- **Dialects, standard and non-**
- **Rules of mental grammar**
- **African-American English (AAE)**

Background preparation:

- *Kaplan (2016), Ch 2, "A dialect is a collection of mistakes" — sections 2.0–2.2*

1. Setting the stage

- Discussion question:

  What do you think about the following sentences? Are they "correct"? What does "correct" mean?

  (1) *Cats are **different than** dogs.*

  (2) *Cats are **different from** dogs.*

  (3) *Cats are **different to** dogs.*

1. Setting the stage

Kaplan (2016, Ch 2: 9)

> - What's interesting is that speakers often have the feeling that various dialects are not merely different from each other; some are actually better...
> - Southern American English is stigmatized as uneducated, lazy, and backwards; New York English is said to be rude and 'nasal'.
> - Many English speakers believe that there are correct and incorrect ways to speak, and there is a particular variety— 'Standard English'—that gets things right by obeying grammatical rules.

- Many of us have had these kinds of ideas reinforced by our schools and communities!

Kaplan (2016, Ch 2: 10)

- If this assessment is right, then Standard English is the true embodiment of the language, and non-standard dialects are something less than language.
- If Standard English follows 'the rules' (whatever those are) and other varieties do nothing more than break those rules, then Southern English and AAE [African-American English] are just collections of mistakes.
- And if they're just a collection of mistakes, then these non-standard dialects have no place in schools or other official domains.

1. Setting the stage

Kaplan (2016, Ch 2: 10)

> - In this chapter, we will examine the belief that non-standard dialects don't obey grammatical rules. […]
> - We will see that all varieties of a language, whether standard or not,do in fact obey grammatical rules;
> - non-standard varieties are just obeying rules that happen to be different from the rules of the standard.

- Case study (Wednesday):

  "What is the best way to teach the standard dialect of a language to students who speak a non-standard dialect?"

2. Prescriptive / descriptive grammatical rules

- What does "correct" mean for language?

2. Prescriptive / descriptive grammatical rules

- **Prescriptive** rules:

- **Descriptive** rules:

2. Prescriptive / descriptive grammatical rules

- **<u>Prescriptive</u>** rules:
    - What you "***should***" say/write

- **Descriptive** rules:
  - Characterize the systematic behavior of the speakers of some language variety: What kinds of structures are **grammatical** for speakers?
    - **Grammatical** = acceptable according to a speaker's mental grammar

  - A major goal of linguistic analysis
    - Linguists also want to develop a theory of the *possible kinds* of descriptive rules languages can have

2. Prescriptive / descriptive grammatical rules

- What does "correct" mean for language?

	prescriptively correct in US English	**grammatical** for US English speakers	**grammatical** for UK, Aus, NZ English speakers
different than			
different from			
different to			

- What does "correct" mean for language?

	prescriptively correct in US English	**grammatical** for US English speakers	**grammatical** for UK, Aus, NZ English speakers
different than	✖	✔	(✔)
different from	✔	✔	✔
different to	✖	✖	✔

2. Prescriptive / descriptive grammatical rules

- What does "correct" mean for language?

  Linguists do not typically use the word *correct*.

  - Say *grammatical* for mental grammar
  - Say something like *prestige norm* or *prescriptively "correct" form* when relevant

- **Discussion**:

    - What are some places where **<u>prescriptive</u>** rules about language can be found?

    - In linguistics courses, we tend to make a big point of emphazising that linguists are most interested in descriptive rules, and that many prescriptive rules are actually arbitrary or artificial (like the rule against splitting infinitives). But **are prescriptive rules ever useful**?

3. Language varieties: 'standard' and 'dialect'

- **Discussion**:
  - Linguists take the position that all dialects of a language, whether standard or not, have grammatical rules. (More evidence below.)

    In that case, **why are certain dialects considered standard** while others are considered non-standard?

  - Do you think it is the case that everyone should learn to speak the standard dialect of their language?

3. Language varieties: 'standard' and 'dialect'

- **Discussion**:
    - Is *being grammatical* the same as *making sense*?

3. Language varieties: 'standard' and 'dialect'

- Dialects of English that pronounce 'r' at the end of a syllable are called **rhotic**.

  Is "standard English" rhotic or non-rhotic?

  ...pa<u>r</u>k you<u>r</u> ca<u>r</u> in Ha<u>r</u>vard Ya<u>r</u>d

3. Language varieties: 'standard' and 'dialect'

- Is "standard English" rhotic or non-rhotic?

  - **Rhotic** in US, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, Barbados, India, Pakistan, …
  - **Non-rhotic** in England, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, …

- How did this happen?

  - Interaction of colonization settlement patterns with historical language change in England
  - See a nice discussion on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhoticity_in_English

4. Grammatical rules (descriptive!)

- What is the point of the following examples (slightly modified) from Kaplan's discussion in sec 2.2.1?

(4) a.   <u>The blue books</u> are on the table.
     b. *<u>The my books</u> are on the table.

(5) a.   <u>A blue book</u> is on the table.
     b. *<u>A my book</u> is on the table.

(6) a.   The book is <u>blue</u>.
     b. *The book is <u>my</u>.

(cont.)

4. Grammatical rules (descriptive!)

- What is the point of the following examples (slightly modified) from Kaplan's discussion in sec 2.2.1?

(7) a. <u>The book</u> is on the table.
     b. <u>A book</u> is on the table.
     c. *<u>Book</u> is on the table.
     d. *<u>Blue book</u> is on the table.
     e. <u>My book</u> is on the table.

5. African American English

- What is AAE?

Kaplan (2016, Ch 2: 9); emphasis added

- It's common to describe dialects in terms of geography, but dialect differences can be associated with any number of social dimensions.
- In the United States, for example, one very salient variety is **African American English (AAE)**.
- AAE is associated with differences based on race: it is spoken by many African-Americans (though **not by all**, and it is spoken by people of **other racial backgrounds** as well).

5. African American English

- Some negative attitudes toward AAE

Kaplan (2016, Ch 2: 10)

- AAE is highly stigmatized, and many people believe that it does nothing more than disobey the rules of Standard English.
- Raspberry (1996) refers to it as 'a language that has no right or wrong expressions, no consistent spellings or pronunciations and no discernable rules'.

6. AAE rules: Consonant deletion

- Speakers of AAE 'leave off final consonants' — ??? (Raspberry 1996, quoted by Kaplan, p 14)

- Which words **will** / **will not** undergo consonant deletion, according to Kaplan's discussion?

mask	*friend+ly*	early suffix:	*accept+able*
adopt	*soft+ness*		*expect+able*
bold			
paint		late suffix:	*cold+er*
jump			*spend+ing*
			soft+er

7. AAE rules: Aspectual *be*

- K (p 17) gives the following example (from Ross 1997):

> T: Bobby, what does your mother do?
>
> S: She be at home.
>
> T: You mean she *is* at home.
>
> S: No she ain't, 'cause she took my grandmother to the hospital this morning.
>
> T: You know what I mean. You aren't supposed to say, 'She be at home.' You say, 'She is at home.'
>
> S: Why you trying to make me lie? She ain't at home.

- What's going on here?

7. AAE rules: Aspectual *be*

(examples adapted from Kaplan (2016: 18)

- How are yes/no questions formed in Standard English? AAE works similarly...

  (8) SAE/AAE *They were running.*→

  (9) SAE/AAE *They run.* →

- ...but what happens with aspectual *be*?

  (10) AAE *They be running.* →

- What are some implications of this pattern in (10)?

7. AAE rules: Aspectual *be*

(examples adapted from Kaplan 2016: 18)

- How are yes/no questions formed in Standard English? AAE works similarly…

  (8) SAE/AAE *They were running.* → *Were they __ running?*

  (9) SAE/AAE *They run.* → *Do they run?*

- …but what happens with aspectual be?

  (10) AAE *They be running.* → *Do they be running?*

- What are some implications of this pattern in (10)?

8. AAE rules: Stressed *BIN*

- K (p 18) gives the following example (from Rickford 1983):

  > Someone asked, 'Is she married?' and someone else answered, 'She BIN married.' Do you get the idea that she is married now?

- Presented to 25 Black participants, 25 white participants

  - Most Black participants: 'yes'
  - Most white participants: 'no'

- See also:

  (11) AAE *They BIN running.* → *Have they BIN running?*

9. Responding to William Raspberry

Let's unpack Raspberry's statements…

- no 'right or wrong expressions' / 'discernable rules'

  - Is it true that "anything goes" in AAE? (What evidence from the reading debunks this claim?)

- no 'consistent spellings'

  - Let's help Raspberry out here and consider the more reasonable claim that AAE has *some* variability or inconsistency in spelling.

  - Is this evidence that AAE has no grammar/is not a real language?

9. Responding to William Raspberry

Let's unpack Raspberry's statements...

- 'no consistent pronunciations'
    - Implications if pronunciation is variable?

9. Responding to William Raspberry

- What did we find in Raspberry's parody of AAE?
  - See the first few paragraphs in the Sakai check-in assignment

10. Looking ahead

- Next time:
  - We will look at the "case study" section of the chapter, which presents research results summarized from primary sources

  - To prepare: Focus on **Österberg (1961)** and **Yiakoumetti (2006)**, and try to identify for each:
    - What is the big-picture research question?
    - What is the measurable research question?
    - What results were found? Implications?
    - How can we read the charts/tables?

10. Looking ahead

- On Friday, I will present a new case study to update these results

    - In future weeks, student groups will be in charge of similar "new case study" presentations" (topic sign-ups coming soon!)