24.901 North American Dialects

   • Towns over 50K pop (68% of N.A.)
   • Telephone survey: name, age, occupation, location, national ancestry
   • Two speakers per locus point; c. 800 total
   • Key words and free conversation
   • Excludes AA and Latino speakers who have special dialect features that are differentiated by different geographical parameters
   • Focus on stressed vowels; traditional transcription based on American Structuralist phonemicization and keywords

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2. rhotic vs. nonrhotic
   • r-vocalization develops in 18th century England;
   • prestige variant for 19th and early 20th century American English on Eastern seacoast
   • rhotic restoration after WWII; change from above
   • vocalization retained as consistent rule in Boston, NYC, and scattered areas of south (Durham NC, Columbia SC, New Orleans) map. 7.1

3. Mergers
   • mergers expand at expense of distinctions (Herzog)
   • hypercorrections
i. /hw/ and /w/ merger: whale vs. wail (map 8.1)
   • starts in 13th c.; noted for London in 1791
   • distinction was alive in N.A. in most areas except Eastern seaboard
   • now generally lost except for some speakers in the South

ii. /ohr/ vs. / h r/
   • hoarse, four, mourning vs. horse, forty, morning
   • preserved in Eastern Mass, Maine; SC; Talahassee - Dallas

iii. /iw/ vs /uw/ (map 8.3)
   • loss of glide after coronals in NA
   • some speakers still distinguish dew, lute vs. do, loot (North Carolina), Talahassee - Jackson

iv. Mary /ey/ vs. merry /e/ vs. marry /æ/ map 8.4
   • three-way distinction maintained in NYC, Phil, Trenton NJ
   • Mary and merry merge while marry distinct in scattered areas of South and East
   • distinction lost elsewhere

v. Merger of /i/ and /e/ before nasals: pin and pen map 9.5  South

Mergers in Progress

Low-back merger of /o/ and /oh/ (map 9.1)
   • hot, sock, Don, dollar vs. caught, talk, dawn, caller
   • merger in West, Western Penn and Canada; maintained in South, Midwest, East

5. Vowel Chain Shifts

Chain Shifts (Martinet 1951)
   • vowels dispersed over acoustic space to maintain a margin of comfort
   • drag chain: vowel shifts to occupy a space vacated by a prior movement: fronting of [u] results in raising of [o]
   • push chain: vowel x encroaches on space of y, which then moves to maintain contrast
   • English short vowels are stable through history while long vowels are not (cf. Great Vowel Shift; divine *iː>[aɪ], serene *eː>[iː], profane *æː>[ɛː] vs. divinity [i], serenity [e], profanity [æ]
   • generalizations on recurrent changes in the English vowel system: peripheral vowels raise, lax vowels and the nuclei of diphthongs centralize and lower
   • Inland North Area around Great lakes was basis for Kenyon & Knott's (1953) Pronouncing Dictionary of American English
   • Broadcasting standard for mid 20th century
   • most unmarked for General American speech
   • Since then a large warping of the vowel space has occurred that has classic properties of a chain shift, termed Northern Cities Shift (NCS)
   • First step: raising of [æ] (recall James Adamo of Detroit) (F1 < 700 Hz) (map 14.4)
• Second step: fronting of merged [o, ah] to fill void: lockes sounds like lax (F2 > 1450 Hz) map 14.5
• Third step: lowering and fronting of [oh/] (also found more widely) to fill void
• Fourth and fifth (Eckert): e > , > o (14.8)

6. Southern Speech
   older features
   • Preservation of contrasts lost elsewhere: whale=/= wail; dew =/= do
   • Front glide /yu/ in dew, tune, Tuesday
   • Fronting of back vowel in Vw diphthong: too, road, mountain
   • Loss of contrast of pin and pen; him and hem
   • simplification of /ay/ diphthong finally and before voiced cons: high, side, time
   • drawl: breaking of /æ/ esp before nasals: pants [a-y-schwa]
   newer features
   • /ay/ glide deletion generalized to all contexts in Central Texas and Inland South
   • reversal of /ey/ and /e/ so that nucleus of bait is lower and more central than bet which becomes higher and fronter [macon georgia]

7. lexical differences
   i. general term for carbonated beverage
      • tonic Eastern Mass
      • coke South
      • pop Midwest, upper West
      • soda (lower West: Nev, Az, CA)
   ii. roof
      • shortened /u/: North Midwest to West: Columbus Oh Kansas City, Denver, Seattle, Central CA
   iii. positive anymore (it's hard to find a job anymore), needs+PPtcl (The car needs washed)
      • Scotts Irish origin
      • Upland South and Midland (map 21.3, 21.4)

8. general points
   • no significant effect of ethnicity; Telsur subjects origin (German, English, Scotts-Irish, Irish, Italian, Scandinavian, French, Polish)
   • African American Vernacular English (AAVE)
     ➢ Uniform dialect with minimal regional variation
     ➢ Stands apart from vowel shifts found in the atlas, esp in Northern Cities

9. North-Midland boundary
   • Sharpest division in North American English dialectology
   • Rapid spread of NCS in 30-40 years; extends east-west not north-south: Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee
   • Cities below line (Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Columbus, Cincinatti, Indianapolis) do not participate and differ from one another as well
   • Boundary has remained stable for a century; sound change originated in Western NY
• Divides Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania into northern and southern (downstate) regions
• Carver (1987) shows lexical isogloss for rural and agricultural terms (10.2)
• Correlates with different settlement histories (10.4)
  ➢ New England (Pilgrim-Puritan)/Yankee
    whole parishes move as group; settle in towns; house located by roadside;
    stable: sustained contact
  ➢ Midland/Upland Southerners
    movement of individual families; structure of rural neighborhoods based on
    kinship; house located by creek or spring in isolated areas; frequently move:
    intermitant contact
10. Yankee vs. Upland Southerners: clash of attitudes, self perceptions and stereotypes:
   Yankees: self-improvement, impose moral views on whole society; antislavery;
   busybody and meddling
   Southerners: lean, lank, lazy
11. political cultures (Elazar 1972) [10.8]
   • Moralistic: government should help people achieve good lives; government service is
     public service; community can intervene in private affairs if it serves communal goals
   • Individualistic: politics is a business, dominated by parties; government should not
     interfere in individual’s lives
   • Traditional: hierarchical view of society; government is province of elites; preference
     to maintain status quo
12. strong correlation between county-by-county voting for 2004 Presidential race and the
    Midland-Inland Northern boundary
13. conclusion: “as long as these ideological differences persist, speakers may be more likely
    to align their productions towards those around them who share their own identity and word-
    view”
Westward settlement streams as shown by building material (Kniffen and Glassie 1966, Figure 27).

Distribution of political cultures in North America, M = Moralistic; I = Individualistic; T = Traditional (Kilpinen 2010, based on Elazar 1972, Figure 11).