LINGUISTIC IDEOLOGY VS. LANGUAGE USE

The assumption that non-standard features in oral varieties (e.g. African American Vernacular English, Canadian French, New Mexican Spanish) represent recent innovations is widespread, even among linguists. In this course we examine the role of grammatical ideology in society, language use, and linguistic inquiry. What is the standard? Have strong grammatical traditions in languages such as English, French, and Spanish influenced actual usage? The problem of the lack of diachronic spoken-language data in ascertaining the existence and direction of change is tackled in a novel way by incorporating grammarians’ injunctions over the centuries as potential conditioning factors in the analysis of contemporary variability (Poplack and Tagliamonte 2001; Poplack, Van Herk, and Harvie 2002). Students will identify a morphosyntactic variable with a history of prescriptive attention, and will analyze its occurrence in a corpus of speech using variationist methodology.

Course materials:
- Readings on reserve/online at Zimmerman Library.
- GoldVarb, a variable rule computer application, for Macintosh
  (http://www.crm.umontreal.ca/~sankoff/Goldvarb_Eng.html) or PC
  (http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/lang/webstuff/goldvarb/).

General references on reserve:

Student response papers:
Hard copy due at end of class period. For each reading assigned: one-three sentence summary, one-two sentence evaluation, and one or two discussion questions.
Aug 26 & 28:  Introduction


Sept 2 & 4:  The ideology of the standard


Sept 9, 11, 16:  Grammatical ideology and idealism in linguistics


Sept 18  The persistence of the non-standard

Sept 23  Form-function asymmetry


Sept 25  Quantitative Measurement

Woods, Anthony; Paul Fletcher; and Arthur Hughes. 1986. Tables and graphs; Summary measures; Probability. Statistics in language studies, 8-47; 59-76. Cambridge: CUP.

Sept 30 & Oct 2  Extracting and Coding Data

Workshop: Extracting variants and coding factor groups in Excel.

Oct 7 & 9  Introduction to VARBRUL

Workshop: Condition files and results files.

Oct 14  Data and method: Apparent time; Diachronic corpus research


Oct 21  New resources: Grammar databases

Oct 23

**The variationist comparative method**


**CASE STUDIES**

Oct 28 & 30: **Operationalizing competing hypotheses on the origin of forms: The English Past and Verbal -s**


Nov 4 & 6: **Tracing grammaticization through inherent variability: The future**


Poplack, Shana, and Danielle Turpin. 1999. Does the FUTUR have a future in (Canadian) French? Probus 11.133-64.

Nov 11 & 13: **Frequency and variability: The French Subjunctive**


Nov 18 & 20: **Using extralinguistic factors to gauge change: The Spanish Conditional**


Nov 25: **Grammaticization of the Spanish Present Perfect**


Dec 2, 4, 9 & 11: **Student Presentations**
Final research paper: The effect of grammatical ideology on usage

Choose linguistic variable and corpus, due: Nov. 4
Oral version due (to be presented in class): Dec. 2 - 11
Written version due: Dec. 16

No written submissions can be considered after this date

In a corpus of oral speech*, locate a linguistic variable with some history of prescriptive attention, preferably one whose treatment can be traced over a period of time.

Extract tokens of this variable from the corpus.

From both prescriptive and descriptive literature**, identify constraints that have been proposed to condition the choice of variants; operationalize these as factors suitable for quantitative analysis.

Code all extracted tokens for these factors.

Use variable rule analysis to assess the contribution of factors selected as significant to the probability of occurrence of one of the variants.

Address the following question: To what extent has grammatical ideology affected language use? (Is the variable involved in change and, if so, in what direction?)

* For Spanish, recordings and transcriptions from the New Mexico – Colorado Spanish Survey (NMCOSS) may be used, with permission from Neddy A. Vigil.
** Students working on the same language are encouraged to collaborate in assembling a grammar database.