

rather than comparatively. She also examines the structure and function of creoles, using Gullah as the basis for this review. The chapter ends with a discussion of the ways in which classroom teachers can use pidgins and creoles as a resource in the classroom and with a call for more study on the discourse-level characteristics of pidgins and creoles.

In the final chapter of this part, "Language and Gender," Rebecca Freeman and Bonnie McElhinny discuss how the use of gender-differentiated language both reflects and can help to perpetuate the subordinate status of women in society. A central goal of the chapter is to increase awareness of how language shapes our understanding of the social world, our relationships with one another, and our social identities. Freeman and McElhinny begin the chapter by discussing sexism in language and suggesting alternatives to sexist practices in naming and representation. Next, they examine two prevalent models for approaching gender-differentiated language: the dominance model, which stresses men's dominance over women, and the difference, or dual-culture model, which stresses men's and women's cultural differences. In place of these models, the authors argue for highly contextualized and localized studies of interaction, and they review several studies which exemplify such an approach. The authors then examine language and gender around the world, looking specifically at language and gender as they relate to genre, multilingualism, politics, the ESL context, and cultures in the United States. The chapter ends with an examination of language and gender in the classroom in which the authors encourage teachers to incorporate the methods of ethnography of communication in their classroom and to promote critical discourse analysis.

5 *Regional and social variation*

John R. Rickford

Introduction

"In the United States of America (or England, or India, or Australia), they speak English." Although this statement is true, it is only a half truth, and understanding the other half of the truth is essential for any language arts teacher. Part of what this statement omits is that other languages besides English are spoken – Spanish, Gujarati, and Vietnamese, for instance – and that students' competence in and attitudes toward these languages, relative to English, can have a big impact on their success in and attitudes toward school. But part of what it omits is also that "English" is not a single entity but, like any other living language, something that varies considerably depending on one's regional background, social class and network, ethnicity, gender, age, and style, to name only the most salient dimensions. Understanding and recognizing such variation is essential for language arts and second and foreign language teachers.

Reasons for studying dialects

But "Why?" you might ask. One reason is to better prepare our students for the vernacular varieties of a foreign language which they can expect to find its native speakers using if and when they have the opportunity to travel abroad. Understanding the variability in our own language and that of our students is also very important for L1 and L2 teachers, because the regional and social dialects that teachers and children speak can have a big impact on students' success at school (see also Nichols, this volume). For instance, if a teacher and student come from different dialect backgrounds, a teacher might have trouble understanding what

It is a pleasure to thank the following individuals for their assistance with this chapter: Renée Blake, Sandra Lee McKay, Genevieve Broderson, Nancy Hornberger, Angela E. Rickford, and Keith Walters. Responsibility for any errors or infelicities is, of course, my own.

a student says, or vice versa. Or a teacher might try to model the pronunciation of a certain vowel by saying that it is similar to the vowel in a model word which turns out to be quite different in the child's dialect. For instance, if the teacher pronounces *bite* with a diphthongal [aɪ], and the student pronounces it with a long monophthongal [a:], the child might keep producing [ba:f] while trying to imitate the teacher's [baɪt] and might never learn the model pronunciation through this putative model word. Or a teacher might be under the mistaken impression that a student who reads *John walks home* as *John walk home* had failed to see and register the semantic significance of the third present -s suffix; the student, however, might have read and understood it perfectly but converted the sentence to the regularities of her native variety of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) in reproducing it for her teacher. Similarly, an intelligence test which included items involving third present -s might discriminate against English dialect speakers whose dialects systematically omitted this form. Finally, both teachers and students could have negative attitudes toward each other depending on the dialects they speak, with those attitudes in turn affecting their ability to work effectively with each other and ultimately limiting their performance as teachers and learners (see McGroarty, this volume).¹

On the positive side, an increased awareness of regional and social variation can significantly enhance teachers' and students' mutual understanding and appreciation, and can offer teachers additional tools with which to enhance their students' appreciation of literature, their ability to write and use a variety of styles, and their sensitivity to the diversity and richness of the speech communities in which their languages are used.

Quiz

Let us try a brief quiz, involving American English, to illustrate the concepts of regional and social variation, and the challenges they can pose for communication:

1 For the relationship between dialect usage, teachers' attitudes and expectations, and pupils' performance, see Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968 (which helped to establish the correlation between teachers' expectations and pupils' performance), Williams, 1970 (which reported that pupils perceived as speaking in less standard English were also perceived as being less confident and eager), and Smitherman, 1981 (p. 19, reporting Justice Joiner's opinion in the 1979 case of *Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School Children v. Ann Arbor Board of Education* that negative attitudes toward African-American Vernacular English had served as a barrier to the equal educational opportunity of AAVE-speaking children).

1. Frank: How is Bob?
Mary: Bob worries a lot *any*more.
What do you think Mary meant? (a) Bob doesn't worry a lot anymore; (b) Bob still worries a lot; (c) Bob worries a lot nowadays; (d) Other: _____.
2. Tabitha: Is she married?
Jamal: She *BIN* married. (*BIN* is emphatic, heavily stressed)
What do you think Jamal meant? (a) She's been married before but isn't now; (b) She's married now and has been for a long time; (c) Other: _____.

Among speakers of Mary's Midwestern dialect, the positive *any*more in example 1 conventionally means "nowadays," indicating that a situation that did not exist in the past now does, but many speakers from other dialect areas think that it means "still" – that a situation that existed in the past still does (Labov, 1973, pp. 65–76). For Jamal, and for other speakers of AAVE, the stressed *BIN* in example 2 has the interpretation of item (b), but speakers unfamiliar with AAVE typically give item (a) as their answer (Labov, 1973, pp. 62–65; Rickford, 1975).² Although example (1) shows regional variation and example (2) shows social variation, in both cases the answers offered by speakers unfamiliar with the dialect are quite different from what the speaker intended. Note, too, that although these examples, like many others in this chapter, are from varieties of English in the United States, the comments here apply to other countries and to other languages. Language teachers in non-English and non-American situations will undoubtedly be able to supply comparable examples from their own classrooms and communities. Discovering and discussing such examples should present excellent opportunities for research and pedagogy.

Preliminaries

Three other general points remain to be made before regional and social variation is considered in more detail. The first is that when we speak of *accents* (as distinct from *varieties* or *dialects*), we are referring to features of pronunciation alone – the phones, or individual sound segments in a word, as well as suprasegmental features like accent, tempo, and intonation. The second is that dialects can differ not only *qualitatively* – in the fact that dialect A has feature X whereas dialect B

2 Note that understanding and use of *BIN* is not limited to working-class African-Americans. One African-American judge whom I interviewed in Philadelphia was surprised to discover that he was immediately distinguished from his European-American friends by his ability to provide the correct remote phase interpretation to example 2 in the quiz.

has feature Y – but also *quantitatively* – in the sense that although both dialects A and B use features X and Y, feature X is used significantly more often in dialect A than in dialect B. Quantitative variation is particularly important in differentiating social dialects, and we will return to this issue when we consider social variation. The third general point to be made is that, contrary to popular perception, dialect differences are usually regular and systematic and should not be regarded as the result of carelessness, laziness, and so on. Although some dialects may command more prestige than others in some circles, they do so usually as the result of external social and political factors. The dialects themselves are natural outgrowths of differences in history, geography, and social interaction. As linguists use the term, there is no negative connotation to *dialect*, which is simply a neutral word describing a variety of a language used by a particular set of people. Everyone speaks a dialect – at least one.

Regional variation

The study of *regional dialects* – varieties of a language which are spoken in different geographical areas – is among the oldest traditions in the systematic study of intralanguage variation; its roots are in the study of nineteenth-century historical-comparative linguistics. In 1876, in order to corroborate the neogrammarian claim that sound laws operate without exception – for example, that a change from [p] to [f] will occur in *every word* which originally contained a [p] – George Wenker began mailing a dialect questionnaire to thousands of schoolmasters in the north of Germany. As it turned out, Wenker's findings revealed more variability in pronunciation than the neogrammarians predicted (see Chambers & Trudgill, 1980, pp. 37–38, 174 ff.; Davis, 1983, p. 18, for further discussion). However, interest in the systematic study of regional dialects had taken root, and in subsequent years regional dialect surveys were undertaken in a number of countries. In 1896 Jules Gilliéron sent a trained field-worker (Edmond Edmont) into different parts of France to complete dialect questionnaires in person, rather than depending on mailed responses from correspondents whose accuracy in hearing and recording dialect features was unknown. This fieldwork method was basically the one used in later dialect surveys of other countries, including Italy and southern Switzerland (Jaberg & Jud, 1928–1940) and the United States (Cassidy, 1985; Kurath et al., 1939–1943), although in the United States, because of its geographical size, dialect surveys required the use of many field-workers rather than one or two. Cassidy's *Dictionary of American Regional English*, for example, drew on the usage of 2,777 informants from 1,002 communi-

ties, who were interviewed by 72 field-workers (Cassidy, 1985, pp. v, xii, xiv).

Methods

If you were to attempt to carry out a regional dialect survey in your classroom or community (assuming that the people therein came from different regions), you would soon run into some of the methodological problems which the earliest dialect geographers faced. For instance, in attempting to elicit a local word or pronunciation, you might simply give what you think is the most general or standard equivalent and ask your respondents how they say it in their dialect, for example:

3. How do you refer to *cottage cheese* in your dialect? Do you have a special word for it?

The advantage of this *direct* method, the one used by Wenker and Edmont, is its expeditiousness. Its disadvantage, however, is that the form used as a prompt might influence the informants' response, causing them to give a different word or pronunciation than they would normally employ. Accordingly, it is more common to use a variant of the *indirect* approach, adopted by Jaberg and Jud and most subsequent dialectologists. For instance, you might ask informants to name an item (cottage cheese) on the basis of a picture or a verbal description, as in:

4. Lumpy white cheese . . . made from sour milk . . . (Cassidy, 1985, p. 883)

Another issue which might arise in your community study is what kinds of informants to select for your survey. One strategy that many dialect surveys in the United States and Europe have used is to select older people who were born and raised in the community and have not moved around much. This makes sense from the point of view of trying to capture distinctive local traditions, but other aspects of much regional dialect research – overrepresenting male respondents, underrepresenting modern (as opposed to traditional) usage, and not making use of socioeconomically stratified random samples – have been the subject of sharp criticism (see Chambers & Trudgill, 1980, pp. 24–36; Pickford, 1956).

Dialect maps and isoglosses

Assuming that you avoided the pitfalls of informant selection and succeeded in conducting a revealing dialect survey, the next issue would be how to display your results. One way would be to list the different

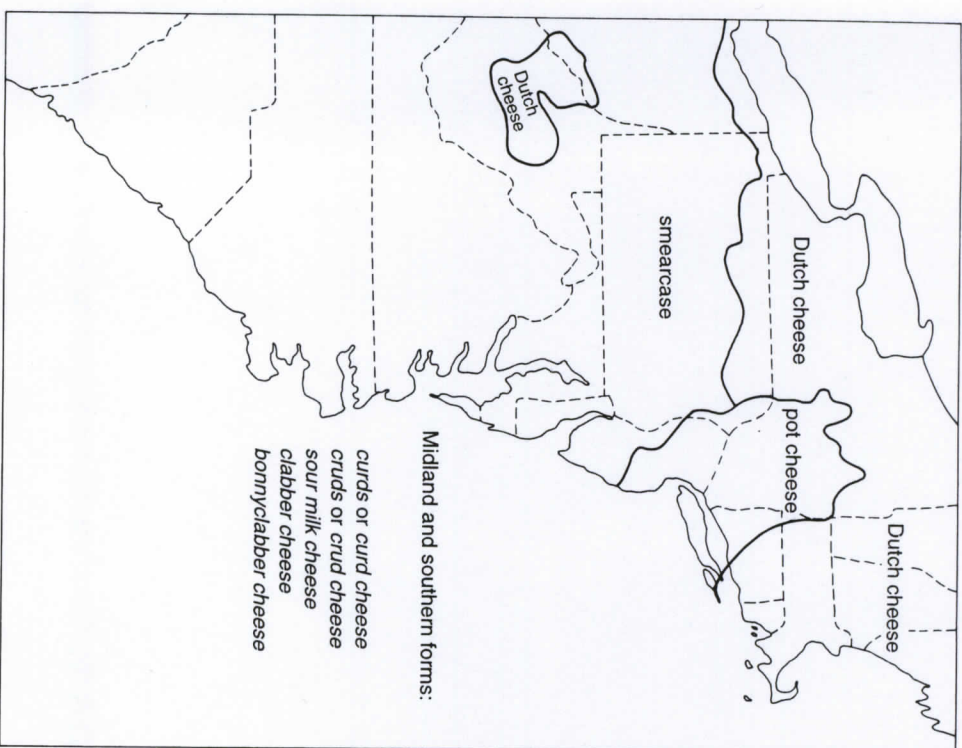
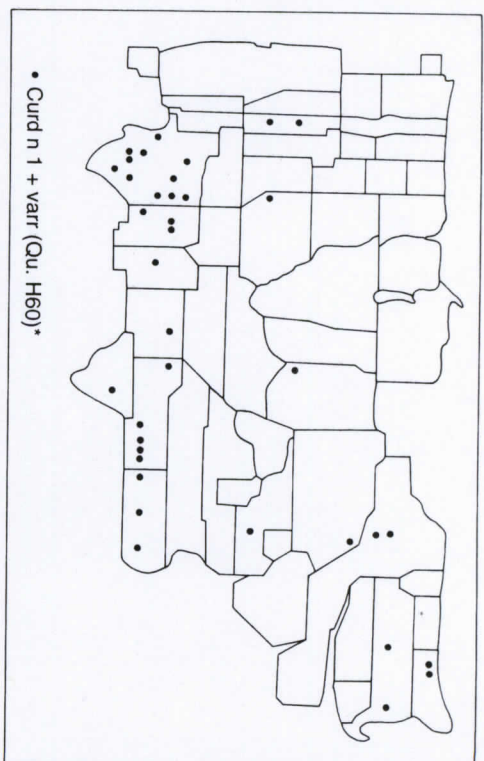


Figure 1. (In Reed, 1977, p. 99; from Kurath, 1949.)

responses you received, with an indication of where they seemed to be most prevalent. But a more graphic way of showing the results would be to chart the distribution of the variants on a dialect atlas or map, as Reed (1977, p. 99; drawing on data in Kurath, 1949, Fig. 125) did for the northeastern variants of *cottage cheese* in the United States (see Figure 1). The lines separating the areas in which each variant is used (*Dutch cheese*, *pot cheese* and *smearcase*) are called *isoglosses* (see Chambers & Trudgill, 1980, p. 103, for further discussion of this term). A related way of displaying your results (usually, in fact, as a prelimi-



*The dots indicate the location of informants who gave *curd* or its variants (*curds*, *curd cheese*) in response to question H60 on the DARE questionnaire: "What do you call the lumpy white cheese that is made from sour milk?"

Figure 2. (From Cassidy, 1985.)

nary to drawing isoglosses) is to use a symbol for every location on a map in which a certain variant was attested, as in Figure 2 (from Cassidy, 1985, p. 883), which shows where in the United States the noun *curd*, "freq. pl, also *curd cheese*," was offered in response to the description in example 4.³ The distribution here is primarily southern, providing partial confirmation for the indication in Figure 1 (from research nearly five decades earlier) that *curds* and *curd cheese* are "midland and southern forms."

Dialect areas

When different isoglosses bundle or run together, they may be taken to define a *dialect area*. In Figure 3, for instance (from Kurath, 1949, Fig. 42), the isoglosses separate the northern dialect area, in which *pail*, *fauget*, *skunk*, and *merry Christmas!* are used, from the Midland and South dialect areas, in which *bucket*, *spicket*, *polecat*, and *Christmas gift!* are used, respectively. Figure 4 (from Kurath, 1949, Fig. 3) further separates the North, Midland, and South dialect areas of the eastern United States, and their subdivisions, without indicating the specific

³ The DARE maps of the United States differ from conventional maps because they display population density rather than land area (Carver, 1985, p. xxiii).

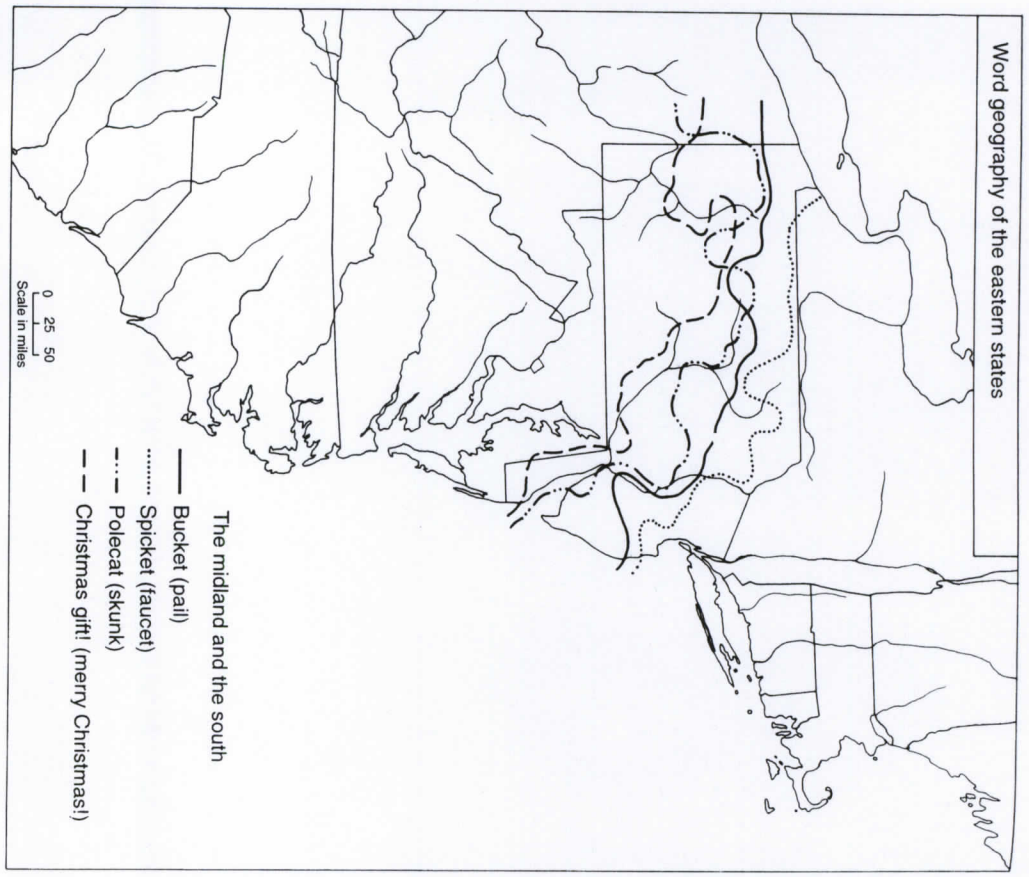


Figure 3. (From Kurath, 1949.)

features (primarily lexical; Reed, 1977, p. 23) upon which the divisions are based.

Phonological isoglosses

All the isoglosses discussed so far involve lexical features, or words. But dialects can be distinguished by their phonological features or

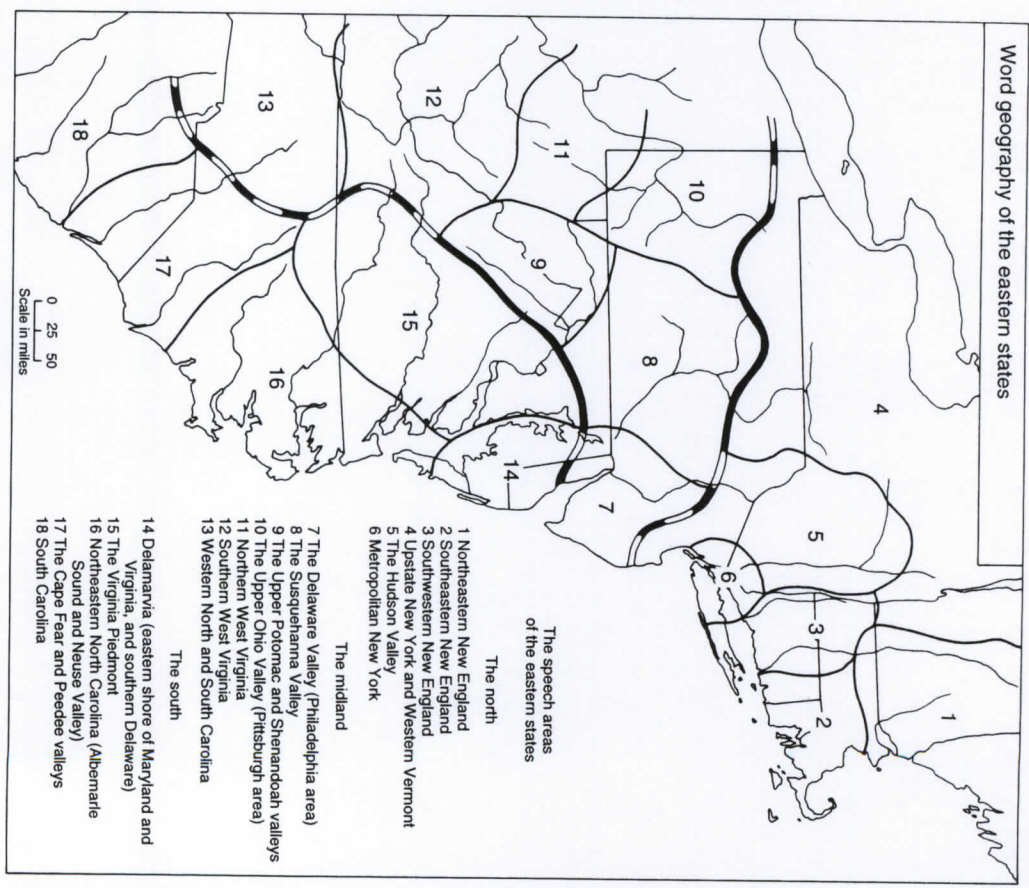
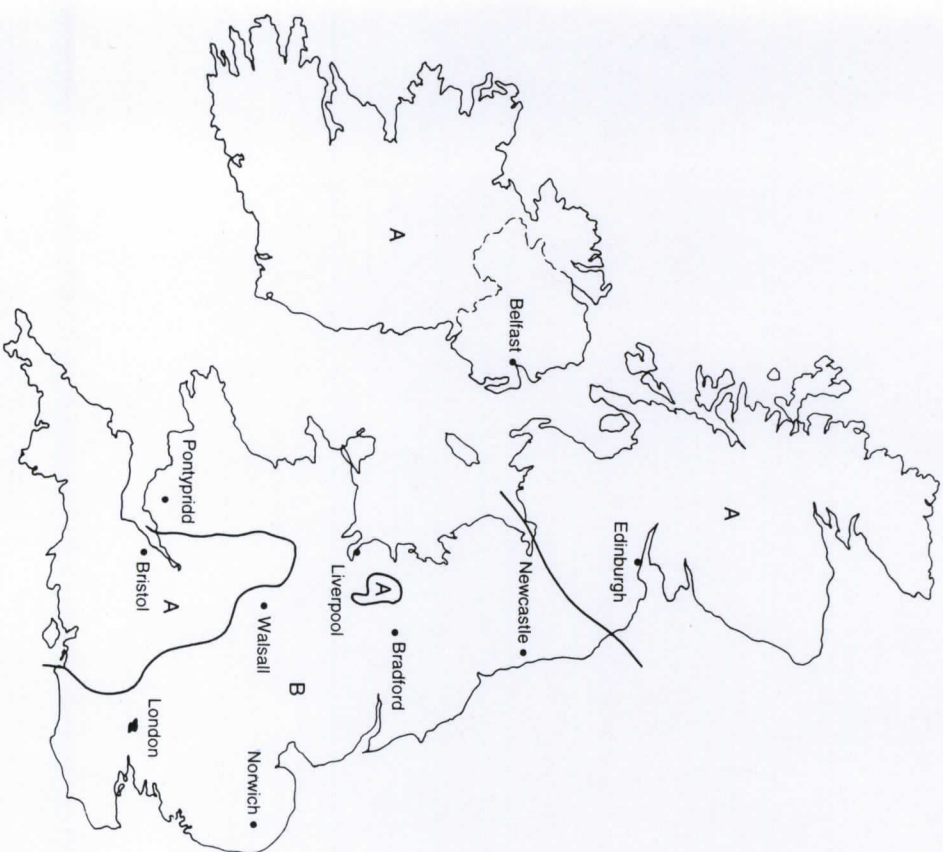


Figure 4. (From Kurath, 1949.)

pronunciations too. Figure 5 shows the distribution of postvocalic /r/ – the pronunciation of /r/ after a vowel, as in *bark* – in Britain. Speakers in the areas labeled A – including Ireland, Scotland, southwestern England, and a small area near Liverpool – pronounce their /r/s in this position, but speakers in the B area – basically the rest of England and Wales, including the city of London – do not. As Chambers and Trudgill (1980, p. 10) note, the discontinuous distribution of the r-



A = postvocalic /r/ present
B = postvocalic /r/ absent
Figure 5. (From Hughes & Trudgill, 1979.)

pronouncing areas indicates that these are *relic areas* – remnants of an earlier time when *r*-pronunciation was more widespread; subsequently this usage was displaced by an *r*-less innovation. Interestingly, in the prestigious Received Pronunciation (RP) of those in “the upper reaches of the social scale” (Hughes & Trudgill, 1979, p. 2), the *r*-less pronunciation is the norm, in contrast with New York City English, in which *r*-lessness is most characteristic of the lower and working classes (Labov,

1966, p. 240). This is an excellent illustration of the sociolinguistic generalization that linguistic features do not have social significance in and of themselves but only in terms of the social groups that use them. In England, it is prestigious to “drop your *r*’s”; in New York City, it is not.

Combinations of features

Of course, dialect areas are often distinguished not just by lexical isoglosses or by phonological ones but by combinations of lexical, phonological, and grammatical features. For instance, the Wallon (Wal-

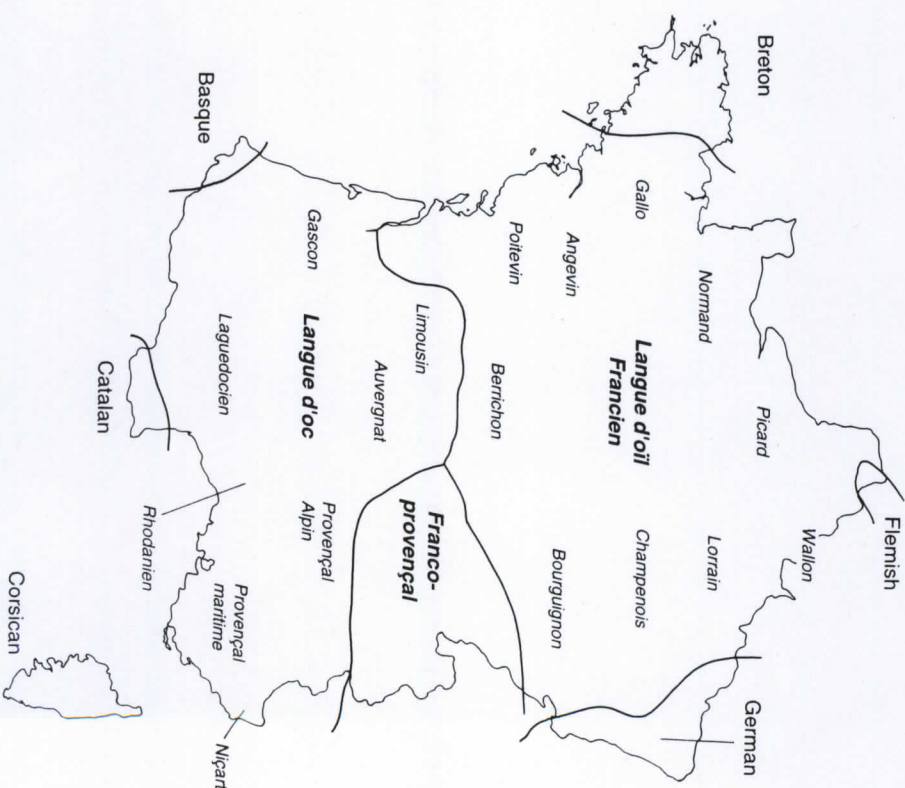


Figure 6. French regional languages and dialects. (From Ager, 1990.)

loon) dialect in the northeast of France – adjacent to Belgium and part of the larger *Langue d'oïl* region (see Figure 6) – is distinguished from standard French by the following features, among others (Ager, 1990, p. 20):

5. Pronunciation: The /r/ is pronounced gutturally

Lexis: The numerals *septante* and *nonante* correspond to French *soixante-dix* ('seventy') *quatre-vingts* ('eighty')

Syntax: *Avoir* is followed by an adjective as in *avoir bon de faire quelquechose* (or *facile, difficile, dur*, etc.), in the sense of *trouver bon de faire quelquechose* ('find it good to do something,' or easy, difficult, hard, etc.)

Why do regional dialects arise?

Regional dialect differences arise for various reasons. One factor is the influence of geography itself. A river, a mountain range, or an expanse of barren land can serve to keep two populations apart, and since languages are constantly undergoing change (although we seldom notice it happening), the dialects of the two separated populations will, over time, drift apart. Conversely, a river can help to spread an innovative feature, if populations up and down its banks are in contact with each other. This is evident in the East Middle German situation depicted in Figure 7, where the southern form *hinten*, 'behind,' has made its

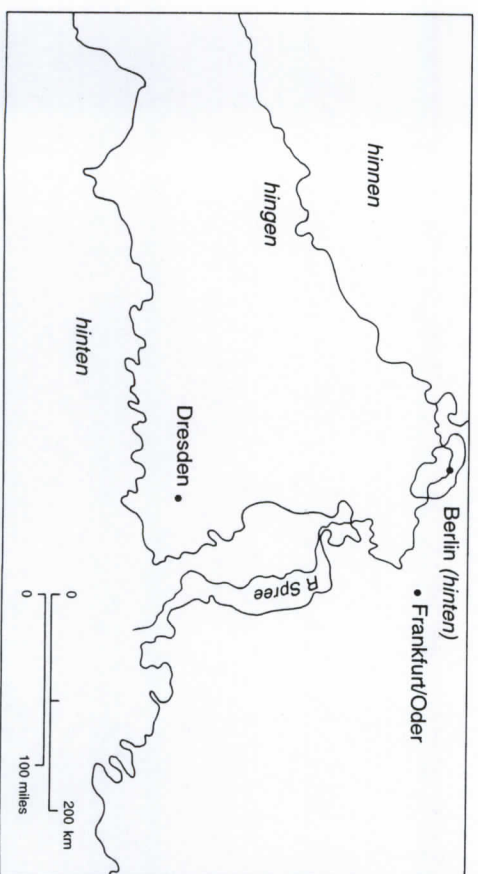


Figure 7. Variants of *hinten* in East Middle German. (From Barbour & Stevenson, 1990.)

greatest penetration into *hingen* territory along the course of the river Spree (Barbour & Stevenson, 1990, p. 71). Moreover, in accord with a pattern of urban diffusion to which Peter Trudgill has most forcefully drawn our attention (see Chambers & Trudgill, 1980, p. 189 ff.), the innovation has already jumped ahead to the urban center of Berlin.

Other factors besides geography that help to create regional dialects include political boundaries, settlement patterns, migration and immigration routes, territorial conquest, and language contact. (See Davis, 1983, pp. 4–5; Wolfram, 1991, pp. 22–26, for further discussion.) In Texas, for instance, contact with Louisiana French in the eastern part of the state has led to loans like *jambalaya*, 'rice stew,' and *bayou*, 'inlet,' and contact with Mexican Spanish along the southern border has yielded loans like *mesa*, 'dry plateau,' and *lariat*, 'rope with a noose' (Reed, 1977, p. 52).

Contrary to what many people might think, television has not been a significant force in spreading dialect patterns or obliterating dialect differences, particularly in the more highly structured domains of phonology and grammar (see Trudgill, 1983, p. 61). This appears to be because television is a noninteractive medium; watchers do not talk back to it and get judged or responded to on the basis of their dialect use, as they do in face-to-face verbal interaction.

Classroom implications and exercises involving regional dialects

Teachers of foreign languages might try to do some research on regional dialect differences in the countries where the languages they are teaching are spoken, partly as a way of preparing students for the regional vernaculars they are likely to encounter if they visit the countries themselves and partly as a way of enriching their students' classroom experience (allowing them to move away from the class text for a while, making them more sensitive to the ubiquity of variation in language more generally, and so on). For L1 and L2 teachers (e.g., teachers of English as a native or second language in the United States), regional differences in phonology and grammar are more likely to be a challenge in the classroom than are differences in lexicon or word use. If, for instance, a child uses *jambalaya*, a Louisiana word meaning 'spicy rice stew,' teachers who are unfamiliar with it are likely to notice it and ask what it means, and they may be quite willing to accept such regionalisms in writing for the local color they convey. But the mergers and near mergers of vowels produced by the kinds of *chain shifts* (sequenced changes in a set of vowels) which are currently taking place in the United States might be more problematic. Figure 8 (from Wolfram,

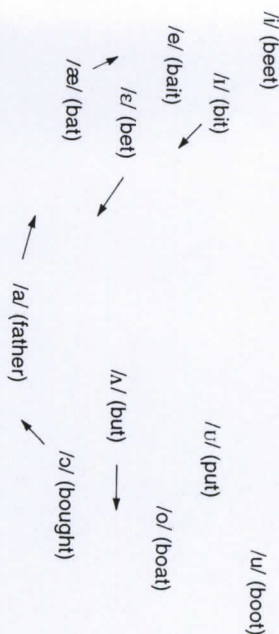


Figure 8. Vowel rotation in northern cities chain shift. (From Wolfram 1991; based on Labov, 1991.)

1991, p. 87, based on Labov, 1991, p. 25) shows the northern cities chain shift that is taking place in cities like Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago; for teachers not from these areas, a student's pronunciation of *bat* might be mistaken for *bet*, and his or her pronunciation of *bet* for *but*. Labov and colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania (see Labov, 1988) have begun to investigate the effects of these vowel differences on oral comprehension. The extent to which they affect reading and writing is as yet unknown.

Interesting classroom exercises for language arts and foreign language teachers to do with their classes include viewing and discussing films which discuss or exemplify regional dialect differences (e.g., *American Tongues* and *Yeah, You Rite!* for American dialects⁴ and *The Story of English* [McCrum et al., 1986] for English dialect differences worldwide), investigating dialect differences in the classroom and the surrounding community (for example, with the checklists in Cassidy with Duckert, 1970; Wolfram, 1991, pp. 278–297), and noting regional variants encountered in literature or in travel to other regions.

Social variation

When we turn from regional variation to social variation, things get somewhat more complicated but also more interesting. For whereas individuals may grow up exclusively or primarily in one region – unless their parents are engaged in occupations that require them to move often (like the military or foreign service) – they typically belong to

⁴ *American Tongues* was released by the Center for New American Media, and the International Production Center (New York, New York) in 1986. *Yeah, You Rite!* was released by the Center for American Media (New Orleans, Louisiana) in 1984 and is distributed by Côte Blanche Productions (Cut-off, Louisiana). Both video recordings were produced and directed by Louis Alvarez and Andrew Kolker.

many social groups simultaneously and their speech patterns reflect the intersections of their social experiences, categories and roles (e.g., the speech of young upper-middle-class white female “jocks” from the Chicago area, as discussed in Eckert, 1989). Furthermore, whereas regional dialects are often distinguished *qualitatively*, for example, by the fact that speakers in one town use a different word or pronunciation than speakers in another, social dialects are often distinguished *quantitatively*, for example, by the fact that speakers of one ethnic group use a particular feature more frequently than another. And because social dialects may be subject to more stigmatization, social comment, and (attempts at) conscious suppression than regional dialects, the linguists who study social dialects (sociolinguists) usually attempt to obtain samples of *spontaneous or casual speech*, the way people speak when they are most relaxed and least conscious that their speech is being observed. Although our knowledge of regional dialects is largely based on the results of formal questionnaire elicitation, our knowledge of social dialects is largely based on the results of recorded interviews in which people were indirectly encouraged to speak more animatedly because of the topic (e.g., childhood games and customs) or audience (e.g., including close friends or peer group members or both).⁵

Social variation in language might be considered from the perspective of differences between speakers in a variety of dimensions, including (1) age, (2) social class and network, (3) race or ethnicity, and (4) gender. The first three dimensions will be the focus here, because the fourth is covered in another chapter (see Freeman & McElhinny, this volume).

Age

Variation in language according to age may reflect either age grading or change in progress. *Age grading* involves features associated with specific age groups as a developmental or social stage, as in the two-word utterances of children around 18 months of age (“Mommy sock,” “Drink soup” – Moskowitz, 1985, p. 55), or the in-group slang of teenagers (*rad*, “cool,” *gnarly*, “gross” or “cool” – T. Labov, 1992, p. 350). Normally, speakers abandon the features associated with a particular stage as they grow older, and they begin to speak pretty much like the members of the age group above them as they mature. In the case of *change in progress*, however, age differences reflect an actual change in community norms. When Labov (1966, p. 344 ff.) reported that upper-middle-class New York City speakers in the 20- to 29- and 30- to 39-

⁵ See Labov (1972a), Bell (1984), and Rickford and McNair-Knox (1993) for a discussion of the effects of topic and audience in sociolinguistic interviews, and also Rickford (1987) for a reminder of the value of elicited intuitions in helping to gauge the full extent of an individual's sociolinguistic competence.

year-old age groups were pronouncing their *rs* in words like *fourth* and *floor* much more often than comparable speakers in the 40- to 49- and 50- to 75-year-old age groups did, this was not just a stage, which the under-40 speakers would abandon as they grew older. On the contrary, they represented the vanguard of a change in community norms with respect to (*r*) pronunciation – from a basically *r*-less norm to a basically *r*-full norm. Over time, one would expect the newer norm in a change in progress to become established as the norm for all age groups and subpopulations. The study of age differences is thus important for the study of language change (“change in apparent time” – Bailey et al., 1991), but it can sometimes be difficult to tell whether stable age grading or change in progress is going on (see Labov, 1981; Rickford et al., 1991, pp. 127–128).

The kind of age-related language variation which teachers are most likely to notice in school is the use of slang, which, as noted above, is a variety of age grading. Teachers interested in deciphering the slang of their adolescent or teenage students might consult general dictionaries of slang like Partridge (1984), but since slang is often so ephemeral – its value as an in-group marker depends on its being inaccessible to older people and outsiders – dictionaries of this type run the risk of being out of date even before they are printed. One study which is somewhat more than a dictionary is Foster (1986), which concentrates on the “jive lexicon” of African-American and other inner-city teenagers, as well as their characteristic speech events like “ribbin” and “woofin.” Drawing on his own teaching experiences, Foster argues that age, race, and class differences between teachers and inner-city youth often make teachers incapable of understanding what their students say and unable to appreciate and control the interactional dynamics in their classrooms (cf. Kochman, 1986, on this point). Another valuable recent work is Teresa Labov’s study (1992) of adolescent slang. It provides definitions for about two dozen common adolescent slang items (e.g., *veg out*, *space cadet*, *to book*, *bit the big wazoo*), but more important, it analyzes the relative familiarity of these and other terms among different segments of the adolescent population. The variables examined include geographical background (*guidos* is primarily East Coast, *rad* primarily West Coast), race (*bummer* is more familiar to whites, *bougie* to African-Americans), and gender (*clutch* is somewhat better known among males, and *trashed* somewhat better known among females, although neither of these differences is statistically significant). Since the questionnaire which provided the data for this study is included in an appendix to Teresa Labov’s article, teachers may use it in their classrooms, making it the basis of a lively discussion of variation in language and its geographical and social correlates.

Another aspect of adolescent speech which American teachers may

have noticed is the use of *go*, *be like*, and *be all* instead of *say* to introduce quotations in speech (“He’s like, ‘I’m not gonna do that,’ and I’m all, ‘Yes you will!’”). The *be all* form is primarily a California–West Coast innovation. Both *be all* and *be like* occur in contracted rather than full form (“He’s all, . . .” rather than “He is all, . . .”) and are more frequent with pronoun subjects than full noun phrases (“He’s all, . . .” rather than “The old lady’s all, . . .”). The rise of these two forms may represent change in progress rather than age grading, since neither appears to have been characteristic of older generations in earlier times (see Blyth et al., 1990, for a discussion of *be like*); but only time will tell whether they will become established as new community norms.

Social class and network

Variation in language according to social class is, like variation according to age or ethnicity, a subcategory of variation according to *user* (the differences between groups of speakers in various dimensions), as distinct from variation according to *use* in different styles or registers.⁶ Social class variation in language has attracted the most attention and yielded some of the most striking regularities within quantitative sociolinguistics.

The best-known work in this area is Labov’s study (1966) of variation in New York City English. In this study, Labov introduced the concept of a sociolinguistic *variable*, a linguistic feature which varies in form and has social significance (p. 49), and established the importance of adhering to a *principle of accountability* in studying such variables – reporting how often they occurred in recorded samples as a proportion of all the cases in which they could have occurred. In Figure 9, for instance, the variable is (*ing*), the realization of the suffix in words like *fishing*, and what is shown is the percentage of the time that speakers “dropped their *gs*” (more accurately, used an alveolar instead of a velar nasal – [n] instead of [ŋ]) in all words with such suffixes in their recorded samples.⁷ For this study, Labov drew on a random sample of New Yorkers from the Lower East Side, stratified on the basis of occupation, education, and income into the four primary socioeconomic classes shown in Figure 9: lower working class (SEC index nos. 0 to 2), upper working class (3 to 6), lower middle class (7 and 8), and upper

6 This distinction was introduced by Halliday (1964).

7 The convention is to use parentheses to represent the variable, as an abstraction, but to use square brackets or diagonals to represent the phonetic or phonemic variants which realize it in actual speech. It is usually the relative frequency of a particular variant which is represented in the displays of quantitative sociolinguistics (as in Figure 9 and Table 1).

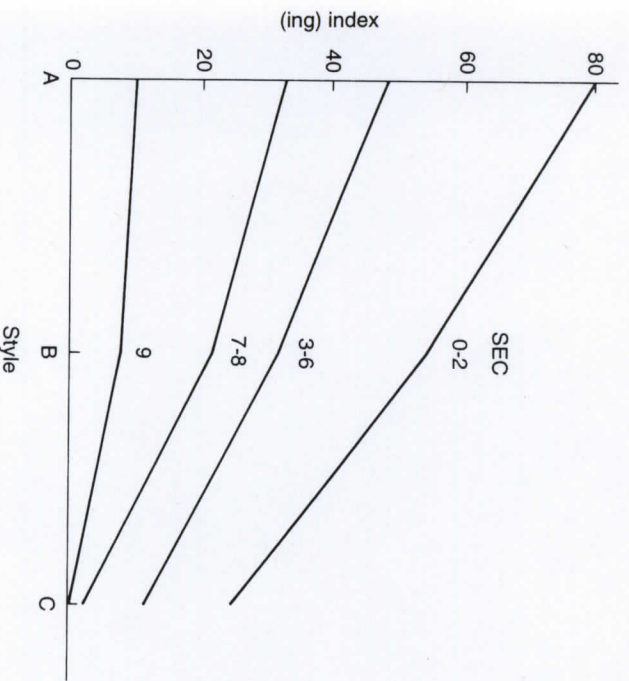


Figure 9. Class and style stratification of -ing in working, living, and so on, for white New York City adults. Socioeconomic class scale: 0 to 2, 3 to 6, 7 and 8, and 9. A = casual speech, B = careful speech, C = reading style. (From Labov, 1972b; originally in Labov, 1966.)

middle class (9). For example, in style A, casual speech, the classes are neatly separated with respect to this variable, with the lower-working-class speakers using [ɪŋ] most often, and the upper middle class using it least often. What Figure 9 also reveals, however, is that although the social classes are differentiated by their frequencies of [ɪŋ] in each style, they are similar to each other insofar as they all show lower frequencies of [ɪŋ] in more formal styles (B, careful speech, and C, reading style).

Variables like (ing), which vary simultaneously by social group membership and style, are called sociolinguistic markers, in contrast with indicators, which are correlated with geographic region or social group membership only. This particular variable is actually a stable sociolinguistic marker, because variation in its use does not reflect an ongoing change in New York City English; it is part of a stable pattern which has been observed in several other communities. For instance, Fischer (1958), in an early quantitative sociolinguistic study of (ing) among 24 children in a New England village, reported "a slight tendency for the [ɪŋ] variant to be associated with higher socio-economic status" (p. 309) and a strong tendency for its frequency to increase as the context

TABLE 1. PERCENTAGE OF VERNACULAR [ɪŋ] PRONUNCIATION FOR FOUR SOCIAL GROUPS IN SPEECH COMMUNITIES IN BRITAIN, THE UNITED STATES, AND AUSTRALIA¹

Social group	1	2	3	4
Norwich	31	42	91	100
West Yorkshire	5	34	61	83
New York	7	32	45	75
Brisbane	17	31	49	63

¹The Norwich data are adapted from Trudgill (1974); the West Yorkshire, from Petyt (1985); the New York City, from Labov (1966), and the Brisbane, from Lee (1989). In Table 1, the number 1 indicates upper middle class or its equivalent, and the number 4 indicates lower working class or its equivalent. Numbers 2 and 3 represent intermediate social classes.

Source: Holmes, 1992, p. 153; adapted from various sources.

became more formal.⁸ And Wolfram (1991, p. 194), drawing on earlier data from Shuy, Wolfram, and Riley (1967), reported the following mean percentages of [ɪŋ] in Detroit: upper middle class, 19.4; lower middle class, 39.1; upper working class, 50.5; and lower working class, 78.9. Not only are these figures parallel to the statistics in Figure 9, but they are also parallel to those in Table 1, from Holmes (1992), which includes data from Norwich and West Yorkshire, England, and Brisbane, Australia, as well as New York City. As Holmes observes (1992, p. 152), "[T]here are regional variations between communities, but the regularity of the sociolinguistic pattern in all four communities is quite clear. . . . [P]eople from lower social groups use more of the vernacular [ɪŋ] variant than those from higher groups." (p. 152)

In order to demonstrate that social class differences can be reflected in patterns of grammar as well as pronunciation, we will draw once again on Holmes (1992, p. 159), whose Figure 10 shows the percentage of unmarked or vernacular third person singular present tense forms (*he walk* instead of *he walks*) in Norwich and Detroit. The stratification here is even sharper than it was for (ing) in Table 1 and Figure 9, with the middle-class groups almost never "dropping their s," whereas the working-class groups do so quite often. As Holmes notes (1992, p. 159), in a generalization that may be familiar to teachers from their

⁸ The style distinction was statistically significant, but the socioeconomic differences were not, partly because the sample was small and because this small semirural community did not have marked socioeconomic class divisions. Fischer also found that girls favored the [ɪŋ] variant more than boys did, and that it was more common with "formal" verbs like *criticizing* than with "informal" ones like *punchin*. For a more recent and comprehensive study of internal linguistic constraints on variation between [ɪŋ] and [ɪn], see Houston (1991).

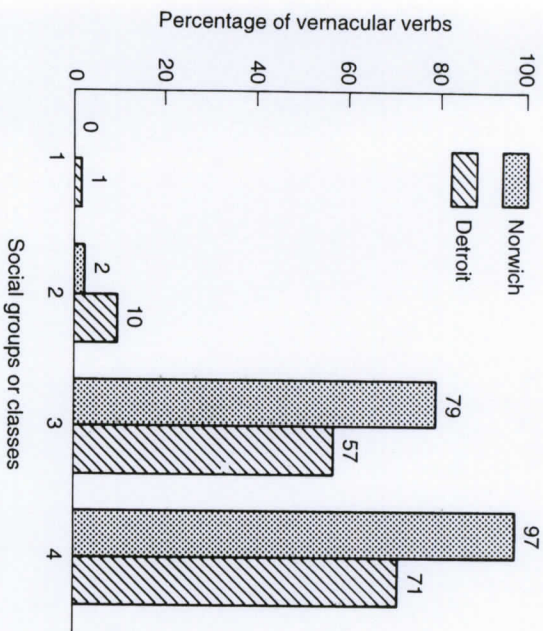


Figure 10. Vernacular present-tense verb form (third person singular: she walk) in Norwich and Detroit. (From Holmes, 1992, p. 159.)

own classroom experience: "People are often more aware of the social significance of vernacular grammatical forms, and this is reflected in the lower incidence of vernacular forms among middle class speakers in particular." (p. 159). This is reflected too in the sharp difference which Eckert (1989, p. 68) reports between Belten high school "jocks" and "burnouts" with respect to use of multiple negation (as in "He *didn't* eat *none*"). In this Detroit suburb, as in many other communities across the United States, the jocks are more middle class in their orientation and more institutionally identified with the high school (as athletes, club officers, and the like), and not surprisingly, they are much less likely to use this stigmatized grammatical feature (probability = .280) than the "counterculture" burnouts (probability = .720; the difference is significant at the .006 level).⁹

For another example of how dramatically grammatical variables can

9 The probabilities or feature weights which Eckert reports for multiple negation are based on frequency differences observed in speech but represent the output of the variable rule computer program introduced by Cedegren and Sankoff (1974) for the analysis of variable linguistic data. One of the many advantages which the probabilities computed by this program have over observed frequencies is that they provide a multivariate analysis, taking into account the simultaneous effect of other factors (e.g., internal linguistic factors) considered in the analysis of the variable. For a recent discussion of variable rule analysis in linguistics, see Sankoff (1988).

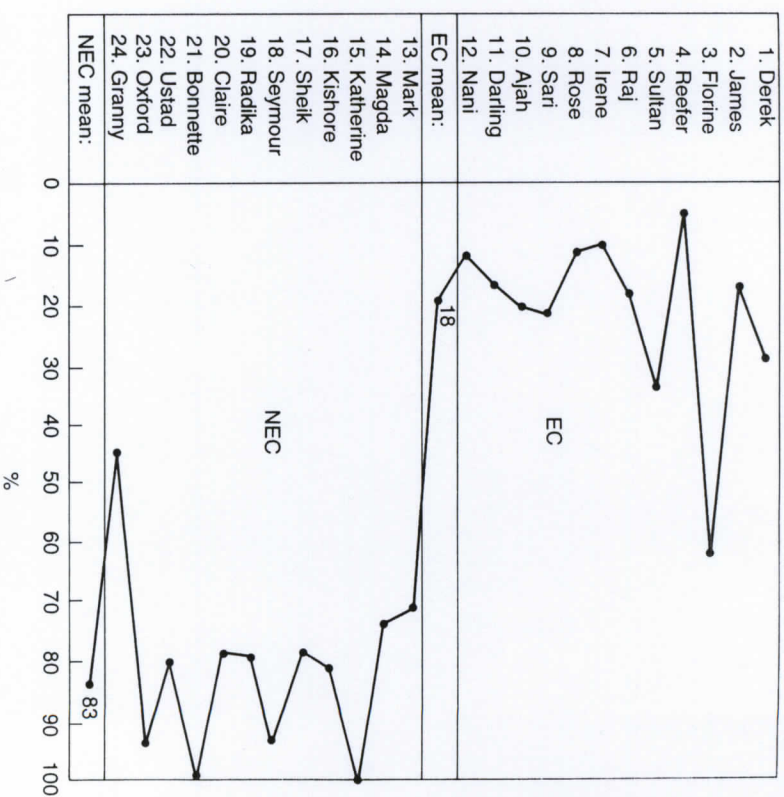


Figure 11. Relative frequencies of standard English (acrolectal) variants in singular pronoun subcategories among twenty-four residents of Cane Walk. (From Rickford, 1986.)

stratify a speech community, consider the data in Figure 11, from Rickford (1986). The linguistic variable is the relative frequency with which acrolectal or standard English variants were used in nine singular pronoun categories (acrolectal "I see it" versus basilectal or creole "Me see um") in Cane Walk (pseudonym), a rural community in Guyana, South America. The social variable is membership in the two major social classes in the community: estate class (EC), whose members work as weedeers or cane cutters and in other field-labor positions on the sugar estate behind the village, and nonestate class (NEC), whose members either hold supervisory positions like field foreman on the sugar estate or who work as shop owners, clerks, or teachers and in other capacities outside the sugar estate. With the exception of Florine and Granny, to whom we will return later in this chapter, the acrolectal

pronoun usage frequencies of EC and NEC members simply do not overlap, and their group means – 18 percent and 83 percent, respectively – are as far apart as middle-class versus working-class present tense -s usage in Detroit (see Figure 10). One difference, however, is that the decision about how many and which classes to recognize in Cane Walk was done on the basis of an ethnographic approach, considering community members' "subjective" views on the matter, rather than on the basis of an "objective" multi-index sociological measure.¹⁰ Another is that the EC-NEC distinction in Cane Walk can be fruitfully interpreted in terms of sociological *conflict* paradigms, as two social groups with fundamentally different values, whereas the sociological paradigm implicit in Figures 9 and 10, and in most sociolinguistic analysis to date, is a *functional-order* model in which the classes are assumed to share a consensus on norms and values. (See Guy, 1988; Kerbo, 1983, pp. 90–91; Rickford, 1986; Williams, 1992; Woolard, 1985, for further discussion.)

Another aspect of social differentiation which can accord with, but sometimes subdivide or cut across, class groupings is social *network*, a measure of the extent to which and the ways in which members of a community interact with each other. The exceptional status of EC member Florine in Figure 11 is due in part to her close friendship network with NEC members, in particular Mark and Magda, her next-door neighbors. And the exceptional status of NEC member Granny is due in part to her occupational network – the fact that she works all day in a run shop frequented by EC cane cutters. It was Milroy (1980) who first demonstrated, on the basis of data from Belfast English, that networks which were *dense* (close-knit, in the sense that each member of the network knew one another) and *multiplex* (with members knowing and interacting with one another in multiple capacities, e.g., as friends, coworkers, and family members) could help to maintain local vernacular norms, such as the dropping of the *th* in such words as *mother*. More recently, Edwards (1992) has shown the relevance of network analysis to the use of African-American Vernacular English in Detroit, and Milroy and Milroy (1992) have proposed a theoretical integration of social class and network analysis in sociolinguistics.

Race and ethnicity: Focusing on African-American Vernacular English.

In addition to observing language differences related to children's networks and social class backgrounds, teachers may also notice differ-

¹⁰ As shown in Rickford (1979), the two social classes can also be distinguished on multi-index measures, but the point is that their identification is done in the first instance on the basis of ethnographically valid community norms.

ences in the English of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. They may notice, for instance, that some Mexican-American or Punjabi children have a distinctive accent, that some African-American children speak a different variety of English from that of children from European or Caucasian backgrounds, and that even among the European-Americans, the children from German backgrounds sound slightly different than the ones from French or Polish backgrounds.

Some of these race- and ethnicity-correlated differences in language use reflect the effects of bilingualism in the children's home and/or in the community – the influence on the child's English of another language which they or their parents learned natively. For instance, the fact that in some varieties of Mexican-American English voiced [z] is replaced by voiceless [s] (so that speakers say "soo" for "zoo") may be attributed to transfer or interference from Spanish (Valdés, 1988, p. 130), which does not have voiced [z] in word-initial or word-final position. Similarly, Koreans learning English often have difficulty with English articles (e.g., *a* and *the*), since Korean has no similar forms; conversely, Koreans may feel uncomfortable with the fact that English does not encode the complex honorific distinctions between addressees which are expressed by Korean verbs (Kim, 1988, p. 262).

Foreign language influences of this type are more likely the more recently one's family or ethnic group immigrated – for instance, the children of Vietnamese who immigrated to the United States in the early 1980s are more likely to show such influences than are the grandchildren of Germans who immigrated to the United States in the 1950s. But ethnic varieties of English do not merely reflect passive inheritance from a parental or ancestral language. On the contrary, ethnic varieties are often actively maintained or developed to express the distinctive ethnic identity of their users (LePage & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). That this is so is clear from the fact that African-American Vernacular English remains a distinctive variety in the United States 300 or 400 years after Africans were first brought to the United States and long after direct transfer from African languages was a factor. AAVE is actually an excellent variety to concentrate on in this section, since it is perhaps more different from standard English than any other American English dialect¹¹ and it has been the focus of considerable description and controversy within linguistics during the past quarter century, often in relation to

¹¹ One variety which is even more different from SE than AAVE is Gullah, or Sea Island Creole, a creole spoken by African-Americans on the islands off the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia (Jones-Jackson, 1987). See Rickford (1974) for arguments and evidence that Gullah's isolation has merely preserved features that may have been more general in African-American English in earlier centuries. See Nichols (this volume) for more on Gullah.

educational issues. AAVE is also one of the features of their students' usage which inner-city teachers most often ask about, so it is especially important for us to consider it in a volume intended for language arts teachers.¹²

PHONOLOGICAL AND GRAMMATICAL FEATURES OF AAVE

Table 2 identifies the primary phonological and grammatical features of AAVE. Although it is impossible in a chapter of this length to add all the qualifying details about each feature that would be ideal (but see the accompanying footnotes and references), two general comments should be made, one about the frequency with which these features occur among African-American speakers, and the other about their distinctiveness vis-à-vis the colloquial or vernacular English of white Americans.

Not every African-American speaks AAVE, and no one uses the features in Table 2 100 percent of the time. Although it is often said that 80 percent of African-Americans speak AAVE (Dillard, 1972, p. 229), this is a guessimate rather than a systematic empirical finding. In general, AAVE features are used most often by young lower and working class speakers in urban areas and in informal styles, but how often depends on the feature in question. Wolfram's study of Detroit (1969) remains the most comprehensive source of information on class stratification in AAVE,¹³ and Table 3 summarizes some of the systematic class effects it revealed for several features. Note that the lower-working-class (LWC) speakers' usage of these features ranged from a high of 84 percent for consonant cluster simplification to a low of 6 percent for plural *-s* absence, and that although the middle-class speakers used consonant cluster simplification at least half the time, they used the other features very infrequently, in some cases not at all. Investigations of AAVE also show the systematic effects of style, age, sex, and linguistic environment. For instance, Foxy Boston, a teenager from East Palo Alto, California, deleted *is* and *are* 70 percent of the time in one interview with an African-American with whom she was familiar, but

12 AAVE has parallels in Canada and England as well. For the former, see Poplack and Tagliamonte (1991). The distinctive varieties of English spoken by black children in England – influenced to a considerable extent by the Caribbean creole English of older immigrants – has also been the focus of linguistic description and pedagogical discussion over the past 2 decades. For further information, see Suttcliffe (1982), Suttcliffe and Wong (1986), Suttcliffe with Figueroa (1992), and Edwards (1986).

13 Wolfram's sample included twelve representatives of each socioeconomic class. The classes themselves were differentiated using an adapted version of Hollingshead and Redlich's (1958) scale, combining scales of education, occupation, and residency (Wolfram, 1969, pp. 32ff.). Since most African-Americans in Detroit at that time were working class, Wolfram suggested (p. 36) that the speech patterns described for the LWC and UWC in his study would be characteristic of the "vast majority" of African-Americans in Detroit.

TABLE 2. SOME MAIN FEATURES OF AAVE AND THEIR SE EQUIVALENTS

Phonology (pronunciation)

1. Simplification of word-final consonant clusters, e.g., *han*^c for SE "hand," *des*^c for SE "desk," *pos*^c for SE "post," and *pass*^c for SE "passed" (note that the *-ed* suffix in this last example is pronounced as [t]).^a
2. Realization of final *ng* as *n* in gerunds and participles, e.g., *walkin*^c for SE "walking."^b
- 3a. Realization of voiceless *th* [θ] as *t* or *f*, as in *tin* for SE "thin" and *baf* for SE "bath."^c
- 3b. Realization of voiced *th* [ð] as *d* or *v*, as in *den* for SE "then" and *bruvv*^c for SE "brother."
4. Deletion or vocalization (pronunciation as a weak neutral vowel) of *l* and *r* after vowels, as in *he'p* for SE "help" and *sistuh* for SE "sister."
5. Monophthongal pronunciations of *ay* and *oy*, as in *ah* for SE "I" and *boh* for SE "boy."^d
6. Stress on first rather than second syllable, as in *police* instead of SE "police" and *hótel* instead of SE *hotel*.^e
7. Deletion of initial *d* and *g* in certain tense-aspect auxiliaries, as in "ah 'on know" for SE "I don't know" and "ah'm 'a do it" for SE "I'm gonna do it" (Rickford, 1974, p. 109).

Grammar

8. The verb phrase (markers of tense, mood, and aspect)
- 8a. Absence of copula/auxiliary *is* and *are* for present tense states and actions, as in "He Ø tall" for SE "He's tall" or "They Ø running" for SE "They are running."^f

^aThe systemic nature of AAVE is shown by the fact that this rule operates only when both members of the consonant cluster are either voiceless, involving no vibration of the vocal cords (as in *post*, *ask*, and *apt*), or voiced, with the vocal cords vibrating (as in *posed* [zɔd], *hand*, and *old*). When one member of the cluster is voiceless and the other voiced (as in *jump* or *thank*) the cluster cannot be simplified, except in negative forms like *ain't* and *don't*. See Fasold and Wolfram (1978, p. 52) for further discussion.

^bThis is popularly known as "dropping your *gs*," but it doesn't actually involve any *g* dropping at all. What actually happens, in phonetic terms, is that one kind of nasal (an alveolar nasal – with the tongue touching the alveolar ridge right behind the top front teeth) is substituted for another one (a velar nasal – with the tongue touching the velar or upper back region of the roof of the mouth).

^cAs Fasold and Wolfram (1978, pp. 55–56) point out, voiceless *th* is more often realized as *t* at the beginnings of words, and as *f* at the ends of words. Similarly, *d* realizations of voiced *th* are more common word-initially and *v* realizations are more common word-finally.

^dAs Fasold and Wolfram (1978, p. 61) point out, this feature is common among both blacks and whites in the south, and occurs much more frequently before voiced sounds or pause (as in *side*, *l*) than before voiceless sounds (as in *sit*).

^eAccording to Fasold and Wolfram (1978, p. 61), this affects only a small subset of words such as *police*, *hotel*, and *July*.

^fIn the grammatical examples, Ø is used to mark the point at which a grammatical form or inflection would occur in equivalent SE examples. This is compar-

TABLE 2 (cont.)

- 8b. Absence of third person present tense -s, as in "He walkØ" for SE "He walks" or "He doØn't sing" for SE "He doesn't sing" (Fasold, 1972, pp. 121-149).
- 8c. Use of invariant *be* to express habitual aspect, as in "He *be* walkin" (usually, regularly, as against "He Ø walkin" right now) for SE "He is usually walking/usually walks" (Fasold, 1972, pp. 150-184).
- 8d. Use of stressed *BIN* to express remote phase, as in "She *BIN* married" for SE "She has been married for a long time (and still is)" or "He *BIN* ate it" for SE "He paid it a long time ago" (Baugh, 1983, pp. 80-82; Rickford, 1975).
- 8e. Use of *done* to emphasize the completed nature of an action, as in "He *done did* it" for SE "He's already done it" (Baugh, 1983, pp. 74-77; Labov, 1972c, pp. 53-57).
- 8f. Use of *be done* to express resultatives or the future or conditional perfect, as in "She *be done had* her baby" for SE "She *will have had* her baby" (Baugh, 1983, pp. 77-80).
- 8g. Use of *finna* (derived from "fixin' to") to mark the immediate future, as in "He's *finna go*" for SE "He's about to go."⁸
- 8h. Use of *steady* as an intensified continuative marker (to mark actions that occur consistently and/or persistently), as in "Ricky Bell *be steady* steppin in them number nines" (Baugh, 1983, p. 86).
- 8i. Use of *come* to express the speaker's indignation about an action or event, as in "He *come walkin* in here like he owned the damn place" (Spears, 1982, p. 852).
- 8j. Use of *had* to mark the simple past (primarily among preadolescents) as in "then we *had* went outside" for SE "then we went outside" (Theberge & Rickford, 1989).
9. Negation
- 9a. Use of *ain't* as a general preverbal negator, for SE "am not," "isn't," "aren't," "hasn't," "haven't," and "didn't," as in "He ain't here" for SE "He isn't here" or "He ain't do it" for SE "He didn't do it."
- 9b. Multiple negation or negative concord (i.e., negating the auxiliary verb and all indefinites in the sentence), as in "He *don't do nothin'*" for SE "He doesn't do anything" (Labov, 1972c, pp. 130-196).
- 9c. Negative inversion in emphatic statements (inversion of the auxiliary and indefinite pronoun subject), as in "Can't nobody do it" for SE "Nobody can do it" (Sells, Rickford, & Wasow, 1995).
10. Other grammatical features
- 10a. Absence of possessive -s, as in "JohnØ house" for SE "John's house."
- 10b. Absence of plural -s (fairly infrequent), as in "two boyØ" for SE "two boys."
- 10c. Appositive or pleonastic pronouns, as in "That teacher, *she* yell at the kids" (Fasold & Wolfram, 1978, p. 80) for SE "That teacher Ø yells at the kids."

ble to the use of an apostrophe in phonological examples (e.g., *be'p*) to mark the point at which a consonant or vowel occurs in equivalent SE forms.

⁸There is no published discussion of the use of *finna* in AAVE, but see Ching (1987) for a discussion of its probable source – *fixin* to – in the South.

TABLE 2 (cont.)

- 10d. Auxiliary inversion in embedded questions (without *if* or *whether*), as in "I asked him *could* he go with me" for SE "I asked him whether he could go with me."
- 10e. Use of *here go* as a static locative or presentational form, as in "Here go my own" (said by a 12-year-old girl from East Palo Alto, California, as she showed me her artwork) for SE "Here is my own."

TABLE 3. USE OF SELECTED AAVE FEATURES IN DETROIT, BY SOCIAL CLASS

Feature	LWC %	UWC %	LMC %	UMC %
Consonant cluster simplification <i>not</i> in past tense (p. 60)	84	79	66	51
Voiceless <i>th</i> Ø → <i>f</i> , <i>t</i> , or Ø (p. 84)	71	59	17	12
Multiple negation (p. 156)	78	55	12	8
Absence of copula/auxiliary <i>is</i> , <i>are</i> (p. 169)	57	37	11	5
Absence of third person present tense -s (p. 136)	71	57	10	1
Absence of possessive -s (p. 141)	27	25	6	0
Absence of plural -s (p. 143)	6	4	1	0

LWC = lower working class; UWC = upper working class; LMC = lower middle class; UMC = upper middle class. Numbers are percentage amounts.

Source: Wolfram, 1969.

only 40 percent of the time in another interview with a European-American whom she had not met before (Rickford & McNair-Knox, 1993, p. 247). The members of the Cobras street gang in New York City deleted *is* more often when it had a pronoun subject (e.g., *He*) than when it had a noun phrase subject (e.g., *The man*), and more often when recorded with their peer group than when interviewed individually (Labov, 1972c, p. 84). Wolfram (1969, p. 179) reported that the 14- to 17-year-old subjects in his Detroit sample deleted *is* and *are* 68 percent of the time, but the adults did so only 38 percent of the time. In a sample from East Palo Alto, 15-year-old Tinky Gates deleted *is* and *are* 81 percent of the time, her 38-year-old mother, Paula Gates, did so 35 percent of the time, and 76-year-old Penelope Johnson did so only 15 percent of the time. Finally, males are generally reported as using AAVE features more often than females, but this may be partly because the interviewers in most studies are male. For instance, Wolfram (1969, p. 136) reports that the lower-working-class males in Detroit deleted third present -s 74 percent of the time compared to 69 percent for lower-working-class females. But Foxy Boston and Tinky Gates, in interviews conducted in East Palo Alto by a female field-worker (Faye

McNair-Knox), showed even higher rates of third present *-s* absence – 97 percent and 96 percent, respectively (Rickford, 1991).

The features of AAVE that appear to be distinctive to this variety (or nearly so) are primarily grammatical. Wolfram (1991, p. 108) lists eight such features, and six of them (including stressed *BIN*, invariant *be*, and *is* absence) are grammatical. Many phonological features of AAVE (e.g., nos. 1, 2, and 4 in Table 2), and some of its grammatical features too (e.g., no. 9b in Table 2), also occur in the colloquial English of white Americans, especially those from the working class, and some of them (like nos. 5 and 8e in Table 2) are characteristic of southern speech (see Feagin, 1979). But, in general, the features which AAVE shares with other American vernaculars occur more frequently in AAVE and/or in a wider range of linguistic environments. For instance, consonant cluster simplification appears to be more common in the AAVE of working-class African-Americans than in white working-class speech, and it occurs in AAVE even when the next word begins with a vowel (e.g., *pos' office*), a position in which many other dialects retain the final consonant (Wolfram, 1991, p. 109).¹⁴ For some AAVE speakers, words like *des* do not have an underlying final *k*, and the plural form is *desse* according to the same rule that applies to words ending in a final sibilant (e.g., *rose-roses*, *boss-bosses*, *church-churches*).

THE CREOLE ORIGINS AND DIVERGENCE ISSUES

One source of controversy in the study of AAVE is whether the dialect was once more different from standard English and white vernacular dialects than it is now, in particular, whether it was a creole language similar to the creole English spoken in Jamaica, other parts of the West Indies, and elsewhere in the world (e.g., Hawaii and Sierra Leone).¹⁵ Although this issue can be pursued quite independently of educational considerations, there is a potential connection between the historical and educational issues, as noted by Stewart (1970). Stewart pointed out (p. 362) that if educators realized that AAVE came from creole roots and resulted from a very normal and widespread process of historical development rather than from carelessness or ignorance, they might be more willing to recognize the distinctness and validity of the dialect and to take it into account in their language arts pedagogy.

In favor of the creolist view, Stewart (1970) and Dillard (1972, 1992)

¹⁴ In other words, speakers of such dialects will say "pos' five letters," deleting the final *t* before a consonant, but "post office," retaining the final *t* before a vowel. Similarly, some AAVE speakers delete or vocalize postvocalic *r* before a vowel, even within the same word (so that "Carol" sounds like "Ca'ol"), but speakers of white vernaculars do not (Labov, 1972c, p. 40).

¹⁵ See Nichols, this volume, for definitions of pidgin and creole languages.

have observed that textual attestations of the language of African-Americans from the eighteenth and nineteenth century are even more similar to Caribbean creole English than is modern AAVE. In addition, these authors and others (including Bailey, 1965; Baugh, 1980; Holm, 1984; Rickford, 1977; Rickford & Blake, 1990; Winford 1992) have suggested that when copula absence and other features of modern AAVE are examined carefully and quantitatively, the creole resemblances and origins of AAVE become much clearer. On the other hand, skepticism about the creole origins hypothesis has come from Poplack and Sankoff (1987), who, examining copula absence in the English of the descendants of early nineteenth-century African-American migrants to Samaná, Dominican Republic, conclude that the language of those migrants "was no more creolized than modern ABE [i.e., AAVE], and ... bore no more resemblance to English-based West Indian creoles than modern ABE, and indeed less."¹⁶ Tagliamonte and Poplack (1988), on the basis of their analysis of past tense marking in Samaná, reach a similar conclusion. In response to the latter paper, Winford (1992) has shown that there exist close parallels between past marking in Trinidadian creole and AAVE, but debate on the creole origins of AAVE is likely to continue.

A more recent and perhaps equally unresolved issue is whether AAVE is currently diverging from white vernaculars, becoming more different from them than it was, say, a quarter of a century ago. This hypothesis was first advanced by Labov and Harris (1986), who argued that, as a result of increasing racial and economic segregation, sound changes in the white community had not diffused to the black community, and grammatical innovations in the black community had not diffused to the white community. To their data from Philadelphia, Bailey and Maynor (1987) added data from the Brazos Valley, Texas, which suggested that the AAVE of urban children had become more different from that of older African-Americans and from white vernaculars. Skepticism about the divergence hypothesis has, however, been raised by some of the contributors in Fasold et al. (1987), by Butters (1989), and by Rickford (1991). One difficulty is that, although the AAVE of the youngest generation shows divergence from white vernaculars with respect to some features, it shows convergence with respect to others. Also, it is unclear whether modern AAVE appears to be diverging simply because more truly vernacular data exist than did twenty-five years ago (Farr & Daniels 1986, p. 34). (See also Bailey, 1993; Bailey & Maynor, 1989; Butters, 1989, for further discussion.)

¹⁶ Besides Samaná English, a source of new data for arguments about the creole hypothesis is the set of recordings of former slaves transcribed and analyzed in Bailey, Maynor, and Cukor-Avila (1991).

ATTITUDES TOWARD AAVE

How people feel about AAVE and people who speak AAVE is an important issue for educators, for at least two reasons. First, teachers often have unjustifiably negative attitudes toward students who speak AAVE (Labov, 1970), and such negative attitudes may lead them to have low expectations of such students, to assign them inappropriately to learning disabled or special education classes, and to otherwise stunt their academic performance (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Smitherman, 1981, p. 19). Second, teachers trying to decide whether and how to take AAVE into account in their classroom pedagogy might benefit from understanding what the attitudes of students, parents, employers, and other teachers are toward this variety (see McGroarty, this volume).

As it turns out, such attitudes are not uniform. Although educational psychologists such as Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) and Farrell (1983) have berated the use of AAVE structures by young children and have seen them as reflecting or creating cognitive deficits, their conclusions have been persuasively rebutted by linguists (Labov, 1970, and Baugh, 1988, respectively). Leading African-American writers (e.g., Baldwin, 1979, Jordan, 1985) have defended the legitimacy and expressiveness of AAVE, and inner-city African-American teenagers sometimes reject the standard and endorse the vernacular in opposition to mainstream white culture and values (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 182). At the same time, parents have expressed concern that if their children were limited to the vernacular, this would negatively affect their chances of getting good jobs and going on to college (Hoover, 1978, p. 85), and the validity of this concern has been demonstrated in empirical research by Terrell and Terrell (1983). However, even those parents who prefer the standard for job interviews, for reading and writing, and for schools and formal contexts, accept the vernacular for listening and speaking, particularly in the home and in informal settings, and some have endorsed it for purposes of solidarity maintenance and culture preservation (Hoover, 1978, pp. 78–79).¹⁷ This ambivalence about AAVE is part of a larger “push-pull” dynamic in African-American history (Smitherman, 1986, p. 170), but it is not limited to African-Americans. Taylor’s survey (1973) of 422 teachers of various races throughout the country revealed that, although 40 percent expressed negative opinions about the structure and usefulness of AAVE and other vernacular varieties, 40 percent expressed positive opinions (p. 183). Moreover, their

attitudes could not be characterized simply as positive or negative; they varied depending on the aspect of dialect use under discussion, length of teaching experience (those who had been teaching for 3 to 5 years were most positive), and other factors.

Most teachers, parents, and linguists agree, regardless of their attitudes toward AAVE, that children should be taught to read and write fluently as a basis for success in the entire curriculum. Many also believe that students should be assisted in developing bidialectal competence in AAVE and standard English.¹⁸ Linguists have consistently suggested that the goal of being competent in AAVE and Standard English would be better achieved if the structural, rhetorical, and expressive characteristics of African-American vernacular language were taken into account. In the next section we will consider some of their observations and suggestions.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING LANGUAGE ARTS TO SPEAKERS OF AAVE

Reading, the subject which parents in Hoover’s study (1978, p. 82) ranked as the most important item in the elementary school curriculum, was the first subject to attract the interest of sociolinguists working on AAVE. Labov (1972c, pp. 33–34) observed that, because of the homonyms produced by regular AAVE rules (e.g., *Ruth* = *roof*, *pass* = *passed*), it might be difficult for teachers to know when they are dealing with a mistake in reading or a difference in pronunciation. For instance, the child who reads “He passed by both of them” as *he pass’ by bof of dem* may have decoded the past tense meaning and every other semantic component of the original correctly but simply pronounced the sentence according to the rules of his or her own vernacular. The teaching strategy in this case would be very different from that for a child who had not recognized or understood the significance of the *-ed* suffix. Labov suggested (p. 34) that teachers in the early grades accept the existence of a different set of homonyms in the speech of African-American children to preserve their confidence in the phonic code and facilitate their learning to read.

An alternative strategy, advocated by Baratz (1969), Stewart (1969), and Smitherman (1986), among others, was to introduce AAVE speakers to reading through “dialect readers,” which minimize the differences between the printed word and the child’s vernacular, and allow the child to concentrate on decoding and comprehension without the additional burden of simultaneously learning a second dialect. Simpkins, Holt, and Simpkins (1977) created the most comprehensive set of dialect materials, a series of *Bridge* readers written in AAVE, a transitional

17 Hoover (1978) interviewed eighty California parents, sixty-four from East Palo Alto and sixteen from Oakland. The “standard” and “vernacular” varieties about which they were asked were African-American varieties, spoken by African-American interviewers, and sharing AAVE prosodic and phonological patterns while differing primarily in grammar.

18 See Sledd (1969) for demurrals on this point.

variety, and standard English, as exemplified in these brief excerpts (Simpkins & Simpkins, 1981, p. 232):

6. AAVE: He couldn't find no dictionary, so he split on down to the library.... He ask the lady there 'bout books to help him learn some big words like redundancy.

Transition: He didn't have a dictionary so he went down to the public library.... He asked (the librarian) for a book to help him.

Standard English: He explained to the librarian that he wanted to increase his vocabulary.

The *Bridge* reading program was field-tested with 540 students from the seventh through the twelfth grades, and the students' progress after several months of instruction was "extremely promising," as measured by scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in Reading (Simpkins & Simpkins, 1981, p. 237).¹⁹ Despite these early successes, the series was not retained, and dialect readers have not been widely adopted, for a variety of political, philosophical, and practical reasons, including negative reactions from parents, educators, and community leaders (see Labov, in press; Rickford & Rickford, in press; Wolfram, 1991, pp. 255–266; Wolfram & Fasold, 1969, pp. 142–143).

Another teaching strategy that was proposed a quarter century ago but is less popular these days is the use of drills that focus attention on differences between AAVE and SE and aim to help children develop competence in switching smoothly between them. Here are some examples of translation drills from Feigenbaum (1970, p. 92):

7. <i>Direction</i>	<i>Teacher stimulus</i>	<i>Student response</i>
SE → AAVE	Paula likes leather coats	Paula like leather coats
AAVE → SE	He prefer movies	He prefers movies

One virtue of this method is that it recognized and promoted the integrity of both AAVE and SE. Another is that it made use of second language teaching techniques, in accord with Stewart's suggestion (1964) that SE be taught to AAVE speakers as a "quasi-foreign language." However, the drills were boring and assumed to a certain extent that the teacher spoke AAVE or had some knowledge of it (Keith Walters, personal communication). Moreover, their value was called

19 Simpkins and Simpkins (1981, p. 238) reported that the 540 children using the *Bridge* series showed "significantly larger gains" than a control group of 123 students who did not – an average gain of "6.2 months for four months of instruction compared to only an average gain of 1.6 months for students in their regular scheduled classroom reading activities."

into question by theoretical developments in second language acquisition (Wolfram, 1991, p. 225).²⁰

One educational implication of AAVE research which was noted early and continues to be emphasized today is that many standard intelligence tests are biased against speakers of AAVE and similar dialects insofar as they include items which involve differences between AAVE and SE but give credit only for the SE response (see Hoover & Taylor, 1987; Labov, 1976; Smitherman, 1986, pp. 239–241; Vaughan-Cooke, 1983; Wolfram 1976, 1986, 1991). One example is the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA) grammatical closure subtest, which includes this item:

8. Here is a dog. Here are two _____. (SE *dogs* is correct; AAVE *dog* is "wrong.")

In response to this evidence of bias, some linguists have urged that creators and users of such tests increase their knowledge of the speech of the communities they serve and field-test them with dialect speakers (Wolfram, 1991, pp. 244–247), and others have called for "a national moratorium on all testing until valid measures are devised" (Smitherman, 1986, p. 239).

With respect to writing, a number of useful suggestions have been made by linguists. Farr and Daniels (1986) have isolated fifteen factors associated with effective writing instruction for dialect speakers, including an appreciation of children's native linguistic competence and moderate marking of surface errors (pp. 45–46). In a similar vein, Smitherman (1986, p. 213 ff.) urges that, in their responses to students' writings, teachers concentrate on organization, content, and rhetorical power rather than on superficial errors caused by the transfer of grammatical patterns of AAVE. Ball (1992) has drawn attention to special circumlocution, narrative interspersal, and recursion styles which occur in the expository discourse of African-American students, perhaps reflecting the models of African-American sermons and other expressive oral genres. This line of research is similar in some respects to the work of Michaels (1981) and Taylor and Matsuda (1988), who report that African-American children often use in oral narratives a "topic associating" style, involving "a series of associated segments . . . linked implicitly" rather than a "topic-centered" style involving "tightly structured discourse on a single topic." The teacher who does not recognize this topic-associating style, illustrated in example 9, may prematurely interrupt or curtail students' expressive productions.

20 However, Taylor (1989) has used similar drills quite successfully with college-level students and cites other research in which "the audio-lingual methods, applied to the teaching of Black students, has proved to be a successful tool" (p. 108).

9. A topic-associating narrative: I went to the beach Sunday / and to McDonald's / and to the park / and I got this for my birthday / (holds up purse) my mother bought it for me / and I had two dollars for my birthday / and I put it in here / and I went to where my friend / named Gigi / I went over to my grandmother's house with her / and she was on my back ... (from Michaels & Cazden, 1986)

A number of researchers have made other suggestions for adapting language arts instruction to the language and culture of African-American youth, advocating, for instance, an increased use of call and response and tonal semantics in classroom exercises (Smitheman, 1986, p. 220), the use of lyrics from popular songs and rap music to develop poetry appreciation, spelling, vocabulary, and sentence structure (Baugh, 1981; Hoover, 1991), and a cultural linguistic approach including increased use of the language experience method, in which children create and read their own thoughts and experiences (Starks, 1983).²¹

Finally, Kochman (1986), Foster (1986), and Morgan (1991) have drawn attention to linguistic and cultural differences between African-Americans and white Americans – for instance, with respect to turn-taking and discussion style. Understanding these differences may improve the teacher's ability to communicate and function effectively in the classroom.

Classroom implications and exercises involving social dialects

Many of the specific suggestions made in the preceding section in relation to AAVE can be applied to social dialects more generally. The overarching need is that teachers recognize the regularity and integrity of the social dialects which children and adolescents employ in the classroom and in the schoolyard, that they appreciate the powerful attachment to such dialects which students often have – sometimes as a vital part of their social identity – and that they build on such dialects, where possible, in language arts and second language and foreign language instruction.

One action teachers might take to increase awareness of and sensitivity to social variation is to show and discuss films and videotapes in which distinctive social dialects are exemplified and/or play a significant role. The list might include the following, but the possibilities are virtually unlimited: *My Fair Lady* (based on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*), the PBS television series *The Story of English* (with accompanying text by McCrum et al., 1986), the November 19, 1987, discus-

21 See also Heath (1983) and the papers in Brooks (1985).

sion of black English on the Oprah Winfrey Show,²² and *Daughters of the Dust* (see Dash, 1992, for screenplay and discussion). Literature which exemplifies similar variation may offer even richer possibilities for reflection and analysis. As examples of the many references that might be consulted on this issue, note Holton's (1984) analysis of the use of AAVE in African-American fiction; Brathwaite (1984), Dabdeen and Wilson-Tagoe (1988), and Chamberlain (1993) on Caribbean and Afro-British literature; Lal and Raghavendra (1960) on poetry in Indian English, and James (1986) on third world literature more generally. Recordings of third world poets and authors reading their works in their native varieties of English (e.g., Kay, Agard, D'Aguar, & Berry, 1990) constitute another valuable classroom resource.

Finally, teachers might elicit from students examples of age-, class-, gender-, and ethnicity-related differences in language use which they have encountered in their own experience, encourage them to exploit such differences creatively to represent various characters in drama and composition, and engage them in discussion of what these differences reflect about social relations and imply for schooling and careers. The results should be dynamic and richly instructive, for teachers and students alike.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to focus on some of the ways in which English, like other languages, varies in its pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and use according to both regional and social factors. Such variation has tremendous implications for all teachers who deal with language instruction, whether as L1, L2, or foreign language instructors. Sometimes such variation poses additional problems and challenges for language teachers, but it is part of the multicultural richness which characterizes most modern societies and should be considered a rich resource for classroom discussion, the development of literacy skills, the enhancement of individual and social identities, and the improvement of intercultural relations and understanding.

Suggestions for further reading

Brooks, Charlotte K. (Ed.). (1985). *Tapping potential: English and language arts for the black learner*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

22 The videotape is available from Harpo Productions, Chicago, Illinois. However, as Keith Walters (personal communication) has suggested, it might be most fruitful to show and discuss this videotape after students have learned about the systematicity of AAVE and other dialects and after they understand some of the factors which influence people's attitudes toward such dialects.

This book represents an attempt by a variety of linguists and language practitioners to apply general linguistics principles and research on specific varieties to the education of speakers of those varieties. Reading, writing, and literature are covered in separate sections.

Chambers, J. K., & Trudgill, Peter (1980). *Dialectology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This remains one of the best introductions to regional and social dialectology, clarifying key terms and concepts in dialect geography, urban dialectology, sociolinguistics, and variation theory.

Cheshire, Jenny (Ed.) (1991). *English around the world: Sociolinguistic perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Although some of the articles in this book are relatively technical, they provide more comprehensive and up-to-date coverage of varieties of English worldwide than is available in any other volume. Among the countries or regions covered are Britain, the United States, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Southeast Asia and Hong Kong, South Asia, southern, East, and West Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.

Holmes, Janet (1992). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. London and New York: Longman.

This is the most recent and most accessible introduction to the study of language in society currently available. It includes data on multilingualism and social and stylistic variation from speech communities all over the world.

Labov, William (1970). *The study of nonstandard English*. Champaign, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, by special arrangement with the Center for Applied Linguistics.

This is somewhat dated now, and may be difficult to find, but it is an excellent introduction to sociolinguistics and vernacular dialects for teachers, with useful suggestions for doing original research in the classroom.

Wolfram, Walt, & Christian, Donna (1989). *Dialects and education: Issues and answers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

This book uses a question-answer format to provide a stimulating introduction to regional and social dialects and the kinds of issues which many language arts, L1, and L2 teachers raise. Although the focus is on American English dialects, the questions and answers are relevant to language teachers everywhere.

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6 Pidgins and creoles

Patricia C. Nichols

He gon catch we back!
Huh?
He gon catch us again!

This striking exchange took place some twenty years ago, between an 11-year-old African-American boy and me as we were driving down a four-lane highway along Waccamaw Neck in coastal South Carolina. I was passing a big four-wheeler as it was gathering speed on a straight road, and my young passenger was commenting on the futility of that attempt – first in his native creole and then in a variety closer to mine. Born about 20 miles and 20 years apart along this coast, we had learned very different language varieties in our home communities. Now, working together daily in his newly integrated local school and goofing off that day on a fishing trip, we were learning to accommodate to each other's language patterns. But, as this brief exchange makes clear, the child was doing the major share of the accommodating. When my "Huh?" indicated a lack of understanding, he could make substitutions for two words in his native creole, known as *Gullah*, that moved his variety closer to my standard English. Having worked for 2 months as a classroom aide and researcher in his school, I was able to understand his use of *gon* as an auxiliary marker for *future* and his extension of the standard meaning of *catch*, so that I could then translate his observation to something like: "He [the truck driver] is going to pass us again." But *his* relatively greater understanding of *my* speech, and of how it differed from his, was all too typical for the school setting he was in.

Integrated just 2 years previously, the small elementary school that this child attended (grades 1 to 6 for children ranging in age from 6 to 12) now had a European-American principal and a faculty equally divided between African-Americans and European-Americans, while the student population remained about 90 percent African-American. Most students entering school spoke Gullah at home and with their

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