

Today's topic:

- **Social factors in sound change**

Sound change: Important results

- There are certain **common types** of sound change
- Common types can often be explained by means of **phonetic factors** and how they affect the **transmission** of language between generations
 - Articulatory variability
 - Acoustic (or perceptual) ambiguity
- Example: Discussion of HW #1, question (4)

Something that still needs explaining

- The **propagation** of a sound change:
If some individual gives rise to a sound change, how does it spread to the wider community?

Sound change and the “Darwinian paradox”

- If you start using a different pronunciation from everyone around you, does this enhance your ability to communicate with others around you? (see discussion in Labov 2001)
- There must be other factors behind the propagation of sound change

Class discussion: Eckert (2005)

- Your group will be assigned a figure (graph, chart, diagram) from the reading
- Each group's task is to prepare a “bullet-point summary” of their assigned figure to present to the rest of the class
 - What are the facts being illustrated in the figure? (How do we read it?)
 - Why are these facts interesting?
- In order to do this, you will need to understand and be able to explain the text around the figure and in the relevant section of the paper

Figures for group discussion

- A Fig 1, “Reduced *-ing*.”
- B Fig 2 and Fig 3, on Martha’s Vineyard vowels
- C Fig 6, 7: Social context for the “jocks and burnouts” discussion
- D Fig 8, 9, on Detroit-area high school vowels
- E Fig 10, 11, 13 – Further aspects of the Detroit study

General discussion

- Other points from the Eckert article?
 - Evidence that individuals can shift their speech patterns depending on the context
 - ...
- What are some social factors that influence language variation within a larger community?
- What might be some connections between these factors and diachronic sound change?

Looking ahead

- Important factors in understanding diachronic sound change
 - Phonetic properties (common types of change)
 - Transmission between generations
 - Social factors in language variation and choice of linguistic variables
- What about diachronic language change in other domains of the grammar?
 - To what extent can similar factors be identified?