

- **Linguistics as science**
- **Linguistic diversity**
- **Some ethical considerations**

For more on these ideas, see:

- CL Ch 1
- Linguistic Society of America [ethics statement](#)

0. Course information — reminders

Welcome!

- I am **Jen Smith** [[my web site](#)] (*she/her*)
 - Please call me “Dr. Smith” or “Prof. Smith” or “Jen”
- Course structure:
 - M, W** | Lecture
 - Presents new course content
 - Lecture outline (slides) **usually posted** right before class
 - F** | Recitation
 - Smaller groups led by teaching assistants (TAs)
 - Be ready for discussion and hands-on practice

0. Course information — reminders

- **Textbook:** *Contemporary Linguistics*, 7th ed. (CL)
 - 7th edition (green)!
- **Course web site:**
<https://users.castle.unc.edu/~jlsmith/ling101.html>
- Check the “**Daily syllabus**” web page after every class to find out about readings and assignments
 - Be sure to find the “**Course info and policies**” handout — ***download and keep in a safe place***

*Remember to REFRESH your web browser
to get the latest version of a web page*

0. Course information — reminders

- Any questions about the course or course policies?
- Be sure to check out the handout [“Tips for success in this course”](#)

0. Course information — Key goals

- Key goals for this course include:
 - Learning some **key concepts** about language
 - Developing **analysis / problem-solving** skills
 - We will ask you to do both of these things:
 - **Learn** new information: terms, skills, facts
 - **Apply** new (and old) information to solve problems, *often in new ways*
- It is crucial to go *beyond* just memorizing facts—**work to understand the new ideas** in this course

1. Linguistics as science

- The way that people use language has many social and cultural aspects — but human language itself is also a **naturally occurring phenomenon**

Review from last time:

- Language appears to have a **critical period**
 - At least for first-language acquisition
- Language development in children occurs **spontaneously** when they are exposed to a speech community — *language doesn't need to be taught*

1. Linguistics as science

- Excerpts from some of the NATSCI Learning Outcomes
 1. ... use scientific knowledge, logic, and imagination to **construct and justify scientific claims** about **naturally occurring phenomena** ...

1. Linguistics as science

- Excerpts from some of the NATSCI Learning Outcomes
 2. Analyze and apply **processes of scientific inquiry** ... These include
 - generating and testing **hypotheses** or **theories** pertaining to the **natural world**
 - building and justifying **arguments** and **explanations**
 - **communicating** and **defending** conclusions

1. Linguistics as science

Overview—A scientific approach to human language:

- Observe **data** = **human language behavior**
 - *What do people say and understand?*
- Attempt to develop a **model** of human mental grammar that **accounts for the observed data**
 - *What is human language cognition like?*
- Identify and **test** further **predictions** of the model
- Change, refine, expand the model as needed to **account for the new data**

1. Linguistics as science

- In this course, we will investigate properties of language that a speaker has acquired **naturally** (not through instruction)
- Linguistics research often focuses on **descriptive** and **mental** grammars of **native speakers**
 - Native speaker: Someone who acquires a language from exposure, *as a small child*
 - Descriptive and mental grammars = ?

1. Linguistics as science

- What is ***grammar***? (review from last class)
 - **Prescriptive** grammar:
What people “should” say or write
 - Useful for learning a foreign language, or learning a particular style (formal writing, ...)
 - NOT the focus of most research in linguistics

1. Linguistics as science

- What is ***grammar***?
 - **Descriptive** grammar:
What people **do** say and understand
= **Language data**
 - **Mental** grammar:
Linguistic competence (“What we know when we know a language”)
 - We can’t observe a speaker’s mental grammar directly, so we try to build a **model** of it

1. Linguistics as science

- Moving away from prescriptive grammar and focusing on **descriptive grammar** has some very important **implications** for **whose language** should be viewed as data in linguistics...

2. Language varieties and linguistic diversity

- If you are a native speaker of English, does your mental grammar judge this example to be grammatical? (Does this “sound normal” to you, or does it “sound funny”?)

*Feeding your cat is **different to** feeding your dog.*

2. Language varieties and linguistic diversity

- This structure is judged ungrammatical by most speakers of American English (it “sounds wrong”)

*Feeding your cat is **different to** feeding your dog.*

- This came from a blog called *catsofaustralia.com*
 - Saying ‘different to’ sounds fine to speakers of Australian English
- So—
Which is correct, American English or Australian English?

2. Language varieties and linguistic diversity

??? But (you may say), that's not a fair question! The two kinds of English are **just different**

- An American English speaker has a mental grammar that allows *different than* [yes, really, for most of us] or *different from*, but not *different to*
 - An Australian English speaker has a mental grammar that does allow *different to*
- Both American English and Australian English speakers **have** mental grammars; they're simply **different**

2. Language varieties and linguistic diversity

This is a key idea in linguistics.

- This point can be extended to the **language variety** (sometimes called *dialect*) of **any** speech community
 - No language variety “has no grammar”
 - No language variety is any less (or more!) logical
 - Every mental grammar is systematic
- The speakers of **any language variety** can use their mental grammar to make **grammaticality judgments** about whether words, sentences, etc., are acceptable **in that variety**

2. Language varieties and linguistic diversity

- What is a “**standard**” or “**prestige**” language variety?
One that got lucky! (historically, socially, politically)
 - Which group was **in power** when dictionaries, style guides, curricula, etc., were made?
 - Which group did other people **want to imitate** or sound like in order to gain certain social or political advantages?
 - These are the factors that typically determine which variety (dialect) is considered the “correct” or “desirable” one in a society

2. Language varieties and linguistic diversity

- Is it **useful** to be able to speak and write so-called “standard” or “mainstream” American English?
 - In many cases, **yes** — there are social implications of using, or not using, this variety
- Does that mean that mainstream American English is intrinsically, linguistically **better**?
 - **Not at all!**
 - Remember our discussion of Australian English? In the same way, non-“standard” varieties of English simply have a **different** mental grammar

2. Language varieties and linguistic diversity

- For **any variety of any language**, we can analyze it and determine its linguistic properties
- You may have **emotional reactions** to different varieties of your language, based on your own background and experience—you may like some and dislike others—that's human nature. ***BUT!!!***
 - All varieties have a mental grammar
 - All varieties can contribute to our understanding of the range of possible human languages
 - All varieties deserve respect; **none are “wrong”**

2. Language varieties and linguistic diversity

- Many of the language data from English that we discuss in this course will be from “mainstream” (or “standard”) American English
 - This variety is familiar at least as a second language or second dialect to most of the class
- Later in the course, we will look again at language varieties and how they are related to **social factors** and **speaker identity**
- If you speak another variety — try analyzing its linguistic properties as we go through the course!

3. Scientific ethics in linguistics

- Some additional implications of linguistics as a scientific approach to language
 - Linguists want to develop a model of human language in general
 - This means: We need to have a sense of what kinds of mental grammars are *possible*
 - Consequence: We need language data from **as many varieties** of **as many languages** as possible

3. Scientific ethics in linguistics

3. Scientific ethics in linguistics

- On the other hand:
 - Building linguistic models based only on “standard” or “prestige” varieties of languages would miss some of the possible forms a mental grammar can take
 - So, non-standard varieties of languages are not only worthy of respect — it is essential to include them for a full understanding of human language possibilities

4. Other perspectives on language

Language is **social**

- The sounds, words, and structures that we use can signal our group membership or our identity

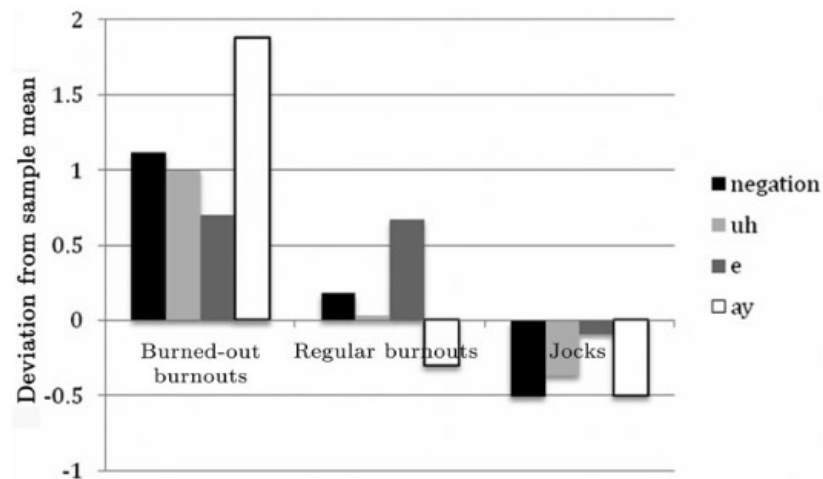


Figure 2

Use of vernacular variants by girls' subcategory. From Eckert (2000).

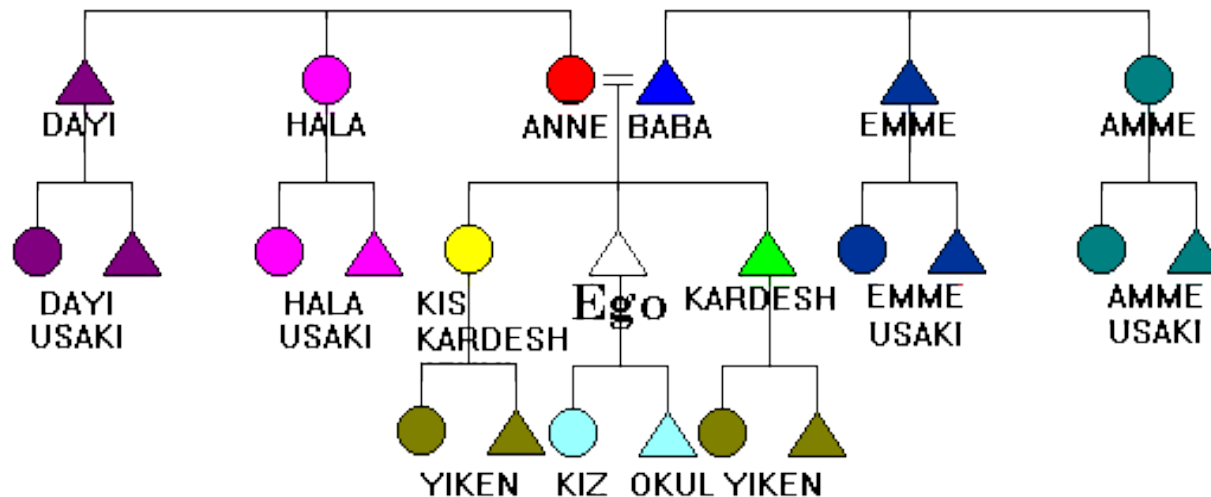
Vowel pronunciation and use of “double negatives” by Jocks and Burnouts in a Detroit high school (Eckert 2012)

- In this course, we will also discuss **social aspects of language use**

4. Other perspectives on language

Language is **cultural**

- Terms used by a society can provide information about the structure or interests of that society



Turkish kinship terms, by Brian Schwimmer

https://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/tutor/case_studies/turkish/turkterm.html

- We *won't* discuss cultural aspects very much in this course
→ see LING/ANTH 138, "Linguistic Anthropology"

5. Getting ready for the next class

- Visit the [Daily Syllabus page](#) on the course web site
- **Reading assignment** for M Aug 28
 - A PDF scan of *CL* Ch 2 is available in [Course Reserves](#) on the LING 101 Canvas site
- Upcoming — **HW #1**
 - *Part 1*: **Discussion questions** are due at your recitation (**F Aug 25, 10:10 or 11:15am**)
 - *Part 2*: **Check-in** on “Course info & policies” and web site is due on Canvas by **F Aug 25, 9pm**