

Today's topic: Ch 2 case studies

- **“What is the best way to teach the standard dialect...”**

Background preparation:

- *Kaplan (2016), Ch 2, “A dialect is a collection of mistakes” — section 2.3*

0. Today's objectives

After today's class, you should be able to:

- Distinguish linguistic facts about language varieties from social attitudes toward language varieties
- Explain how the three research studies reviewed in Ch 2 relate to each other and to the Oakland “Ebonics” controversy
- Explain the information presented in Table 2.1 (Swedish) and Figure 2.1 (Greek) in the context of the research questions of the relevant studies

1. Dialects: Linguistic facts vs. social attitudes

- Let's finish the last few slides from last time

1. Dialects: Linguistic facts vs. social attitudes

Summary of our discussion from last time

- **Every language variety** that is acquired by children on the basis of the language of their community...
 - is complex and systematic
 - has a **mental grammar** (that is largely not consciously available to its speakers)
 - distinguishes between structures (pronunciations, words, sentences, etc.) that are **grammatical** and those that are ungrammatical in the variety in question

1. Dialects: Linguistic facts vs. social attitudes

- **Every language variety** that is acquired by children on the basis of the language of their community has a **mental grammar**

Discussion

- Is every language variety **equally appropriate** to **use** in all social situations?
 - Are there situations where a standard variety is more appropriate?
 - Are there situations where a non-standard variety is more appropriate?

2. Ch 2 case studies - Overview

Write/pair/share discussion

- What is the unifying theme or question behind the topics that Kaplan discusses in sec 2.3?

Section outline:

- 2.3.1 Background: The Oakland Ebonics controversy
- 2.3.2 Learning to read in rural Sweden: Österberg (1961)**
- 2.3.3 Comparing the local dialect with the standard: Yiakoumetti (2006)**
- 2.3.4 Comparing AAE & the standard in college: Taylor (1989)

2. Ch 2 case studies - Overview

Debriefing

- Sec 2.3 title:
“What is the best way to teach the standard dialect to speakers of a non-standard dialect?”
- More specifically (see Kaplan 2016: 21):
Does giving students **explicit instruction** in the **differences** between their dialect and the standard dialect improve their **ability to use** the standard dialect?
- This is the **big-picture research question** in sec 2.3

2. Ch 2 case studies - Overview

- Does giving students **explicit instruction** in the **differences** between their dialect and the standard dialect improve their **ability to use** the standard dialect?
 - What were the teaching methods used in the three research studies discussed in this section?

3. The Oakland Ebonics controversy

- What was this controversy?

3. The Oakland Ebonics controversy

- Oakland school board proposal: Have teachers discuss explicitly the differences between SAE, AAE so that AAE speakers could improve skills in SAE
- Proposal was widely misunderstood and criticized
 - Why use “a collection of mistakes” in the classroom?
 - The resolution used unclear and even problematic language to discuss AAE (“Ebonics”)
 - Many people even thought (wrongly) that the purpose was to *teach* AAE to students

3. The Oakland Ebonics controversy

- Kaplan examines the results of the case studies in Ch 2 from a particular perspective:
 - How much do the results contribute, specifically, to the debate about using AAE in the classroom to improve the teaching of Standard English?
- But this is a broader question, with relevance for many communities in the US and in the world

4. Österberg (1961)

- Explain the results in this data table (Österberg 1961)

Table 2.1 Means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) for scores on Reading Test I (reading of single words), adapted from Table 24 of Österberg (1961). An asterisk indicates a statistically significant difference between groups *D* and *R*.

Groups	M	SD
Girls		
D (N = 84)	23.0	6.17
R (N = 86)	19.3	6.85
t	3.70*	
Boys		
D (N = 74)	21.3	6.94
R (N = 87)	19.4	7.36
t	1.67	
All		
D (N = 158)	22.2	6.54
R (N = 173)	19.4	7.11
t	3.73*	

4. Österberg (1961)

- What do the column headers mean?
 - Groups
 - M, SD (more on these terms Wed/Fri)
- What do the row headers mean?
 - What is “D” vs. “R”?
 - Was the main point of the study to compare D/R or to compare girls/boys? Why are both shown?
 - What is “t”? What is a “statistically significant difference”?
 - **t-test**: Are the means different? *(more on these terms Wed/Fri)*
 - **statistically significant**: Unlikely to be a coincidence
- What are the **results** communicated here?

4. Österberg (1961)

Now that we have worked through Table 2.1:

- What was the **measurable research question** of this study?
 - Think of a *measurable research question* as something that
 - (typically) has a **quantifiable/numerical** answer
 - addresses some **specific aspect** of a big-picture research question and *contributes* to answering it

4. Österberg (1961)

- **Measurable research question:**

Does teaching children to **read** in their own **non-standard dialect** first improve **reading outcomes** in the standard dialect?

4. Österberg (1961)

- Piteå — isolated rural area with stigmatized dialect
- Study compared two balanced groups of children in the first grade
 - Half were taught to read in Piteå dialect for 10 weeks and then transitioned to standard Swedish
 - The other half received all reading instruction in standard Swedish

4. Österberg (1961)

- **Results:** Several standardized reading tests were given at end of school year
 - When there was a statistically significant difference between groups, 'Dialect' group always had the advantage
 - Girls more likely to show a statistically significant difference than boys (but boys also showed numerical trend in same direction)
- **Conclusion:** Reading instruction was (slightly) more effective when students learned to read in their own dialect first

4. Österberg (1961)

Discussion

- *How strongly do Österberg's (1961) results support the claim that AAE should be used in the classroom to improve the teaching of Standard English?*
- Concerns with the Österberg (1961) study itself?
- Concerns with extending these results to AAE?

4. Österberg (1961)

- *How strongly do Österberg's (1961) results support the claim that AAE should be used in the classroom to improve the teaching of Standard English?*
- Concerns with the Österberg (1961) study itself
 - Only “a few” of the reading tests showed a *significant* difference, so the effect of dialect instruction was small
 - Österberg didn't include any follow-up studies, so we don't know if the advantage for reading in the dialect actually persisted past the first grade

4. Österberg (1961)

- *How strongly do Österberg's (1961) results support the claim that AAE should be used in the classroom to improve the teaching of Standard English?*
- Concerns with extending these results to AAE
 - In the case of Piteå, *all* students were dialect speakers, and so were teachers; what would happen in the US, where the dialect situation in schools tends to be more heterogeneous?
 - Does dialect instruction help after children have *already* had schooling in the standard dialect?

5. Yiakoumetti (2006)

- Explain the results in this data graphic (Yiakoumetti 2006)

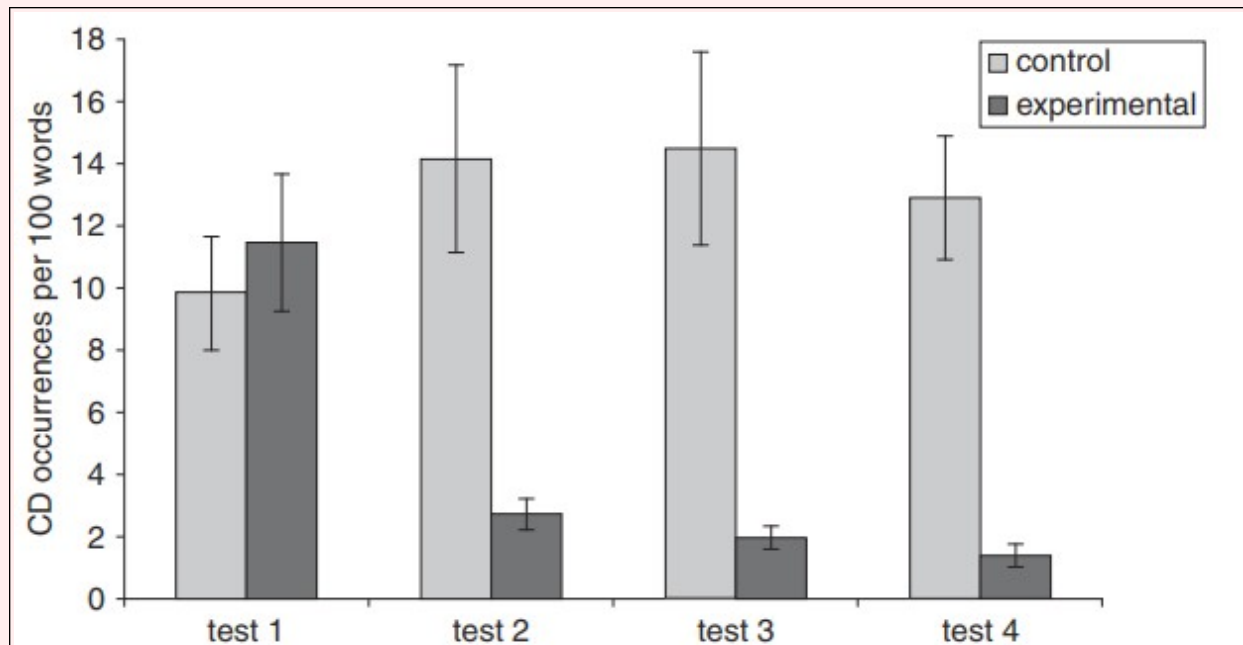


Figure 2.1 Frequency of Cypriot Greek dialect features in students' essays. Test 1 took place at the beginning of the experiment, test 2 in the middle, test 3 at the end, and test 4 three months later. Androula Yiakoumetti, A bidialectal programme for the learning of Standard Modern Greek in Cyprus, *Applied Linguistics* 2006, 27, 2, 295–317, Figure 5. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press.

5. Yiakoumetti (2006)

- What is on the *y* (vertical) axis?
- What is on the *x* (horizontal) axis?
 - What is “control” vs. “experimental”?
 - What are “test 1” – “test 4”?
 - What are the thin lines on each bar in the graph?
- What are the **results** communicated here?
 - Note: This graphic shows results from *one* of the *writing* tests (a geography essay)

5. Yiakoumetti (2006)

Now that we have worked through Figure 2.1:

- What was the measurable research question of this study?

5. Yiakoumetti (2006)

- **Measurable research question:**

Does **explicit instruction** in the differences between a non-standard dialect and the standard dialect encourage non-standard dialect speakers to **use the standard dialect more** at school?

5. Yiakoumetti (2006)

- 11-year-old speakers of Cypriot Greek
 - Half got 45 min. of instruction per day for three months: practice identifying dialect differences, using standard dialect in contrast with Cypriot
 - Other half was control group: no special instruction
- Students were tested on:
 - Two writing assignments
 - A three-minute oral interview

5. Yiakoumetti (2006)

Discussion

- *How strongly do Yiakoumetti's (2006) results support the claim that AAE should be used in the classroom to improve the teaching of Standard English?*
- Some limitations of the study
- Applicability to the case of AAE

5. Yiakoumetti (2006)

- *How strongly do Yiakoumetti's (2006) results support the claim that AAE should be used in the classroom to improve the teaching of Standard English?*
- Some limitations of the study
 - The final test was only 3 months after the end of dialect instruction; how long will the effect last?
 - The oral interviews were very short, which may have made it easier for students to concentrate on using standard dialect features

5. Yiakoumetti (2006)

- *How strongly do Yiakoumetti's (2006) results support the claim that AAE should be used in the classroom to improve the teaching of Standard English?*
- Applicability to the case of AAE
 - This study showed effects with students who had already been getting education in the standard dialect
 - The type of instruction here is more like what was proposed for Oakland

6. Taylor (1989)

Comparing AAE and the standard in college writing

- **Measurable research question:**

Does the use of **Contrastive Analysis** (explicitly contrasting AAE and Standard English) with college students **reduce the number of AAE dialect features** in students' writing?

6. Taylor (1989)

- Students in two groups, meeting once a week
 - One group received explicit instruction in AAE/SAE differences, as well as discussion of cultural context of AAE, and discussion of L2 or dialect interference
 - Control group received “standard teaching methods”
- Study compared writing samples from beginning, end of study

6. Taylor (1989)

- **Results**

- Contrastive Analysis group reduced incidence of AAE features in writing by 59.3%
- Control group AAE features increased by 8.5%

6. Taylor (1989)

Discussion (time permitting)

- *How strongly do Taylor's (1989) results support the claim that AAE should be used in the classroom to improve the teaching of Standard English?*
- Limitations of the study
- Implications for the Oakland resolution

6. Taylor (1989)

- *How strongly do Taylor's (1989) results support the claim that AAE should be used in the classroom to improve the teaching of Standard English?*
- Limitations of the study
 - Small number of participants
 - Statistical analysis not reported
- Implications for the Oakland resolution
 - Older students — not elementary school
 - Results were seen for AAE speakers specifically

7. General conclusions

Discussion

- What is Kaplan's overall take on these studies?

7. General conclusions

What is Kaplan's overall take on these studies?

- All three studies support the claim that explicit instruction in or about students' own dialect leads to improved performance in the standard dialect
- While these studies have limitations, Kaplan sees it as noteworthy that they involve different languages, different ages of students, and different methodologies, and yet they all seem to show **converging results**

7. General conclusions

- Any thoughts, questions, or comments?
- Upcoming: For the next two classes, we will look more systematically at research studies, experiment design, and statistics