© Kim Potowski, 2020, The University of Illinois at Chicago

In this module, we will be exploring some ways in which **linguistic diversity** can present challenges to our teaching and to students' learning, and opportunities for us to avoid stigmatizing students and to instead capitalize on their knowledge.

Part 1: Language variation in the U.S.

Linguistic diversity refers to the fact that not everyone speaks the same. It's fairly obvious that even within the same country, such as the United States, not everyone speaks English the same way. Different words are used in different regions, and many words are pronounced in a variety of ways. United Statesians* are a very linguistically diverse group. Let's see some common examples.

** United Statesian: "A native or inhabitant of the United States; of or from the United States" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). This term is more accurate here than "American," which refers to the entire continent of America.*

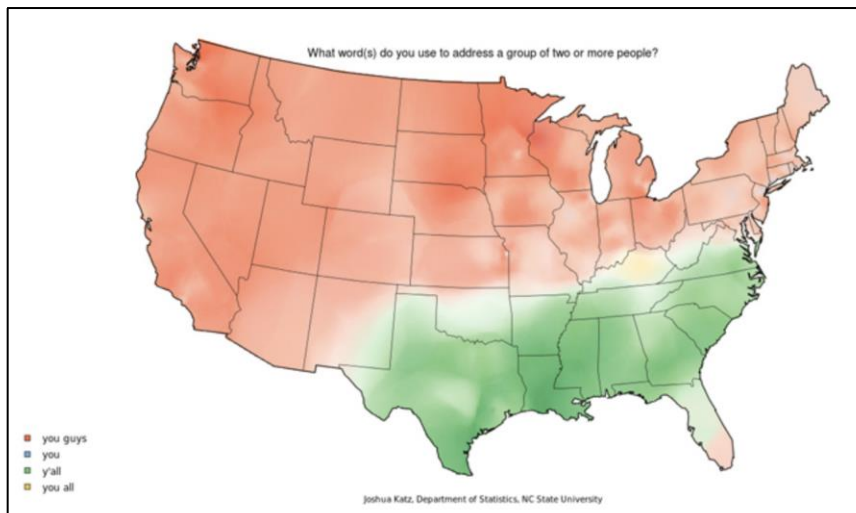
Think about the ways that YOU would say the following things.

1. What word or phrase do you use to address a group of two or more people?

☐ you guys ☐ you ☐ y'all ☐ you all ☐ other

[After they select their answer they see:]

The following maps shows results from a national survey conducted by Bert Vaux, the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Maps were created by North Carolina State University statistics PhD student Joshua Katz



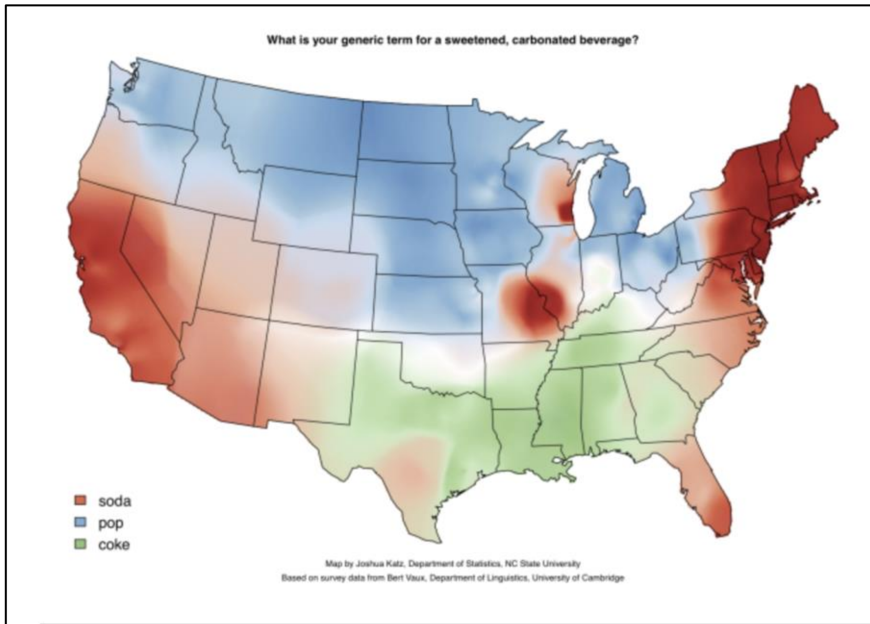
https://laughingsquid.com/soda-pop-or-coke-maps/

2. What word do you use for a generic, sweetened carbonated beverage?

☐ soda ☐ pop ☐ coke ☐ other

[After they select their answer they see:]

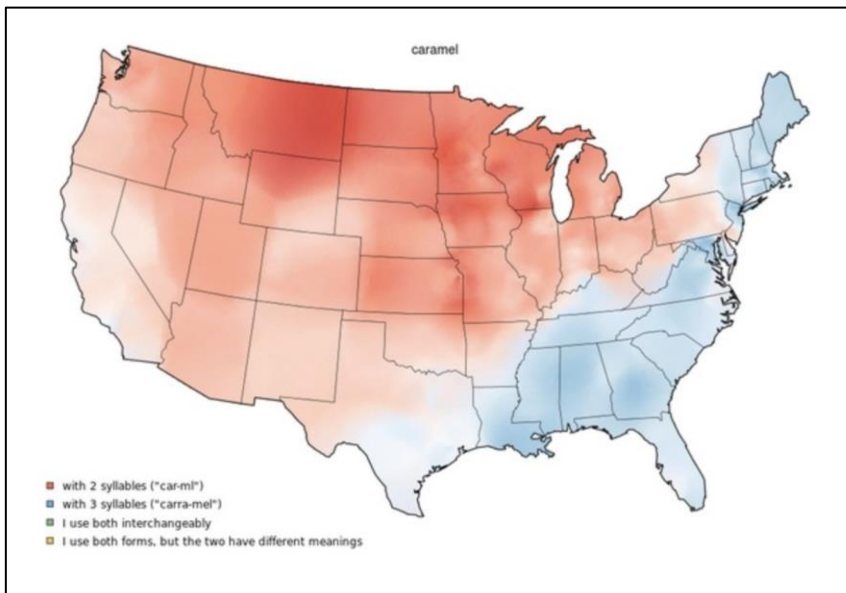
© Kim Potowski, 2020, The University of Illinois at Chicago



3. How do you pronounce the word *caramel*?

☐ With 2 syllables ('car.mel')
☐ With 3 syllables ('cara.mel')
☐ I use both interchangeably
☐ I use both but they have different meanings
☐ Other

[After they select their answer they see:]



https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/06/pecan-caramel-crawfish-food-dialect-maps/276603/

© Kim Potowski, 2020, The University of Illinois at Chicago

We see for these three items, and many others, a variety of words and pronunciations around the U.S. The important point is that EVERYONE has an accent in their native language. There is a reasonable analogy with human hair. If you have hair, that hair has a color. It's not possible to have hair that is "not of any color". Similarly, it is not possible to speak a language without some accent in that language. Yet some people aren't aware of this basic truth and make statements with erroneous claims like these:

> "People from Alabama have a very strong accent (but I don't)."
>
> "She is from New York City and has a noticeable accent (but not me, I don't have an accent)."

The thing is, to the people from Alabama and the woman from New York, the people who said these sentences absolutely do "have accents" in the sense that they sound noticeably different from people in Alabama and in New York City. In other words, yes, the person from Alabama has an accent and so does the person from New York City, as do people from New Zealand, from Jamaica, and from South Africa. But so does absolutely everyone who speaks English. Just like everyone who has hair, has a hair color. And no one's accent is "stronger" than anyone else's, just like no one's hair color is objectively "stronger" than anyone else's.

Even people living in the same geographical area can speak differently. For example, Chicago is a very diverse city with people who speak ethnic varieties such as African American English and Latino English (which we will explore ahead). There is even a distinctive South Side White accent which was parodied on the TV show *Saturday Night Live* in a skit called "Bill Swerski's Super Fans."

How would you identify your accent when you speak English? In other words, in what ways do you think it is recognizable according to geographic area, and perhaps your age, ethnic background, etc.? Do you have several varieties of English in your repertoire and, if so, when do you use each one? If English is not your native language, later in this module we will address issues relevant to this circumstance.

Why is it important to know about linguistic variation? Even though linguists* know that every way of speaking has the exact same intrinsic value, it is also true that society tends to value certain varieties more than others.

* ***Linguists*** *are those who study the science of language and how it operates in society. A biologist looks at animals and plants to figure out which parts are connected; a linguist does the same with language(s) and, sometimes, seeks to connect language to social structure. And just like a biologist might own many plants/animals, a linguist may speak many languages, although this is not a requirement.*

What do you think is the **status** of the following ways of speaking English in the United States? Click on each link to hear a short sample. Does it tend to hold **relatively higher or lower status** in general? Note, this question is not asking about <u>your</u> opinion of each variety, but rather the way you sense that many United Statesians commonly think about these regional varieties. If you are not familiar with the variety of English spoken in a particular region, try to make a guess.

Region	General status in the U.S.
Southern English, i.e. from Tennessee or Appalachia.	☐ Higher status ☐ Lower status
Midwestern English, i.e. from St. Louis, MO or Ann Arbor, Michigan.	☐ Higher status ☐ Lower status
Northwest English, i.e. from Seattle, Washington or Portland, Oregon.	☐ Higher status ☐ Lower status
New York City English, i.e. from Queens or the Bronx.	☐ Higher status ☐ Lower status

Again, the scientific answer is that all of these varieties of English have equal intrinsic value. Yet many people in mainstream U.S. society tend to disparage Southern English and New York City English. We see this in movies and other popular media: accents often serve as a kind of shorthand to communicate that someone is either dimwitted, a smart-aleck sidekick, not trustworthy, comic relief, or "snooty" (high class).

Watch this short clip and match the movie character stereotype with the accent, according to the speaker.

__1. All-American hero a. New York
__2. Wise-cracking sidekick b. Southern
__3. Dumb butt of all jokes c. Midwestern

These stereotypes can change over time but many remain. The character Mittens from the 2008 movie *Bolt* (voiced by Susie Essman) and Terk from 1999's *Tarzan* (voiced by Rosie O'Donnell) have strong New York accents. Both of these characters are tough, smart aleck sidekicks. While these traits aren't overtly negative, characters who have New York accented English rarely seem to be princesses, heroes, heroines, or love interests.

Mittens (*Bolt*)

Some argue that restricting the representation of any group to such a narrow scope might send a message to children that the options in life for such speakers are limited. But do children truly pick up on these accents? There is some research indicating that they do, which is demonstrated in this clip in which a woman describes how her friend's three-year-old white son heard a group of black boys talking and excitedly said "The hyenas!" referring to the movie *The Lion King*.

Linguistic discrimination is common all over the world. Click here to read about findings in Germany that (a) speaking with a distinctive regional accent reduces wages by an amount comparable to the gender wage gap, and that (b) workers with distinctive regional accents tend to avoid occupations that demand high levels of face-to-face contact.

What are some additional sources of variation behind the different ways that people who were raised in the same region might speak?

[Click on each term on the left; the text on the right appears]

Social category	**Example of linguistic differences**
Age	Teenagers often speak differently from middle-aged people.
Gender	Women and men have been shown to exhibit linguistic differences.
Sexual orientation	Some features tend to stereotype men as gay, whether they are gay or not. For an interesting 6-minute New York Times video on this topic, see https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000003757238/who-sounds-gay.html
Class	People of different socioeconomic and/or educational levels often use different linguistic features.
Ethnicity	Individuals from various ethnic backgrounds such as African-American, Latino, etc. use some recognizable features in their English.

For some humorous examples of how our ways of speaking are expected to be tied to certain social categories, check out:

- The short videos at http://potowski.org/citibank
- In YouTube, search for "Key and Peele black phone call"

What does the Key & Peele video suggest about the ways in which people can 'code-switch' between different language varieties in order to signal different aspects of their identity?

Returning to the hair analogy, we know that people have different hair color, textures, and hairstyles. Some people don't have hair at all. But we generally don't hold negative attitudes about "all people with brown color hair" or "all people with curly hair". We don't think that people with straight hair are less intelligent, or that people with red hair are more educated.

Unfortunately, this is frequently exactly what happens with language. There is a stigma attached to certain ways of speaking, even though linguistically all varieties of language are **inherently equally valuable** and **capable of serving the needs of the community that speaks it.**

https://unsplash.com/photos/hx87JWG4yCI

African-American English

It is estimated that 80-90% of African American individuals speak African American English. Watch this 2-minute clip, then answer the questions that follow.

Clip, *Talking Black in America:*

12:20-14:12 end after "as children are developing African American English" and before the word 'so'. (four speakers: Walt Wolfram, Shareese King, John Rickford, Lisa Green)

True or false, based on the video:

1. Only standard English is grammatically correct.
2. All ways of speaking are systematic and governed by their own set of grammar rules.
3. Sometimes people make mistakes with grammar rules.
4. "Language is always right."

Match the sentence with its meaning. [both options should be visible]

	African American English	Mainstream U.S. English
1.	She late.	a. She is habitually/frequently late.
2.	She be late.	b. She is late right now/hasn't arrived yet.
3.	That coffee cold.	a. The coffee sitting right there is cold.
4.	That coffee be cold.	b. Every time I go to that restaurant, the coffee is cold.

A final important point is that, just like mainstream U.S. English sounds different in areas around the country, African American English also varies from region to region. Speakers of African American English from Atlanta, Detroit, New York, and Los Angeles can easily hear many of the differences. And one individual might use more or fewer features of African American English than a neighbor in the same town or even a family member.

Latino English

Another common ethnic variety of U.S. English is called Latino English (or *Chicano English*). Similarly to African American English, this variety developed under conditions of segregation faced by many Latino communities. When the children of Spanish-speaking immigrants grew up using both English and Spanish and the communities began to stabilize, so did a new dialect of English. This variety retains certain phonological (sound) links with the Spanish language but it is **not** "Spanglish" and it is not "learner English". It is the **native English dialect** of many people who may not speak any Spanish at all.

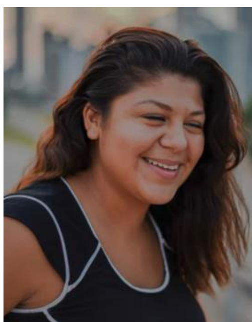
© Kim Potowski, 2020, The University of Illinois at Chicago

Listen to the following three 10-second recordings and decide whether you think the speaker is bilingual in Spanish and English, or whether they are monolingual in English.

1. Ana	☒ speaks Spanish and English	☐ speaks only English
2. José	☐ speaks Spanish and English	☒ speaks only English
3. Javier	☒ speaks Spanish and English	☐ speaks only English

Many people are surprised to learn that José <u>does not speak Spanish</u>. When people hear certain sounds in his English, they assume that he must speak Spanish as well. But as we've said, Latino English is a native English dialect spoken by some individuals who do not speak any Spanish at all. Also, not all Latinos speak Latino English, although we do not currently have reliable estimates of the proportions that do.

Now, read the following true story about Carolina (pseudonym), a Latino English-speaking college student. In this particular college class, she sat in the back row and rarely contributed to class discussions. She wrote the following response on a homework assignment:



"My parents immigrated from Mexico and I was born and raised in Chicago. I've spent my whole life here. I speak Spanish and English but my English is a lot stronger. Lots of people have told me that I don't speak 'correct English' and that I sound ghetto when I talk. They think I'm not capable of going to a four-year university, that I'm not good enough to succeed because of the way I speak. It makes me nervous to speak in front of class, especially with students I perceive to have better English than me, and I end up messing up more."

Her professor responded:

"Thank you for sharing your experience. You are not alone; several of your classmates have expressed similar ideas. Unfortunately you have been victims of other people's ignorance and classism/racism. All varieties of language are valid and **the world needs to hear <u>your</u> ideas, in the ways that <u>you</u> express them**. You are proving those people wrong every single day. You worked hard to make it to college and I have zero doubt in your ability to graduate and pursue a successful career."

After this exchange, Carolina began sitting in the front row and frequently raised her hand to contribute to class discussions.

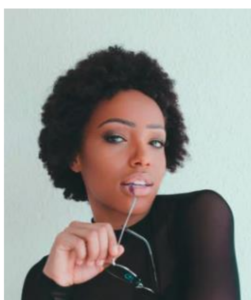
What are some other things the professor might have replied?

Linguist John Baugh, who is able to use features of African American English, Latino English, and mainstream U.S. English, received different responses when using each one to call landlords about apartments that were for rent: when he asked about the apartment in African American English or Latino English, he was told it wasn't available, but when he called back using a

mainstream accent, he was invited to see the apartment. He calls this *linguistic profiling* and says it is the "auditory equivalent of racial profiling […and] can have devastating consequences for those U.S. residents who are perceived to speak with an undesirable accent or dialect." His research inspired this public service announcement.
Click here to learn more about Baugh's work and at minute 6:56 you can hear the different ways he said "Hello, I'm calling about the apartment that you have advertised in the paper."

It is not uncommon for low-income communities to speak varieties of English that are considered stigmatized. Look at this site. What percent of students at your university are eligible for Pell Grants (Federal need-based grants for low-income students)? Whether the percentage is large or small, how do you think linguistic diversity should be treated on your campus?

You may feel that, even if all varieties of language are created linguistically equal, some varieties are valued more by society and therefore should be required in academic and professional settings. This is often referred to as the "appropriacy argument" and is a debate of great importance. In order to explore this topic, it is useful to return to the analogy of hair color. Imagine a science fiction scenario in which short, curly, brown hair was considered more valuable than all other textures, colors, and styles.



You might argue that it would be appropriate and worthwhile for people to dye their non-brown hair, cut it short, and chemically curl it in order to gain prestige. This would be akin to the appropriacy argument.

However, would it be fair to require people to change their hair in order for others to listen to what they have to say without preemptively dismissing them as less intelligent, less worthwhile, etc.? Some people reject the appopriacy argument on these grounds. To take the idea further, we need a different analogy: now think about physical height. What if our science fiction scenario valued only those women who were exactly 5'6" and those men who were exactly 6'0"? Is it possible to change our height? This makes it much clearer that certain individuals will be left out of mainstream society no matter how capable and intelligent they are, and that there is nothing they can really do to gain acceptance. This again is why some people reject the appropriacy argument.

We might identify a continuum with the following four positions: (click on each one to see a description)

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Dismissive</td><td colspan="2">Appropriacy</td><td rowspan="2">Inclusive</td></tr>
<tr><td>Strong form</td><td>Weak form</td></tr>
</table>

Dismissive. Certain ways of speaking are inferior, have little to no value, and should be abandoned entirely, in all contexts.

Appropriacy argument, strong form. We should require students to learn and use the prestigious forms in certain situations, because they are more eloquent or superior in some way.

Appropriacy argument, weak form. We should require students to learn and use the prestigious forms for high-stakes situations (getting a job or scholarship, etc.), but not because they are any better. We should also teach students about the systematicity and value of their own variety, as well as about the societal forces that privilege some ways of speaking over others. The idea is for students to develop the knowledge and agency to make their own decisions about which features to use in what circumstances and possibly in the future effect change from positions of power.

Inclusive. All ways of speaking have a right to be used an accepted in all contexts and mediums. Appropriacy arguments are a kind of "faux-egalitarianism" similar to the "separate but equal" doctrine that persisted in the U.S. until Brown v. Board of Education (Lippi-Green 2011). Note: These arguments are normally not applied to spelling and punctuation. People generally accept that rules governing the uses of *they're*, *there*, and *their*, for example, are not variable.

In this video clip, a teacher works with his students on "code-switching" between African American English and mainstream U.S. English, or what he calls "translating" between the two varieties. Which of the four positions above do you think this approach exemplifies?

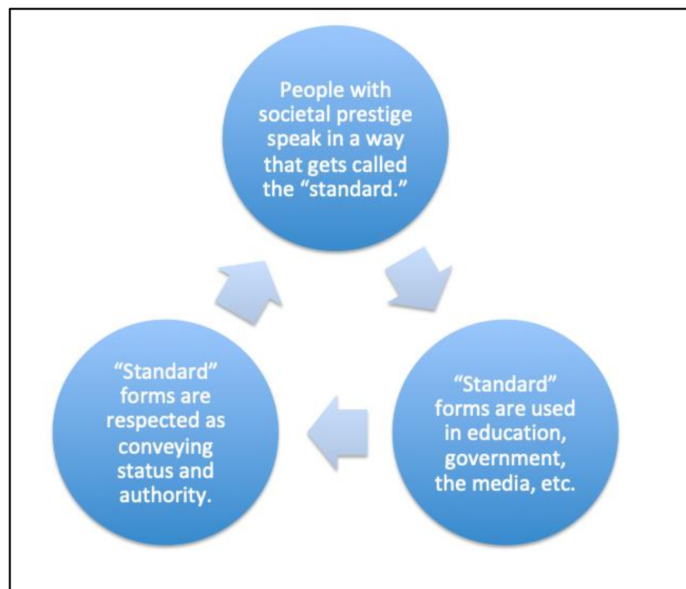
☐ Dismissive ☐ Strong Appropriacy ☐ Weak Appropriacy ☐ Inclusive

Many people think language is like hair color: easy to change. But in reality it is more like height, particularly when we acknowledge that our native sounds and grammar systems are largely in place by the time we are 10 years old. It is true that adults can learn new languages, and we can also learn to change some features in our first language, but both abilities are limited (we will see more about this point ahead). Therefore, requiring a student to write "She is late" instead of "She late", or to pronounce "does" with a final /z/ sound (when Latino English would use an /s/ sound) is not as easy as it may seem and, as we have seen above, has been questioned on its fairness. Very importantly, as some scholars have argued, even if these speakers were to acquire mainstream English, structural factors including racism would keep them from advancing. In other words, it was never really about language in the first place, but rather negative attitudes about the people themselves. In this view, instead of changing how people speak, we should work on changing **how people listen** – that is, develop more inclusive attitudes about linguistic diversity among those who hold power in society.

A final point. Another way that language varies is on its formality, which is also known as *register*. Situations where we tend to use **informal register** include greeting friends, talking with our family, or getting coffee with a coworker, while a **formal register** is expected in situations such as a professional presentation, a work-related introduction, or meeting a prestigious stranger for the first time. Formality of register is similar to clothing choices: we do not wear the same items of clothes when spending a vacation day on the beach vs. attending a wedding in a church or temple.

For example, we do not typically greet a leader of a nation by her first name, nor do we say or write "ain't" or "cuz" in a formal essay or debate. All languages have formal and informal registers. Some people, however, make the mistake of classifying entire varieties as "informal". Consider the criticisms people made about Trayvon Martin's friend Rachel Jeantel when she took the stand in the George Zimmerman trial. Her African American English was perfectly capable of expressing her ideas to the courtroom, yet many people asserted that her linguistic features were indicative of stupidity, laziness, and ignorance. It is not true that her language forms were incapable of communicating her meaning in a formal setting; more likely is that these people believed that speakers of African American English are the wrong *people* for formal settings like the courts, school, and work.

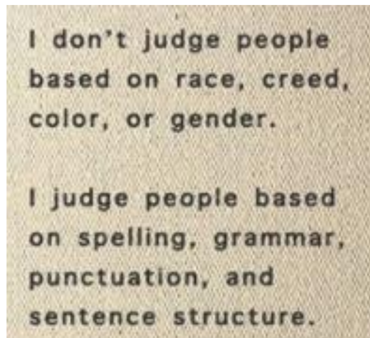
This first half of the module concludes with a consideration of the **cycle of linguistic prestige**. It is meant to illustrate the ways that many of us were taught to think about so-called "standard" language.



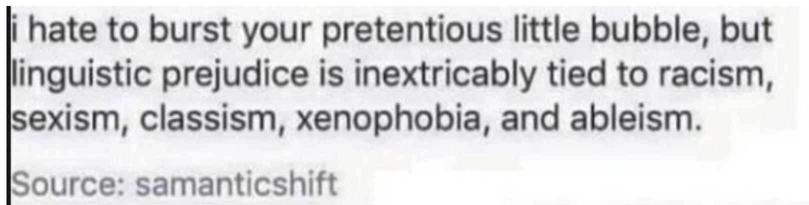
We see that the variety of language considered "standard" is very simply the variety spoken by people who have prestige in society. This variety is used in education and government – because the prestigious people tend to occupy these positions. Then it makes its way into mainstream as a signal

of status and authority, which then bolsters the prestige of the original groups of speakers. The cycle is self-sustaining. An important question underlying this cycle is: Who claims the authority to say what is "the best" way of speaking, and why do people give them this authority?

Many individuals who consider themselves open-minded and generally vigilant against racial and other prejudices feel perfectly justified in rejecting people and their ideas based on how they speak. Consider this meme:



Now consider this reply.



What are your thoughts about this reply in general? Is it possible to have a few private pet peeves about language – for example, to be annoyed by uses of *less* instead of *fewer*, or when people say "between you and I" instead of "between you and me" – and still remain vigilant against criticizing people for the ways they speak?

Four strategies to support your students who use stigmatized features of English:

- Avoid "correcting" students' uses of English that belong to community uses of language. These are perfectly grammatical according to a different system. If you subscribe to a version of the appropriacy argument, instead remind students that a different form is expected, allowing them to develop the knowledge and agency to make their own decisions about which features to use.
- Do not use accents for any kind of "social shorthand" purposes, and don't make fun of any accents.
- When assigning written work, consider using different rubrics to grade content separately from language use. This way, students can receive positive feedback on their ideas without feeling self-conscious about grammar structure and word choice. Requiring an outline before a first draft can help them generate and organize ideas free from trying to put everything into

fluent academic prose. Consider allowing opportunities for students to revise and resubmit their drafts.

- Even if you are teaching a content area that does not center language as an object, you can create a climate of linguistic appreciation and inclusion that increases the comfort levels of students who speak stigmatized varieties. For example, if you show videos that explore topics, can you find some made by a speaker with a non-mainstream accent?

Part 1 comprehension questions

1. True or false: Everyone speaks with an accent.
2. True or false: Some accents are stronger than others.
3. True or false: Some communities speak with incorrect grammar.
4. True or false: If a student writes *there* instead of *they're*, we should not point it out because it would be criticizing their way of using language.
5. The fact that some ways of speaking are valued more than others is based on: ☐ linguistic science ☐ societal attitudes towards people
6. True or false: It is possible to judge people's grammar and remain 100% free of any kind of class, ethnoracial, or geographic judgment.

Part 2: Language variation when English is a New Language

Some of our students did not grow up speaking English as their main language. They may be international students who have arrived from other countries to pursue postsecondary study, or they may be domestic students who arrived to the U.S. as children or teenagers.

Such individuals have been referred to as learning *English as a Second Language* (ESL). However, some of them already spoke two or more languages when they began learning English, so English is not in fact their second language but is their third language or beyond. Some fields now refer to such individuals as having *English as a New Language* (ENL). There are additional terms, but none of them is perfect. Which term below do you think is preferable, or do you have an alternative term to propose?

Term, English-specific	Term for having an 'accent' (any language)	Problems
English as a Foreign Language (EFL)	*Foreign language accent*	Strongly "others" the speaker as "foreign" and not belonging. Some languages like Spanish and French are not foreign to the U.S.
English as a New Language (ENL)	*New language accent*	We can have this accent even if we've been studying/speaking the language for many years (i.e. when it is not "new" anymore).
English Learner (EL)	*Learner accent*	May suggest that the person is studying the language formally, when they may

© Kim Potowski, 2020, The University of Illinois at Chicago

		not have the ability or desire to do so.
English as a Second Language (ESL)	*Second language accent*	It may be a person's third language or beyond.

This module will use the terms *English Learner* (EL) and *EL accent.*

When we say that EL students "have an accent," we mean something different than the geographical, socioeconomic, and ethnic accents discussed in Part 1 of this module. There are several human developmental milestones that come into play in a EL accent:

10-12 months

All babies can hear every human language sound, but we lose this ability between approximately 10-12 months of age and can then only distinguish between sounds in the language(s) we have been exposed to until that time. For example, Japanese children and adults cannot hear or produce the difference between the "r" and "l" sounds because the Japanese language does not have this distinction. However, before 10 months, Japanese (and all) infants can discriminate between them.

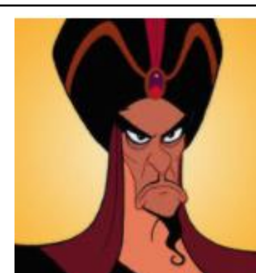
If you are interested in this phenomenon, watch this 5-minute video of the "Baby Head-Turning Experiment" based on the work of Dr. Janet Werker.

10-12 years

This is the approximate age window after which most humans can no longer acquire a new language and end up exactly like a native speaker of that language in their phonology (sounds) and morphosyntax (underlying structure).
Thus, no matter how hard someone tries or how long they've lived in a new country, if they began learning the language after puberty, it is frequently **impossible** for them acquire the new sound system and more complex rules consistently and in a permanent way.

Have you ever begun studying a new language after the age of 13? How would you describe the process and the length of time it takes? How easy or difficult is it to develop the ability to carry out academic tasks in a new language?

As we saw in Part 1, having a U.S. regional or ethnic accent is tied to social characteristics in ways that are utilized by Disney films and other media. EL accents are no different: the Lippi-Green study showed that 40% of EL accented speakers were villains, compared with 20% of non-accented speakers. Here is a quote from her blog:



Jafar, the vilian in Disney's *Aladdin*

"A study of accents in animated cartoons over time reveals the way linguistic stereotypes [can] mirror the evolution of national fears: Japanese and German characters in cartoons during World War II, Russian spy characters in children's cartoons in the 1950s and 1960s (Natasha and Boris meet Rocky and Bullwinkle), Middle Eastern characters in the era of hostilities with Iran and Iraq."

Some people are surprised to learn that 80% of the United States population does not speak a language other than English in the home (according to the U.S. Census). In other words, we are a very monolingual nation overall. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to find people in the U.S. who are not only monolingual but also express contempt for non-English languages being spoken here. There are many documented cases of people behaving badly towards others who are speaking a non-English language in public – see this website and choose one of the links to read about a particular case of linguistic bullying.

When people express negative ideas about a non-English language or an EL accent, the origin of that language can make a difference. For example, some people don't think twice today if they hear someone from Italy speak with an accent because they perceive Italy and the people there as prestigious. But if they hear someone from Latin America speak with a Spanish accent, they may react negatively because of their biases against people from this region.

How many languages are spoken by students on your campus? Students at the University of Illinois at Chicago report speaking at least 71 different languages. See here for a map of where these languages hail from and here to read about some of the people from these places.

Unfortunately, universities are not free from bias against EL speakers or EL accents. Consider the following three cases.

CASE 1: [Rubin 1992, full reference in "Additional resources"]

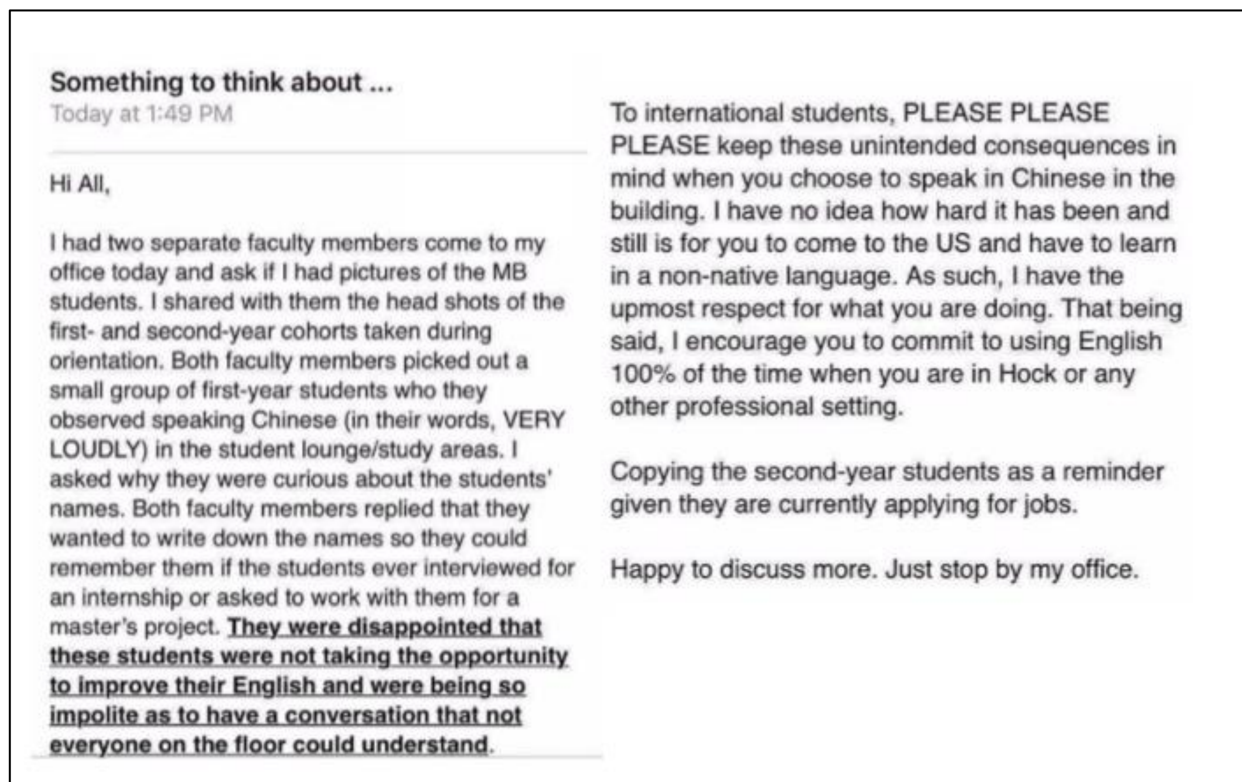
A study of 62 undergraduates at a large Southeastern university divided them into two groups. Both groups heard exactly the same four-minute audio recording of a lecture spoken by a native English speaker raised in Ohio. One group saw a photo of a White woman, while the other group saw a photo of a Chinese woman (both women were similarly dressed, were of similar size and hair style, and were photographed in the same setting and pose standing at a lectern in front of a chalkboard). The group that had been presented with the photo of the Chinese woman rated her as "speaking with a foreign accent" more frequently than did the group who saw the photo of the White woman – but recall that they had heard the exact same audio recording! They seemed to be inventing a 'ghost accent' that was not there. This group also scored lower on a comprehension test of the content of the lecture. That is, their listening abilities were undermined by visually identifying the instructor as Chinese. The author concluded that:

- Even vigorous pronunciation training for international TAs will not entirely solve the problem of U.S. students' stigmatization of 'foreignness' and poor evaluations of such TAs;

- U.S. campuses should explore ways to improve **the attitudes of students** in order to “reduce communication interference”: that is, to discern between real communicative difficulties vs. cases of stereotype and bias.

CASE 2:

A professor in the Master of Biostatistics program [“MB” in the email message below] at Duke University sent the following email to students:



Something to think about ...

Today at 1:49 PM

Hi All,

I had two separate faculty members come to my office today and ask if I had pictures of the MB students. I shared with them the head shots of the first- and second-year cohorts taken during orientation. Both faculty members picked out a small group of first-year students who they observed speaking Chinese (in their words, VERY LOUDLY) in the student lounge/study areas. I asked why they were curious about the students' names. Both faculty members replied that they wanted to write down the names so they could remember them if the students ever interviewed for an internship or asked to work with them for a master's project. **They were disappointed that these students were not taking the opportunity to improve their English and were being so impolite as to have a conversation that not everyone on the floor could understand**.

To international students, PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE keep these unintended consequences in mind when you choose to speak in Chinese in the building. I have no idea how hard it has been and still is for you to come to the US and have to learn in a non-native language. As such, I have the upmost respect for what you are doing. That being said, I encourage you to commit to using English 100% of the time when you are in Hock or any other professional setting.

Copying the second-year students as a reminder given they are currently applying for jobs.

Happy to discuss more. Just stop by my office.

The professor issued an apology but social media debate continued, alleging that the email directive was racist.

What is your opinion? Is it impolite to use a non-English language in public in the U.S.? What other responses could the professor have used when her colleagues approached her about students speaking Chinese in public university spaces?

CASE 3:

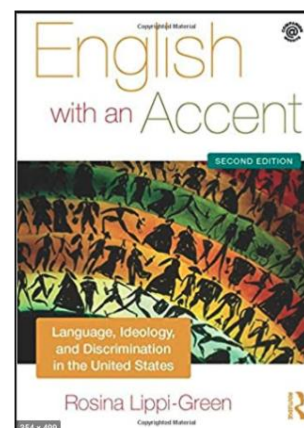
A professor was raised in humble conditions in a country outside of the U.S. She learned English as a third language and is now widely published and respected in her field. She teaches undergraduate and graduate classes at a U.S. university, but she shows impatience towards EL students: “I learned academic English and made it in U.S. academia,” she frequently says. “These students aren’t trying hard enough. They should immerse themselves in English, visit the Writing Center, and they can make it just like I did.”

What are some of the assumptions this professor is making about her EL students? In what ways might she reconsider her positions in order to support her international students?

Recall the story of Carolina, the student who felt silenced because she spoke with a Latino English accent. Yet she was a U.S.-raised native English speaker. Imagine the increased anxiety that a student may feel when they are international and not a native English speaker. Some of them are terrified: of being in a new country, of being judged on their reading, writing, speaking, and thinking in a new language, and of facing discrimination based on how they look and/or sound. It is not surprising that some may seek comfort in spending time with other students in similar situations.

We as university instructors should be vigilant against all forms of discrimination towards speakers of non-English languages and who have EL accents. We are also in a position to carry out an important role in setting a classroom climate in which these students feel supported and can succeed, which is the goal of everyone involved.

Consider the following quote (an edited composite from the work of Lippi-Green):



"When we are confronted with a new person we must talk to, we make a quick series of social evaluations based on our personal histories and backgrounds, which together comprise a set of **filters** through which we hear the people we talk to. We then take a communicative stance. Most of the time, we agree to carry our share of the **communicative burden**: we agree to 'do work' if necessary in order for the language exchange to be successful."

As university instructors, we are compelled to take on our share of the communicative burden and do the necessary work to understand our students and to create an environment that is free from bias and discrimination.

A student sends the following email to Professor Wright:

To Wright,
I must miss class I want you to send me the notes as soon as possible. Your faithful student.

Which reaction would embody the quote above by taking on a large share of the communicative burden?

☐ Respond to the student angrily, correcting the form of address and objecting to the demanding tone.

☐ Assume that the student had good intentions but is unaware of proper email protocol. Reply politely, including directing them to the page of the syllabus that explains what to do when missing a class session, and also politely but directly suggest they consult a website such as this one.

A final thought. Some of the challenges faced by international students have to do with language, but others are related to the fact that aspects of our postsecondary educational system may be vastly different from what they are accustomed to (perhaps the email example above contains elements of this as well). Some things that may be new to these students include these three items:

- Being asked to analyze and offer opinions. Some students come from schooling contexts that consisted solely of one-way lectures by the instructor and rote learning for exams. They may be unaccustomed to being required to offer their own analysis, engage in critical thinking, or give presentations to the class.
- Interpreting feedback on written work. For example, they may not understand indirect wording such as "You might want to…" as an actual directive to carry out that suggestion. Also, if they are unclear on what "cohesion" or "thesis statements" mean, they may not understand comments asking them to improve on these elements.
- The concept of office hours. For some students, going to a professor's office invokes a mistaken idea that they have done something wrong (incidentally, some U.S.-raised first generation college students say the same thing!). Some faculty use the term "Drop-in student hours" instead. And some faculty actually require their students to come to drop-in hours for 5 minutes during the first few weeks of class; in larger courses they make appointments in groups of 4 students. Students might be required to bring one question about the syllabus, or they may simply come to chat about their goals for the class. They learn where the office is located and are encouraged to see it as a friendly space to visit. Professors make clear that it is ***part of their job*** to attend to students in this way, not a burden.

It is estimated that between 50%-70% of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual; the multilingual student is our present and the future. We can show support for linguistic diversity in several ways.

Six strategies to support your students who are learners of of English:

- The typical U.S. **syllabus** may be unfamiliar to some students. Any steps we can take to ensure that students understand its role and increase its clarity are helpful. It may also include an explicit acknowledgement that linguistic diversity is a valuable resource, along with contact information for the campus Writing Center and other supports.

  Optional fill-in box: What might a statement in a syllabus say to communicate to students that linguistic diversity is a valuable resource?

- When assigning written work, consider using different **rubrics** to grade content separately from language use. This way, students can receive positive feedback on their ideas without feeling self-conscious about grammar structure and word choice. Requiring an outline before a first draft can help them generate and organize ideas free from trying to put everything into fluent prose. Consider allowing opportunities for students to revise and resubmit their drafts.

- Remember that developing formal writing skills takes a lot of **time and support**. We cannot expect all EL students to write like English monolinguals, yet they still have a lot to contribute to our classrooms and fields of study.
- Consider allowing students to **record lectures** so that they can listen more than once. If you explicitly ask them to let you know if they don't understand something, some of them may need this invitation repeated frequently before they will seek out the help they need. Also, using a program that provides live captions to our lectures can be helpful (see here).
- Avoid classroom activities that put these students on the spot. Many benefit from having time to share ideas in small groups first (sometimes perhaps with other students of their language group) and **scaffold** their learning. You can also incorporate non-written responses, particularly in on-line courses. Using a tool such as Flip Grid allows students a space to use their voice and listen to the voices of others in the classroom, but may lower some of the stress of speaking in front of the class that often inhibits them from speaking up. In written responses, students often assume a more formal level of English while video responses allow for casual discussion, and instructors may not be as critical of aspects such as grammar and spelling. It also allows for more exposure of linguistic varieties to instructors and domestic students as every student gets equal time to share their voice (credit to Cassidi Hunkler for the Flip Grid suggestion).
- Provide **samples** of successful work – for example, an anonymous essay submitted in a prior course. Also use visuals liberally to support main ideas during lectures.

Additional links:

On Southern U.S. English: (7:27 minutes)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiNsyXHBZak&list=PLA5A8E4EA074CD3F3&index=2

On the pronunciation of "ask" as "ax": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-VnitbeS6w

A delightful hour-long documentary called *American Tongues*, viewable at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5IUmHVj-H8 (note, it contains some objectionable language)

From the "**Vocal Fries**" podcast (note, some of these contain some profanities):

- "Grammar not-zi": "Prescriptive grammar, grammar peeving, and how most of the rules you were taught about English were made up by a few white dudes way back when. Turns out, prescriptivism is racist, classist, and ableist, and enforcing these rules kinda make you a jerk. They also discuss how they had been trained in high school to be prescriptivists, and how linguistics helped them become less biased."
- "Don't be an accenthole": Foreign accented speech (FAS), which foreign accents are judged more harshly, and why we should stop judging FAS.
- "ChicaNO? ChicanYES!": Chicano English, why it matters, and why it isn't the same as Spanglish

"Language privilege: What it is and why it matters"

© Kim Potowski, 2020, The University of Illinois at Chicago

To read about accents in Disney films, see this blog by linguist Rosina Lippi-Green: http://rosinalippi.com/weblog/shorter-works-essays/teaching-children-how-to-discriminate-what-we-learn-from-the-big-bad-wolf/

Black language podcast: https://blacklangpod.buzzsprout.com/1210418/4660637-aight-so-boom?fbclid=IwAR3xFoiF3nD63w6HGJqNy3U2RJKFC3u2GKdOXw_AEbzU0JIaj4DJW72beuQ

Rubin (1992) https://www.jstor.org/stable/40196047?seq=1

Arshavskaya, E. (2015). International teaching assistants' experiences in the U.S. classrooms: Implications for practice. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 56–69.

Dr. Anne Charity Hudley on African American English: why Black kids internalize shame about how they sound from an early age, what "standard English" even is and who the heck decided, and how all of our assumptions around speaking "correctly" play out on the grand scale (hiring practices, college admissions, policy) and on the small scale (within our friend circles, who we choose to read and admire and trust):

https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-check-your-bias-black-voices-dr-anne-charity/id1491356006?i=1000483444429&fbclid=IwAR2JoMev3hDMV6jt__zsv3xi59QHCOWzdlLpXWu4RKlitHS8Ox28wzC7g-E

Terms to click on for definitions:

English as a New Language (ENL)	Latino English	Appropriacy argument
Accent	Grammar	Linguistic prejudice
Dialect	English Learner (EL)	Linguistic profiling
African American English (AAE)	English Learner accent	Linguistic diversity