LECTURE 10: LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS

- Overt and covert prestige
- Studying linguistic and social variation
- Variationist sociolinguistics
- Class and linguistic change

1. Consider how speech features mark your class. Do you ever use such features as the in/ing variable or gonna and wanna contractions? Do you ever palatalize /s/, /t/, or /d/ sounds when they precede a /y/ sound, as in don't you pronounced as "doncha" or can't you pronounced as "cancha"? These are all less prestigious features that most of us use. The key is that we stigmatize users of these features who use them at a frequency much higher than we do. Yet we, too, exhibit lower-level variation. Does this perhaps change how you would view the use or class association of such features?

2. Picking up on how we finished this lecture, think about other identity factors that might influence linguistic change. For example, if you are a white female, how might your speech differ from others in your class group who are of a different generation or race? What similarities might you share in your orientation toward standard and nonstandard norms? How might this be altered by your membership in differing social or ethnic groups? In other words, is class all there is to this picture?

3. Can you name features of your dialect that make it standard, or is it easier to name features that would make someone's speech nonstandard? Interestingly, standard speech seems to be more defined by what it is lacking than what it includes; why might this be the case?

LECTURE 11: SEX, AGE AND LANGUAGE CHANGE

- Age differences in language change
- Acquiring variants
- Age grading
- Gender influence on language
- Gender differences and types of linguistic changes

1. As a way to test some of the research cited in this lecture, record a casual conversation you have with two men and two women with whom you are friends or relatives. If you can, have one of each gender be under 25 and one older than 35. At the end of the conversation, have your participants read the following words off individual flashcards as you continue recording: *walking, running, dog, hibernating, sighing, laugh, eating, reinstituting, happy, facing.*

2. After you have recorded the conversations, select the most conversational five minutes of each and count the number of times you use either an in or an ing variant (regardless of which you use). Now, count the number of times your conversational partner used this ending. Count only verbal ing endings (for example, *walking* or *jogging* but not *ring* or *thing*) . It may be easier to transcribe the conversation to identify these instances. Out of the potential instances for *in/ing*, how many were realized as *in* versus *ing*?

3. Calculate and compare the rates of *in* use for each participant. You can calculate this percentage by dividing the number of *in* uses by the number of instances when *in* could have been used (that is, all potential verbal *ing* endings in the conversation). For example, if your partner spoke 12 total *ing*-ending words and used 3 *in* variants, his or her rate of *in* use would be 25 percent. Do the rates of use vary by age and gender? How do your results fit in with those discussed in the lecture? Does your

percentage of use vary based on the age and gender of your co-conversationalist? Does your relationship type (friend or family member) seem to create differences in the rate of use?

4. Finally, compare each participant's use of the in variant in conversation to the rate of use in reading the word list. What differences do you note? How does style seem to influence the use of this variant?

LECTURE 17: MIND YOUR MANNERS – POLITENESS SPEECH

- Politeness theory
- Why are we polite?
- Positive and negative face
- Indirect and direct strategies
- Making requests
- Face in the workplace
- Cultural values and face

1. If you were to ask someone to loan you money, how would it vary based on:

- How well you knew that person?

- Your relative status (for example, a professor to a student, a child to a parent)?

- How much money you were asking for?

2. Arrange the following examples in order from most to least polite:

a. Can I borrow a couple quarters for the meter? I'm sure you know how it is when you're running late!

b. I am so sorry to even ask you, but I forgot my wallet this morning, and I just need a few quarters for the meter. Might you possibly have a couple quarters that I could borrow?

c. Hey, I need a few quarters for the meter.

d. Excuse me, sir, do you happen to have a couple quarters I could borrow for the meter? I would be so grateful.

e. Darn! I forgot my wallet, and I don't have any quarters for the meter!

3. In the examples in question 2, identify the different politeness strategies used in terms of direct/indirect strategies and whether they appeal to the addressee's positive or negative face.

LECTURE 19: THE GENDER DIVIDE IN LANGUAGE
- Gender differences in speech
- Studies of language and gender
- Origins of gendered language use
- Contemporary views and research

1. Have you ever blamed conversational problems on language differences between men and women? What specifically did you suggest was at fault?

2. Look around over the next couple of days and note the number of ways in which we construct a dichotomy between male and female, for example, separate men's and women's bathrooms, different shoe size conventions, and so on. Try to look past such obvious ways we divide up the world toward more subtle indicators of "difference" around us.

3. Why is it so important to fit into a gendered self (and associated language use)? What do we have to lose if we do not conform?

LECTURE 20: ETHNIC IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE

- Defining ethnicity
- Characteristics of ethnic dialects
- African American dialects of English
- The origins and future of AAE

1. Consider how the social history of a dialect affects how we view the variety itself. In other words, how do associations we make with groups of speakers affect how we view their speech?

2. How do you define ethnicity? If you are Hungarian American, for example, is that different than being Asian American or African American? What are the boundaries and why?

3. How do you feel about the difference between promoting socially appropriate forms compared to the "deficit" view of nonstandard forms? Does the idea that vernacular English forms can be linguistically correct but socially unaccepted change the way you might view speakers of such dialects?

LECTURE 22: LANGUAGE, ADOLESCENCE, AND EDUCATION

- Language change across generations
- Vernacular reorganization
- Gender differences in language change
- Language in education
- The peer-group social world

1. Before we participate as producers or workers in the larger economic structure, what are the important influences on our lives?

2. Think about the structure and organization of most American schools. How might schools be seen to broker middle-class values and goals?

3. Think back to your high school or junior high school days. What were the identity symbols beyond language (for example, clothes, music, hair) to indicate membership in adolescent subcultures, such as the jocks and the burn-outs?

LECTURE 23: TEXTSPEAK – 2 BAD 4 ENGLISH?

- Texting language
- Instant messaging versus traditional communication

- The socio-cultural context of textspeak
- Politeness and face needs in texting
- Texting and literacy
- Texting versus face-to-face interaction

1. Do you text or use other forms of CMC? If so, what do you see as the main communication function it serves for you? If you don't use these forms, why not?

2. If you text, are your texts mainly relational or informational? Do you use emoticons? If so, do you use them to indicate your emotional state or to orient your receiver about how to take your message?

3. Consider how you feel about the relationship between texting and its effect on how we engage socially. What positive and negative aspects do you find?

4. How do you feel about the effect of texting on literacy and writing? Can you envision how greater use of a written form among young people might actually enhance the study of writing as a craft? For example, how might texting help students understand how authors work with tone and perspective?