

Project #4: Dialect Study

100 pts

Description: Part 1: a dialect study of a person of your choice, posted on blackboard.

Part 2: a 3-4 page explanation of why your subject exhibits the features s/he does.

Due:

Goal: To analyze a person's dialect and explain what his or her dialect features illustrate about the particular dialect, changes in dialects, or American dialects in general.

Assignment: We have been discussing and reading about several different types of dialect features that characterize different regions of the United States. For this assignment, you will need to choose a particular set of features to focus on (some things to think about are vowel height or length in particular contexts, the pronunciation of certain consonants, lexical choice for particular concepts, or preferred grammatical constructions), interview a subject, and then analyze the result.

Part 1: First you need to devise a way to test for the features you are studying. Once you have designed your test, you will interview your subject. Start by getting background information on the subject: age, where s/he grew up (and whether s/he moved around a lot), level of education, socio-economic class, occupation. This information will help you analyze your results. Then administer the test you devised.

The write-up for Part 1 should include 1.) an explanation of your test, 2.) the background information on your subject, and 3.) the results of the test (use the IPA if you are representing sounds).

Part 2: Write a 3-4 page paper that explains why your subject exhibits the dialect features that s/he does. Do this by comparing your results and your subject's background to those of your peers' subjects. What sorts of backgrounds cause a subject to exhibit a strong regional dialect? What backgrounds cause a subject to have mixed features? Are some features more stable than others? Do some dialects seem more resistant to change than others? And, in all cases, ***why might that be?*** Even if your subject displays a perfect example of the regional dialect you would expect to hear, you will have an argument to make: you should explain why that person would be more apt to do so than others.

Criteria for Evaluation:

- Part 1:
 - Test: an accurate, thorough, non-biasing method of testing the dialect features you wish to study. Be sure to specify how you picked your questions and how you administered the test.
 - Results: a clear and complete summary of your findings (mark phonology with the IPA).
- Part 2:
 - Explanation: detail in what way your subject conformed to or differed from the typical pronunciations/word choice for her/his region.
 - Thesis: make an argument about why your subject may have displayed the particular dialect features that s/he did
 - Analysis: Support your thesis with close analysis of your results, paying attention to what factors other than region might have an effect and using a comparison with your peers' work to inform your analysis.
 - Finishing: Error-free writing, correct citation, and proper works cited list.

Resources:

Your first resources for this assignment will be the course readings and the dialect features that we discussed in class. If you would like to look for additional dialect features, however, some other resources are

- *The Dictionary of American Regional English*
- *The Linguistic Atlas of the Upper Midwest*
- *The Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States; Based upon the Collections of the Linguistic Atlas of the Eastern United States*
- the TELSUR Project: <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/phono_atlas/home.html>
- the IDEA site: (particularly useful for sound recordings) <<http://web.ku.edu/~idea/>>.
- Harvard Dialect Survey (this give multiple maps that each show the distribution of a single feature): < <http://www4.uwm.edu/FLL/linguistics/dialect/index.html>> or to get directly to the results< <http://dialect.redlog.net/>>
- Dialect map (one big, comprehensive map of American dialects; it can be hard to read, but it is very informative): < <http://aschmann.net/AmEng/#LargeMap>>
- Linguistic Atlas Projects: <<http://us.english.uga.edu/>>