American Dialect Society Annual Meeting 2012
Portland, January 5–7

At the annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America

ABSTRACTS

Michael Adams (Indiana University — Bloomington)
DARE and the idea of dialect

F. G. Cassidy's conception of dialect, enshrined in the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (*DARE*), is historically, theoretically, and functionally distinct. In work leading to *DARE*, Cassidy replaced DIALECT with REGION, resisting abstractions of data imposed on conventional maps (geography driving linguistic data) or aggregated data systematically analyzed on social factors. Instead, *DARE* encompasses and mediates text and speech, social and cultural factors, historical and current speech, and reconfigures the United States in the *DARE* map (linguistic data driving geography), so that the idea of dialect is intimately-scaled.

Rachael Allbritten (National Science Foundation)
Just another Southern city slicker? Correlations of "rural" and "Southern" in dialect perception
Is it true that the stronger a Southern accent is gauged to be, the more rural the speaker will be labeled as well? Variations of a spoken sentence controlling four Southern features were presented online to listeners. Given possible confusion of the labels "Rural" and "Southern" for Southern speech, this paper looks at how listeners rated the stimuli for "Lives in Rural South" versus "Lives in Urban South", comparing answers to those for "Extremely Southern" versus "Not very Southern". Results show that some listeners are able to tease apart the ideas of Southern and rural, for at least some features.

Vicki Michael Anderson (Indiana U).
Obstruent devoicing revisited: Changing patterns in the course of the obsolescence of Pennsylvania Dutchified English.
Pennsylvania Dutchified English (PDE) is an obsolescing dialect, with the youngest speakers in their 30s. A hallmark feature of PDE has traditionally been a unique pattern of obstruent devoicing, with devoicing in both syllable codas and onsets of unstressed word-internal syllables. However, recent fieldwork shows that patterns of devoicing have shifted dramatically over the past twenty years, and now speakers of all ages devoice only coronal obstruents and some of other fricatives, mainly in coda position. Fieldwork also shows that the final generation of PDE speakers devoice even those obstruents with far less frequency and with a much-simplified grammar to determine devoicing contexts.

Jon Bakos (Oklahoma State University)
Beginnings of change: Early evidence Northern Cities Shift in the Lebanese community of Dearborn, Michigan
Bakos (2008) found that the Dearborn Michigan Lebanese Shia community was not taking part in the Northern Cities Shift (NCS) that dominates the urban southeastern part of the state. Across all demographics, their English showed none of the NCS trademarks described by Labov, Ash and Boberg (2006) – neither raising and fronting of /æ/, fronting of /ɑ/, nor centralization of /ɛ/. This was argued to be due to the heritage influence of Arabic and the robust Arab social network of the community. Recent statistical analysis modifies that conclusion: showing evidence of incipient NCS-like movement in the vowel system of younger speakers.

Grant Barrett (A Way with Words)
Restarting the public conversation about language
The nationwide public radio show A Way with Words focuses on changing the way English-speakers think, write and talk about language. Looking at tens of thousands of questions from listeners reveals avenues of language discussion that are inexpertly or mostly unexplored in the public realm and popular press. In this paper, I explain how an effort to change the public discourse about language manifests, what has been achieved, and the role the *Dictionary of American Regional English* serves in building a bridge between the language expert and the casually interested layperson.

Galen Basse (University of Washington) gkbasse@uw.edu
Valerie Freeman (University of Washington) valerief@u.washington.edu
Bag, Beg, Bagel: A three-vowel merger before /g/ in Seattle children
Previous work suggests an ongoing merger of /æ, ɛ, eɪ/ before /g/ in Pacific Northwest English: /ɛ/ and/or /æ/ raise, but less is known about the fairly monophthongal /eɪ/. In our phonetic analysis of the speech of four Seattle children, all three vowels gain glides before /g/ and move toward [ɛɪ]. While the distributions of /ɛg/ and /eɪg/ overlap, /æg/ is less advanced. After liquids, some speakers show a near-complete three-way merger. We posit that the short monophthongs /æg, ɛg/ are reinterpreted as diphthongs, joining the long vowel subsystem as they converge with /eɪg/ at a peripheral position.

Laura Baxter (York University)
The rise and fall of New England English in southern Quebec
This paper reports on change over time in the dialect of English spoken in and around the town of Stanstead, Quebec, located directly along the American border. Archival and more recent recordings reveal the presence of features characteristic of the American dialect region of Eastern New England, such as r-vocalization and fronted /ah/ in the speech of Stanstead residents born as late as the 1950s. These features have completely disappeared in the speech of younger generations, however, a change which coincides with a change in attitudes towards Americans. These changes are also linked to a changing relationship with the political border.

Robert Bayley (University of California, Davis)
Kristen Ware (University of California, Davis)
Frequency and syntactic variation: Evidence from U.S. Spanish
Erker and Guy (2010) extend the analysis of frequency to syntax and examine its role in Spanish subject personal pronoun (SPP) variation. They hypothesize that frequency activates or amplifies the effects of other influences. We test this hypothesis by analyzing approximately 8,600 tokens from 28 Mexican-American Spanish speakers. Results show that frequency minimally affects SPP use. Rather, the fact that frequent forms include few first person plural forms accounts for the slightly higher rate of overt SPP use with frequent forms. Multivariate analysis shows that other well-established linguistic constraints explain SPP variation better than frequency.

Charles Boberg (McGill University)
Regional variants of the continuous short-a system in Canada.
This paper reports on variation in the phonetic realization of /æ/, the vowel of *bat*, *bad*, *band* and *bag*, in Canadian English. It finds that Labov, Ash and Boberg's (2006) characterization of CanE as a "continuous short-a system" is a simplification, obscuring important regional differences. In fact, four distinct patterns emerge: in Western Canada, /æ/ is raised equally before /n/ and /g/; Ontario has more advanced raising before /n/ but less before /g/; Quebec English shows almost no raising, even before /r/; while the Maritimes have traces of raising before /d/. This makes /æ/ a subtle regional indicator across Canada.

Gail Davidson (University of Alaska Fairbanks)
The low back vowel in mid-coast Maine
In mid-coast Maine, the words *cod* and *caught* employ the same low back vowel. The word *father* contains a low central vowel. Twenty-six near- to life-long resident speakers from age 26 to 88 were interviewed and recorded to compare these vowels. Statistical tests, including t-tests and ANOVAs, were run on the resultant formant frequencies. Unlike changes in the vowel sounds across the area of the Northern Cities Chain Shift (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 2006), the low back vowel in *cod* and *caught* and the contrasting low central vowel in *father* were found to be stable in mid-coast Maine.

Betsy E. Evans (University of Washington)
"Everybody sounds the same": 'marginal' data in perceptual dialectology.
When analyzing survey data, researchers usually exclude respondents who do not complete the survey as directed. It is argued here that such 'unuseable' responses can be considered as 'marginal' rather than 'useless', allowing otherwise overlooked language ideologies to emerge. Responses to a perceptual dialectology map survey in which 31/229 respondents wrote comments on the map, without drawing lines around perceived dialect areas as instructed, are described to illustrate this point. Ideologies surfaced in the data, such as the homogeneity of dialects and the importance of a rural/urban dichotomy, thus contributing to our understanding of respondents' socio-spatial perceptions of language.

Michael Friesner (U Quebec ÀM)
Laura Kastronic (University of Montreal)
Assessing ongoing change in Quebec City English
We provide a profile of English spoken in Quebec City, where French represents the majority language, examining eight Anglophones from the Quebec English Corpus (Poplack et al. 2006) to assess age and French-contact effects on Canadian English phonological variables: short-a patterning, front vowels before r, Canadian raising. We address whether Quebec City speakers' isolation from mainstream English results in their lagging behind in ongoing change. We find that, as in Montreal, changes underway in mainstream Canadian English are progressing amongst Quebec City Anglophones. Wide interspeaker variability is arguably due to varying degrees of English use in this minority language community.

J. Daniel Hasty (Michigan State University)
Robert Lannon (Verilogue, Inc.)
My doctor said what? A study of language attitude towards the double modal
Although the double modal construction (We may can just hold that for a while) is a well-known feature of Southern United States English, there is no quantified attitudinal data regarding how community members actually view double modals. Following the matched guise technique, the present study addresses the specific question of how double modals are evaluated socially in the Northeast Tennessee. In evaluating a doctor's bedside manner, the guise in which a doctor uses a double modal was rated significantly higher for adjectives expressing friendliness and politeness.

Kirk Hazen (West Virginia University)
Third-wave dialectology: Are old school methods compatible with third-wave variationist analysis?
Since the early 1960s, the first-wave methods of the Labovian tradition have produced large quantities of scholarship on dialects. The question this paper tackles is whether or not those 'old school' methods can be integrated with the third-wave's focus on individual's styles, identities, and constructions of social meaning (Moore 2011). The suggested solution is an expansion of traditional dialectology's scope to include social space along with geographic space. To illustrate those theoretical choices, this paper employs quantitatively analyzed data from completed studies of five sociolinguistic variables: (ING), *was*-leveling, coronal stop deletion, demonstrative *them*, and quotative *be like*.

Jacqueline Hettel (The University of Georgia)
Composing Southern: Using dialect to teach Standard American English, promote linguistic diversity, and tackle language attitudes
This paper explores how dialect data can be employed in a service course, like first-year composition. In Spring 2011, such a course was taught at the University of Georgia using audio from the Digital Archive of Southern Speech. The case study resulting from this unique classroom demonstrates how students from various disciplines, without any formal linguistic instruction, observed language issues and used them to create learning opportunities about dialects, language attitudes, and linguistic diversity.

William A. Kretzschmar, Jr. (U of Georgia)
Variation in the traditional vowels of the Eastern States
A quantitative picture of variation in American English vowels emerges from LAMSAS data (as for Kurath and McDavid's 1961 *Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States*). Variants were tallied overall and for eleven local and social subsamples for twelve vowels: i (three), I (six), e (eight), E (ten), A (half), ai (five), a (watch), O (fog), o (sofa), uh (one), U (good), and u (two). The results show a nonlinear frequency distribution in all cases. Different groups have different orders of realizations by frequency, which distinguishes the groups while the speakers still participate in an overall pattern.

Stephen Mann (U of Wisconsin-La Crosse)
The relationship between listener identification of sexual orientation and gay men's attitudes toward Gay American English
Research on listener identification of sexual orientation (e.g., Gaudio 1994; Piccolo 2008) has produced conflicting results. This paper addresses this issue by considering the relationship between gay men's attitudes toward gay male varieties of American English (GAE) and listeners' ability to identify their sexual orientation. Interview and perception study data suggest that negative attitudes toward GAE reduce the possibility that a gay speaker will be correctly identified, but positive attitudes do not increase the possibility. This asymmetry makes sense; men with negative attitudes toward GAE may consciously avoid its use, while positive attitudes may operate at a more subconscious level.

Anastasia Nylund (Georgetown University)
L-vocalization in Washington, DC: Understanding complex regional and ethnoracial identities in a contested city
Few sociolinguistic studies have considered the dialectal affiliation of Washington, DC, due to its unique regional and sociohistorical position in the US. In this paper, I investigate the patterning of a robustly region- and race-affiliated variable, the vocalization of /l/, in DC. I find that African American Washingtonians vocalize /l/ to a higher degree, while European Americans resist vocalization. More than a racial pattern, however, /l/-vocalization in DC interacts with ideas of "Southernness" and "townness," shedding light on the complexity of place identity in a city which sits at the fault line between North and South.

Lisa Lena Opas-Hänninen (University of Oulu, Finland) lisa.lena.opas-hanninen@oulu.fi
William A. Kretzschmar, Jr. (University of Georgia)
Ilkka Juuso (University of Oulu)
Jacqueline Hettel (University of Georgia)
Tapio Seppänen (University of Oulu)
The Linguistic Atlas Projects online
The Linguistic Atlas Project audio archive consisting of several thousands of interviews is an excellent resource for the study of the common language of the US and stories of daily life. The data is made available through a lightweight, graphical web user interface that facilitates full metadata queries, GIS-based browsing and access to the actual audio recordings. Users can explore the collection, interact with maps, read informant biographies, listen to recordings and save files for local access. Our aim has been to provide researchers with a growing set of tools for studying linguistic phenomena across large datasets.

Thomas Purnell (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
Hearing the American language change: The state of DARE recordings
The presence of DARE as a dictionary is well established on the landscape of dialect research. In addition to the 1,002 questionnaires, 1,843 recordings were made of speakers in the same communities where the lexical data was collected. Since lexical editing began in 1975, DARE-as-dictionary has been worked on extensively. However, DARE-as-recordings have not undergone the same broad level of analysis.
This paper reviews the current state of the recordings, the range of available data and the findings of past analyses. Additionally, ongoing efforts to transcribe and analyze data at the state level are described.

Wil Rankinen (Indiana U).
Where'd the preposition go? An account of locative prepositional deletion in Michigan's UP speech community.
Among monolingual English speakers from Michigan's Upper Peninsula (U.P.), it is not uncommon to hear the deletion of such locative prepositions as 'to', e.g., "*I went town yesterday*". The paper will first show the prescriptive pressures and social situation surrounding this phenomenon. The analysis will then describe the linguistic constraints of the phenomenon in relation to its social, semantic and syntactic sensitivities: formality/commonality, and verb types, tenses, and determiner phrases. In addition to giving a first-time descriptive analysis of this phenomenon, evidence collected from perceptual acceptability rating tasks will support its existence and use among this monolingual English-speaking community.

Jennifer Renn (U of North Carolina Chapel Hill)
The impact of caregiver language on rural African American children's developing literacy skills
Studies suggest that children lacking proficiency in Standard American English (SAE) may experience difficulty with SAE-based curricula, at least partly because of differences in the phonetic inventories of SAE and African American English (AAE). This paper identifies possible connections between caregiver language and children's later academic and literacy outcomes. Language samples from 460 African American caregivers from rural areas were collected and coded for the presence of 7 common AAE features when their children were 6, 15, 24, and 35 months old. Results indicate a significant relationship between caregiver AAE use during early childhood and later reading and phonological skills.

Brice Russ (The Ohio State University)
Examining large-scale regional variation through online geotagged corpora
In this study, I examine whether Internet-based corpora with utterances tagged for location are useful in mapping the distribution of dialectal variables on a national scale. I use Twitter, one source of such corpora, to map three American English variables: soft drink terminology, intensifier hella, and needs X-ed. I demonstrate that Twitter corpora are able to both replicate previous survey findings and provide new insights into understudied variables, incorporating data collected from large numbers of speakers in a comparatively short timespan without supervision. I conclude by discussing ongoing plans to make tools for collecting such corpora available to interested researchers.

Erin Schneider (Gallaudet University) erinlynnschneider@gmail.com
L. Viola Kozak (Gallaudet University)
Roberto Santiago (Gallaudet University)
Anika Stephen (Gallaudet University)
The effects of electronic communication on American Sign Language
Technological and language innovation often flow in concert with one another. Casual observation by researchers has shown that electronic communication memes, in the form of abbreviations, have found their way into spoken English. This study focuses on the current use of electronic modes of communication, such as cell smartphones, and e-mail, and how they affect American Sign Language. This study explores Deaf ASL users' perceptions of the extent that these memes have entered their signed lexicon. While the research focuses on social factors of age and gender in order to compare the use of these abbreviations by specific groups.

Roger W. Shuy (Roger W. Shuy, Inc.)
A dialectologist's progress: A moral tale
The story of how one dialectologist started off in this field then faced unexpected events along the way, including new directions to explore, several harsh setbacks, lots of excitement and finally, how things eventually came together for him.

James Stanford (Dartmouth College) stanfo23@gmail.com
Thomas Leddy-Cecere (University of Texas, Austin)
Kenneth Baclawski (Dartmouth College)
Farewell to the Founders: Dramatic dialect changes between eastern and western New England
Kurath (1939) and Carver (1987) reported a major east-west contrast in northern New England, reflecting the enduring influence of early European settlers (Founder Effect). Labov, Ash & Boberg (2006) suggest a similar contrast, but there were no data points around the VT/NH border since it lacks large cities. Noting that this pivotal region is understudied, we conducted fieldwork with 62 speakers in this area. Among older speakers, the east-west contrast has moved eastward to the VT/NH border. For younger speakers, many traditional eastern variants are dramatically receding. Centuries after the settlers, the Founder Effect in northern New England is dissipating.

Sali Tagliamonte (U Toronto) with students from LSA Summer Institute: Jon Bakos, Julia Cheng, Jessica Delisi, Amelia Dietrich, Devin Grammon, Ashley Hesson, Kinda Konnerth, Hank Lester, Justin McBride, Jane Mitsch, Meredith Moss, Jenna Nichols, Colin Pitet, Rachelle Price, Gabe Radovsky, Wil Rankinen, Na-Young Ryu, Hayley Smith, Nick Toler, & Jack Toner.
A *weird* and *peculiar* story: Variation and change in North American adjectives.
This paper reports on adjective variation and change in a corpus of North American English focussing on the semantic field meaning strange (N=1227). Logistic regression analysis reveals that older variants — strange, odd, unusual — are favoured by elderly individuals and there is an increasing use of weird. This form is favoured for attributive adjectives and correlates with additional modification, suggesting an affective component to the change. Yet comparative analysis reveals that these adjectives follow parallel developments across British and Canadian English demonstrating that adjective variation cannot simply be a social phenomenon, but a systemic process that extends across time and space.