

ABSTRACTS: American Dialect Society Annual Meeting 2006

At the 2006 annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America

Jennifer Westerhaus Adams (Walker & Lambe, P.L.L.C., Durham, North Carolina)

ADS Session 2

How does American trademark law understand the concept of genericness?

Two principles underpin American trademark law: it seeks both to protect consumers by allowing them to differentiate the sources of products and to promote commerce by allowing producers to differentiate themselves from competitors. The law will not allow trademark protection for words it deems “generic,” because to do so would risk consumer confusion and create monopoly rights for the producer able to co-opt the only term available to describe its product. In order to better understand the evolution of the legal concept of “genericness,” this presentation will examine both the statutory framework and the case law concerning generic marks.

Michael Adams (North Carolina State University)

ADS Session 2

Generic: Lexicographical views I

Though lexicographers have contributed to confusion about the term *generic*, the concept is less important to lexicographical practice than many have thought. This paper will trace the history of the terminological confusion but will argue that lexicography is concerned with different semantic problems and operates from a different standard than that implied in legal and linguistic *generic*. It will also consider a set of ethical problems that confront lexicographers whose practices indulge the misbegotten concept of “genericness.”

Federica Barbieri (Northern Arizona University)

ADS session 5

Who's using be like in America today? Evidence from corpora of everyday conversation

This presentation reports on a study of the use and sociolinguistic distribution of the quotatives *be like*, *go*, *be all* and *say* in present-day American English. The study is based on two corpora of casual conversation (Longman Corpus of Spoken and Written English (1995-1996) and Cambridge-NAU Corpus of Spoken North American English (2004-2005)) which were recorded in various US states, from speakers of all age groups. Results show a marked increase in the frequency of use of *be like* by men and women of all generations below age forty, over the past decade, suggesting that *be like* is rapidly expanding in American English.

Robert Bayley (University of Texas-San Antonio)

Xiaoshi Li (University of Texas-San Antonio)

ADS Session 4

Frequency and phonological variation: Evidence from Mexican American English

This paper, based on approximately 3,000 tokens of –t,d deletion in Chicano English, reports on a test of Bybee’s frequency-based model of variation and change. Results of multivariate analysis show that frequency, while statistically significant, is only a fourth-order linguistic constraint, trailing behind morphological class and the features of the following and preceding segments. Moreover, contrary to the

predictions of Bybee's model, separate analyses by morphological class show a significant frequency effect only for monomorphemes. That is, frequency appears to operate only post-lexically. These results suggest that the role of frequency in phonological variation and change has been considerably overestimated.

Erica J. Benson (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire)

ADS Session 5

Need by, down, in, off, out?

The scant literature on *need* + prepositional adverb (e.g. *the cat needs out*) might lead one to falsely assume limited linguistic (i.e. *need out*) and regional (i.e. Southern) distributions. The data include 1255 ratings by 163 respondents. Robust distribution of *need* + *by, down, in, off, out* is evidenced in the Midland (76%-86% use) compared to the North and South ($p < .000$). *Need* + prepositional adverb joins other grammatical features with primarily but not exclusively Midland distributions, e.g. positive *anymore* and *want/need* + past participle. Some explanations for *need* + prepositional adverb in other dialect areas are explored.

David Bowie (University of Central Florida)

ADS session 3

The limits of adult linguistic stability

The apparent time construct rests on a number of incompletely tested assumptions, including the assumption that speakers retain their vernacular variety effectively unchanged throughout their adult lifespan. As part of a larger study, narratives were elicited from three adult females on two separate occasions about a year and a half apart. Acoustic and impressionistic analyses of the narratives revealed small but significant differences in the subjects' phonetic production between interviews. These findings suggest that adults cannot be relied on to produce precisely the same linguistic responses over even a relatively short period of time.

Allison Burkette (University of Mississippi)

ADS session 1

Mother v. daughter: Dialect and distancing strategies in conversational narratives (a.k.a. "You're not going nowhere")

Using the concept of community voice as a foundation, "Mother v. Daughter" will look at how an individual speaker uses grammar as a means of characterization in her narratives. This paper will present a close examination of conversational narratives told by an elderly mother and her adult daughter – it's the same story, the same linguistic resources, but very different versions. Of interest is the daughter's marked departures from the community vernacular during specific narrations and her use of non-standard features in speech attributed to her mother, the latter acting as editorial commentary on the 'old-fashioned' ideas of her stories' antagonist.

Ronald R. Butters (Duke University)

ADS Session 2

Panel: The concept of genericness in American English: Linguistics, lexicography, and American trademark law

The term GENERIC is important in American trademark law, in linguistics, and in ordinary English usage as represented in popular dictionaries. However, the varying concepts come into conflict in various ways. To non-lawyers, legal maneuvers

designed to thwart specific uses of a term seem unfair and prescriptive. To the lawyer, however, legal constraints upon trademark use serves to protect the public from confusing branding practices and out-and-out fraud. Our panel composed of a lawyer, an eminent lexicographer, and three linguists of various stripes, propose to clarify some of the issues in hopes of promoting understanding.

Jeannine Carpenter (Duke University and North Carolina State University)

ADS Session 1

Stylistic variation and the construction of masculinity in dynamic conversational settings

This study explores relationships of gender construction and stylistic variation during an interview with a teen-aged male. The conversational situation allows examination of style-shifting and construction of gender in relation to changing alignments of participants. This paper examines falsetto intonation and creaky phonation in two parts of the interview, which reveal stylistic strategies used by the subject to construct his masculine identity in relation to his interlocutors. The content of the utterances where these features are employed interact with his stylistic choices; creaky voice underscores stereotypically masculine topics and falsetto intonation is used differently, depending on the other participants.

Patricia Cukor-Avila (University of North Texas)

Bonnie Sbaiti (University of North Texas)

ADS Session 5

Are we fixin' to grammaticalize?

Although the use and spread of *yall* has been studied extensively, another marker of Southern speech, *fixin' to*, has received relatively little attention in the research, both in terms of its relationship to other forms with similar aspectual meaning and how its use has changed over time. The present study fills this gap with an investigation of the use, semantic expansion, and evidence for the grammaticalization of *fixin' to* over time. This study includes both an historical overview of *fixin' to* as well as an analysis of contemporary usage from both conversational and survey data.

Deena Fogle (McGill University)

ADS Session 3

Just How Far South is Indianapolis?

Indianapolis, Indiana sits at an area of potential overlap between the Midland and Southern dialect regions. This paper uses spectrographic analysis of sixteen Indianapolis natives to examine the classification of Indianapolis English through two key variables: the low-back ('cot'/'caught') vowel merger and the monophthongization of /ay/. Results show that Indianapolis is, at least preliminarily, a Midland city. No monophthongization of /ay/ was found except before resonants and none of the speakers exhibited a full, unconditioned merger, though several demonstrated a merger in progress.

Kirk Hazen (West Virginia University)

ADS Session 5

Visit (ING) in Appalachia

This paper investigates the (ING) variable in Appalachian speech to explain both the linguistic and social constraints on variation. Data from 45 speakers is qualitatively

and quantitatively analyzed for grammatical context, phonological environment, geographic region, age, sex, ethnicity, social class, and interview context. Results indicate that the only linguistic constraint is the syntactic category. Socially, a Southern/Northern divide exists in the production of variants: The Southern speakers have a higher rate of the alveolar variant than the Northern speakers, but the other social categories affect this regional variation.

Sarah Hilliard (Duke University)

Angela Washington (Duke University)

ADS Session 1

“Check it, yo”: Examining the role of yo in African American English

Though use of the word *yo* is a frequently stereotyped feature of African American speech, few studies have explored *yo*'s linguistic characteristics. This paper uses conversational speech data from African Americans of various backgrounds, examining the stylistic and pragmatic contexts of *yo* and its status as a marker of identity within African American youth discourse. We find that *yo* fulfills many diverse functions in speech, including evaluating arguments and marking emphasis. Stylistically, *yo* often correlates with well-known AA discourse patterns, and is an excellent index of style-shifting. The analysis demonstrates the linguistic multifunctionality and complexity of *yo*.

Laurence R. Horn (Yale University)

ADS Session 2

Generics and creeping autohyponymy

In semantics, generic NPs refer to kinds rather than particular objects: The dog is a mammal. The generic is opposed to the specific (and in the case of he/man language, to the sex-specific), but since the 19th century, cultural and legal contexts have prompted a more specific opposition between the generic and the proprietary. Once-proper nouns (*zipper*, *linoleum*, *cellophane*) may lose their trademark status along with their upper case. Like other instances of semantic broadening, this process of “genericide” may result in complete meaning shift or in autohyponymy, when a lexical item (*kleenex*, *xerox*, *guy*) may denote its own superordinate.

Kevin Kane (Western Michigan University)

Brooke Pearson (Western Michigan University)

Dana Schaefer (Western Michigan University)

Lisa Minnick (Western Michigan University)

ADS Session 7

Divided by a common language? Language attitudes and the Northern Cities Shift

Our paper explores awareness of and attitudes towards the Northern Cities Shift (NCS). We tested the saliency and status of NCS features by playing recordings of Michigan speakers with NCS for a second sample of Michigan speakers, who were asked to rate the recorded speakers for ‘correctness’ and ‘standardness.’ We consider whether the status of Michigan speech might extend to speakers with NCS features, or whether NCS may cost Michigan speech some the prestige it has long enjoyed among speakers of U.S. English.

Tyler Kendall (Duke University)

Walt Wolfram (North Carolina State University)

ADS Session 7

Local and external Standards in the use of African American English

Although the literature on AAE notes the need to recognize socially stratified varieties and the role of community-internal norms, little empirical research has examined the precise role of local practices and social categories in the instantiation of AAE norms. We examine the speech of African American leaders in the rural South in different settings and with different audiences to determine the relationship of their speech to local AAE norms. The study demonstrates that local norms and community-specific local practices and ideologies may play a significant role in shaping the use of vernacular and mainstream standard variants by these speakers.

Sonja Launspach (Idaho State University)

Janna Graham (Idaho State University)

ADS Session 3

An Investigation of the Regional Uses of Prepositions in Southeastern Idaho

We examined 30 oral history tapes from the Idaho Historical Society to identify various syntactic features in use during the original settlement of southeastern Idaho. The tapes record the speech of 34 Idahoans who were born between 1870 and 1930. This paper focuses on the speakers' use of prepositions. Specifically, we examine the use of multiple prepositions to describe a single relationship and the unusual syntactic environments and semantic attributes of prepositions such as *to* and *on*. Recent samples collected from freshman writing courses suggest that some regional uses of various prepositions—especially *on*—have been maintained.

Ceil Lucas (Gallaudet University)

Robert Bayley (University of Texas-San Antonio)

ADS Session 6

Variation in Sign Languages: Reexamining the Role of the Phonological Environment

Variation in the parts of ASL signs, i.e. phonological variation, has been explained largely by the influence of the preceding and following signs. This paper summarizes the results of a study of three phonological variables: the sign DEAF; the location of a class of signs represented by the verb KNOW; 1-handshape signs. Multivariate analysis shows that the grammatical function of a sign, rather than the phonological environment, is the first-order constraint for all three variables. We suggest that the patterns of variation observed here and in other recent studies follow from the way morphology functions in a visual-gestural modality.

Corrine McCarthy (McGill University)

ADS Session 3

Chicago: Mild but Still Northern

The Northern Cities Shift (NCS) remains an active change in progress at the national level. Within Chicago, early developments-- the raising of /ae/ ('cat') and fronting of /o/ ('cot')—have stabilized. Further, /o/ has settled in low-central, not low-front position: a more conservative position than typically depicted the NCS. Age effects are found for /e/ ('bed') and /i/ ('bid') lowering, /ʌ/ ('bud') backing, and /oh/ ('caught') lowering/fronting, suggesting a continuing change in progress. While the NCS continues to strengthen, Chicagoans do not report knowledge of NCS dialect

features, and display high levels of linguistic security.

Erin McKean (Oxford University Press)

ADS Session 2

Trademarks in dictionaries: What we have done and what we have failed to do

Because of the confusion surrounding the inclusion of trademarks in dictionaries, a confusion made up equally of legal and lexicographic uncertainty, the treatment of trademarks in modern American dictionaries has been haphazard and spotty. By looking at the treatment of trademarks that have been included and considering trademarks that have been either excluded or overlooked, and by considering both the legal realities and the linguistic ones, we can work toward developing a rule of thumb for a standard lexical treatment of lexicalized (not genericized) trademarks.

Jaelyn Ocumpaugh (Michigan State University)

ADS Session 7

New methods in quantifying American /r/-vocalization: What can sociolinguistics do for phonology?

Although /r/ has long been of sociolinguistic interest, the impressionistic methods typically used to investigate /r/ are problematic given its gradient nature. Ocumpaugh (2001) captures this kind of gradient change in /r/ using the Index of R-fullness (IR), an objective measurement based on the normal F2/F3 ratio of a standard /r/. The current study investigates the effect of environment on /r/ production based on Hagiwara (1995) and Ocumpaugh (2001). Results show that /r/ deletes most often in syllable final positions—contrary to patterns of English consonants. These findings suggest that /r/'s consonantal status should be reconsidered.

Mark Peters (Capella University)

ADS Session 1

In-diddly-fixing innovations: The Ned Flanders effect

The Simpsons has had many influences on language, but none of its characters speak as distinctly as the holier-than-everybody Ned Flanders, with his trademark word of *diddly*, which he uses most often as an infix (*scrum-diddly-umptious*, *wel-diddly-elcome*). Traditional discussions of the infix would have ruled out infixes of a monosyllabic word, but Flanders and other characters have used words such as *suck-diddly-uck* and *last-diddly-ast*, which in turn have inspired many surprising nonce coinages that I will present and discuss, such as compound infixes *su-diddly-fucking-uck*, pseudo-infixes (*crap-diddly-yap*), and infix-like compounds that are difficult to categorize (*crap-diddly-crap-crap*).

Dennis R. Preston (Michigan State University)

ADS Session 6

Why can't you understand it when your vowels move?

Peterson and Barney (1952) and Hillenbrand et al. (1995) show different rates for the correct perception of American English vowels. Are these general studies flawed by failures to take account of 1) speaker dialect, 2) listener dialect, 3) listener phonetic sophistication? Such questions are important for sociophonetic studies of American English since the formant values of Peterson and Barney in particular are often used as a baseline. I will survey several more recent studies of vowel perception in US English, evaluating this past work and outlining a more

sophisticated program for continuing work based on these recent experimental findings.

Jeffrey Reaser (North Carolina State University)

ADS Session 4

Middle school teachers' and students' perceptions of linguistic diversity

Although sociolinguists believe it is important, there has been little success disseminating sociolinguistic knowledge to pre-university students, who have less entrenched sociolinguistic ideologies than adults. This is challenging due to the lack of linguistic tradition in mainstream education, lack of linguistic training in teacher education, and because linguists' academic duties keep them from working in public schools. This study examines attitudes 8th graders in North Carolina have about dialect diversity before and after students participate in a 450-minute dialect awareness unit. Strategies enabling teachers without linguistic training to teach this unit are examined, as are teachers' reactions to sociolinguistic information.

Julie Roberts (University of Vermont)

ADS Session 6

Vermont lowering? Raising some questions about (ay) and (aw) south of the Canadian border

Data comprise the speech of 18 Vermonters, aged 9 to 90. Results reveal that raised and centralized (aw) and (ay), reported to be disappearing by Kurath and colleagues, were present in the oldest speakers but were differentially undergoing age and gender related change. Implications, when results and settlement history of Vermont were examined, include the suggestion that, in Vermont, the raised variants are the older, base forms and that the "Canadian Raising" pattern of younger speakers and women may be the result of an overall leveling related to the changing socioeconomic conditions in the area.

Rebecca Roeder (Michigan State University)

ADS session 4

Mexican American English in Lansing, Michigan

This study provides an acoustic analysis of the effects of the Northern Cities Shift (NCS) on speakers of Mexican American English in Lansing, Michigan, an area in which the NCS is prevalent. Results are based on a subject pool of 33 Mexican American speakers, distributed across categories of gender, number of years in Michigan, and socioeconomic status. Both the NCS and Mexican Spanish appear to be influencing the vowel space of these speakers, revealing a dialect continuum that spans the several generations of Mexican Americans in Lansing.

Erik R. Thomas (North Carolina State University)

Phillip M. Carter (Duke University)

Elizabeth L. Coggshall (North Carolina State University)

ADS Session 4

Acoustic evidence for new dialect formation

Mexican American English (MAE) was examined in two disparate communities: Pearsall, Texas, with a long-established, majority Mexican American population, and Raleigh, North Carolina, with an incipient Mexican American population. We examined prosodic rhythm; the degree of fronting of /o/, as in *coat*; and raising of /æ/, as in *hand*. Syllable timing, non-fronted /o/, and unraised /æ/ predominate in MAE

in both communities and are not abating in Pearsall, which suggests that MAE is a stable variety, at least in southern Texas. Texas MAE may provide a model for trajectories of development in incipient Mexican American communities.