include slurs on the opponent and the opponent's family. Real proficiency in this verbal game is a valued ability among members of the cultural group. Other examples of stylized language use can be found in various procedures used in storytelling among different groups. Distinctive styles of telling stories may characterize the verbal art tradition of a community. These varieties of speech events are often easy to identify because of their ritualistic qualities and are generally rich sources of language and culture data.

These instances are just a few of a wide variety of culturally defined language use patterns that have been investigated. Language as a form of cultural behavior, and as an identifying feature of cultural groups, in some ways goes beyond the basic questions of dialect diversity. The two are, however, inevitably intertwined in producing differences in language behavior between groups, and in contributing to the social attitudes toward those differences.

Suggested Readings

Language use differences are often treated within the topic of cultural differences and much of the earlier work dealt mainly with distinct language groups. Robbins Burling treats both features of separate languages and features of different dialects of a language in *Man's Many Voices: Language in Its Cultural Context*, an excellent detailed discussion of the topic. Work on language use patterns of particular dialects of English has so far dealt mainly with groups of Vernacular Black English speakers. Some useful references in this area include Geneva Smitherman's *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* and the collection of articles edited by Thomas Kochman entitled *Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America*. In the context of usage patterns in an American Indian population, Susan U. Philips provides an interesting study of "Participant Structures and Communicative Competence: Warm Springs Children in Community and Classroom."

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