

Today's topic:

- Labov (2007), 'Transmission and diffusion'
 - More on the tree and wave models

Tree vs. wave models – Labov's recap

Labov sketches two scenarios

- The classic comparative method approach
 - Which is primary, tree model or wave model?
 - What is the role of the other component?
- The model of Schmidt (1871)
 - This takes the other position – so which is primary, tree model or wave model?
 - How does this model account for the existence of the other type of pattern?

Basic terminology

- What does Labov mean by these two terms?
 - **transmission**
 - **diffusion**
- What definition does Labov use for determining whether language/dialect X is **descended from** language/dialect Y?
 - How does this relate to the question of transmission vs. diffusion?
- What does Labov think is the primary mode of language change?

Labov's main claim: Discussion

- Does Labov think that we can tell the difference between transmission and diffusion (at least in some cases)?
 - If not, why not?
 - If so, how are the two circumstances different, and why?

Labov's main claim: Discussion

- Does Labov think that we can tell the difference between transmission and diffusion?
 - **Yes**
- **How** are transmission and diffusion different?
 - **Transmission** can be a complex system involving “grammatical conditioning, word boundaries, and the systemic relations that drive chain shifting”
 - **Diffusion** is simpler, and tends to involve only lexical items or phonetic changes

Labov's main claim: Discussion

- **Why** are transmission and diffusion different?
 - **Transmission** involves language acquisition by children
 - **Diffusion** involves contact among adults
 - Children are more easily and quickly able to learn complex linguistic systems than adults (“critical period”)

Case study: (æ) in Norway (sec 2.1)

- What points does Labov make with this example?

Case study: (æ) in Norway (sec 2.1)

- What points does Labov make with this example?
- This appears to be a case where we see:
 - Incrementation (language change in the transmission process) in the urban centers
 - Diffusion from the cities out into the countryside
- But to really check, we need a more complex type of change

Case study: Diffusion of NYC ‘short-a’ (sec 3)

- What is Labov’s main goal in this section?
What is the general nature of the arguments he puts forward?

Your 'short-a' system

(A) Phonetic conditioning?

- Do you have the same vowel in all of these words? If not, which words fall into groups?

| | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| <i>cap</i> | | <i>hat</i> | <i>hatch</i> | <i>hack</i> |
| <i>cab</i> | | <i>bad</i> | <i>badge</i> | <i>bag</i> |
| <i>ham</i> | | <i>man</i> | | <i>hang</i> |
| <i>half</i> | <i>path</i> | <i>pass</i> | <i>cash</i> | |
| <i>calve</i> | | <i>jazz</i> | | |
| | | <i>pal</i> | <i>Lar(ry)</i> | |

Your 'short-a' system

(B) Does syllable structure matter?

- If you found any effects in (A), does it matter if the following sound is in the same syllable?

(C) Do function words act as exceptions?

- Do 'weak' function words (words that allow alternation with schwa) pattern as expected on the basis of (A)-(B)?

The NYC 'short-a' system

Characteristics identified in sec 3

- Phonetic conditioning
- Function-word constraint
- Open-syllable constraint
- Inflectional-boundary closing
- (Word-)initial condition
- Abbreviations (abbreviated personal names)
- Lexical exceptions
- 'Learned' words

Which of these characteristics do we expect to see survive in **transmission**? In **diffusion**?