

Introduction to Language

Derek Denis

University of Toronto
derek.denis@mail.utoronto.ca

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Today's Plan...

Part 0: Course Evaluations

- Get out your smart phones and laptops and take 15 minutes to log on and fill them out for this class!

Part 1: More sociolinguistics

We'll talk some more about how language interacts with other aspects of society today.

- Language and Ethnicity
- Language and Identity

Part 2: The Indigenous Languages of Canada

- What are they? What language families do they belong too?
- What are some of the features of some of these languages?
- Many of these languages are endangered or threatened. What's being done to revitalize them?


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Language and Ethnicity

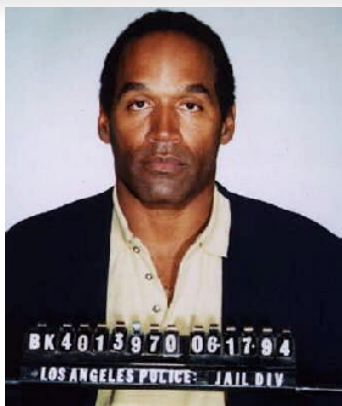
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Language and Ethnicity Language and Identity Languages of Canada

1994



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"I resent that statement! You can't tell by somebody's voice whether they sound black. ... That's a racist statement."

What do you think?
Can you tell somebody's ethnicity from the sound of their voice?

Is it racist?

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Linguistic Profiling

The experts referred to in this paper are linguists John Baugh, William Idsardi and Thomas Purnell.

In a 1999 paper, they detailed several experiments that showed:

1. A person's ethnicity can be determined by phonetic correlates alone, with some great accuracy.
2. People can do this based on one word, "hello".
3. Linguistic profiling and housing discrimination based on one's voice exists.

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Linguistic Profiling

Purnell, Idsardi and Baugh (1999) consider three, broad dialects of American English:

- African American Vernacular English (AAVE)
- Chicano English (ChE)
- Standard American English (SAE)

The first two dialects can be considered **ethnolects**:

Def. A variety of a language spoken by a minority ethnic group, amid speakers of a non-ethnically defined dialect.

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Linguistic Profiling

Experiment 1:

Method:

- Stimulus tokens of the same sentence were recorded by 20 speakers representing AAVE, ChE and SAE
 - "Hello, I'm calling to see about the apartment you have advertised in the paper."
- 421 Stanford University Students were then asked to identify the ethnicity (African American, Hispanic American or European American) and gender of speakers.

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Linguistic Profiling

Experiment 1:

Results:

| Dominant Dialect of Speaker/Racial identification | Gender | % Correct Identification |
|---|--------|--------------------------|
| AAVE/African American | Male | 97 |
| | Female | 85 |
| ChE/Hispanic American | Male | 86 |
| | Female | 79 |
| SAE/European American | Male | 92 |
| | Female | 87 |

Six possible outcomes, null hypothesis is 16.6% identification rate.

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Linguistic Profiling



All of the examples you heard were spoken by John Baugh.

Having grown-up in inner-city Philadelphia and Los Angeles, Baugh is a tri-dialectal speaker of AAVE, ChE, and SAE.

- Baugh's recordings were also included in the experiment.

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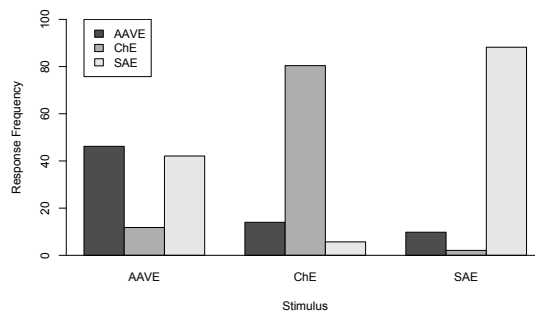
Linguistic Profiling

| Dominant Dialect of Speaker/Racial identification | Speaker | % Correct Identification |
|---|---------|--------------------------|
| AAVE/African American | Male | 97 |
| | Female | 85 |
| | Baugh | 84 |
| ChE/Hispanic American | Male | 86 |
| | Female | 79 |
| | Baugh | 91 |
| SAE/European American | Male | 92 |
| | Female | 87 |
| | Baugh | 86 |

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Linguistic Profiling

Experiment 2: The word "hello" alone, as spoken by Baugh in three ways, was played and participants had to identify the voice as African American Vernacular English, Chicano English or Standard American English:



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Linguistic Profiling

So far, what does this paper tell us about Johnnie Cochran's statement?

"I resent that statement! You can't tell by somebody's voice whether they sound black. ... That's a racist statement."

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Linguistic Profiling

Conclusions so far:

- ▶ Three varieties of English exist and are easily identifiable:
 - AAVE
 - ChE
 - SAE
- ▶ Speakers of these dialects tend to be African American, Hispanic and European respectively.
- ▶ If we can recognize the ethnolect, we can usually identify race.
 - But, John Baugh's recordings show that we can't definitively tell someone's ethnicity by the sound of their voice.

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Linguistic Profiling

Experiment 3:

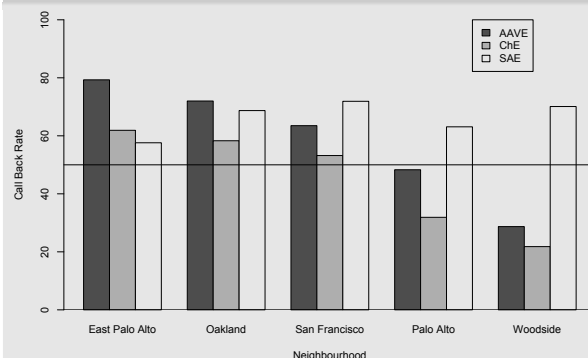
Method:

- ▶ Telephone interviews were conducted in person with perspective landlords in five neighbourhoods in Greater San Francisco Bay Area
 - East Palo Alto, Oakland, San Francisco, Palo Alto, Woodside
- ▶ Baugh phoned each landlord three separate times, each time with one of the three dialects.
- ▶ He left a different phone number and pseudonym each time but the qualifications were identical.

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Linguistic Profiling

Results:

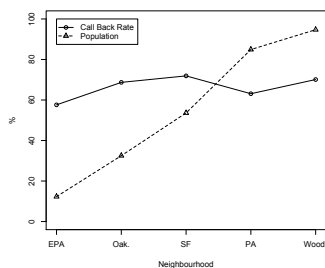


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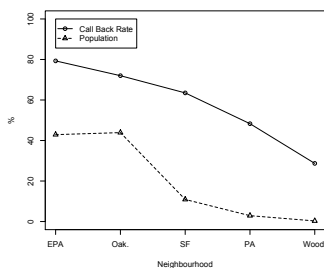
Linguistic Profiling

Results:

Call back rate for SAE calls and white population in five neighbourhoods



Call back rate for AAVE calls and black population in five neighbourhoods

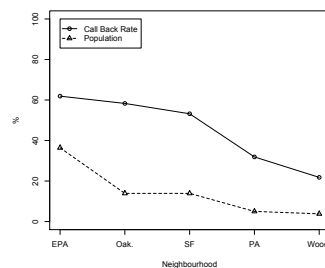


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Linguistic Profiling

Results:

Call back rate for ChE calls and hispanic population in five neighbourhoods



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Linguistic Profiling

This paper has important legal implications, beyond linguistics.

"Discriminatory motives" are established through a discriminator's "knowledge of the complainants minority status" (HUD vs. Cox 1991)

- ▶ Cues to race can be visual and **linguistic**
- ▶ Discrimination exists in the **absence of visual cues**.
 - Linguistic Discrimination.

Despite laws in the United States that protect against housing discrimination, when an applicants race (or gender) is known, intentional discrimination does happen.

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Linguistic Profiling

Is it racist to say that we can tell someone's ethnicity by their voice?

About ten years ago on CNN, John Baugh debated Johnnie Cochran on this point.

- ▶ There are ethnic accents.
- ▶ People can identify them.
- ▶ **What we do with this knowledge** is crucial, not the act of identification.

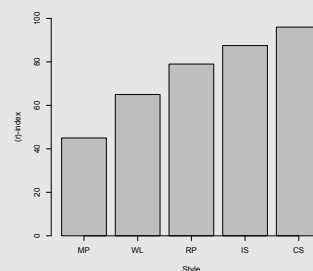
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Language and Identity

Style... so far

Last class we saw that sociolinguists have correlated sociolinguistic variables to particular contextual styles

- ▶ Minimal Pair List
- ▶ Word List
- ▶ Reading Passage
- ▶ Interview Style
- ▶ Casual Speech



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Style... so far

Style-shifting: is when a speaker, in different contexts, does something linguistically different.

- ▶ We saw a case of how a linguistic variable, (r), was correlated with contextual styles.
 - As the style becomes a less self-monitored style, the frequency of non-standard variant increases.
- ▶ When a linguistic variable is correlated with contextual style and some other social factor, we call that variable a **marker**.
 - The use of that variable has **social meaning**; speakers avoid the stigmatized variant when they are self-aware.

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Style

More recently, **style** in sociolinguistics has been redefined and reinterpreted.

Schilling-Estes (2002:378) observes:

1. Speakers **do not shift style** merely, or primarily, **in reaction to elements of the speech situation** but rather are quite active and creative in their use of stylistic resources.
2. Speakers are not bound to the external context as they shape their speech, in fact, **they use their speech to shape and re-shape the context, interpersonal relationships and personal identities.**

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Audience Design

One account of style-shifting is called the **Audience Design** model.

- ▶ Not about self-monitoring alone.
- ▶ Speakers style-shift **in response to audience members**.
 - Create closeness with hearer.
 - Create distance with hearer.
 - e.g., travel agent becomes more vernacular with a difficult client to seem more concerned and helpful.

The Audience Design model was a leap forward but people soon realized that it marginalized **the initiative dimension**.

- ▶ Speaker's engage in self-initiated shifts far more often than previously believed.

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Speaker Design

The **Speaker Design** model promotes the importance of the initiative dimension of style shifting:

- ▶ Speakers create, present, and recreate their identity by **actively** style-shifting.
 - Patterns of linguistic variation are not just about one's position in society.
 - Variables are resources that speakers use to place themselves in society.
- ▶ Speakers have **agency**; not just passive participants.

Language is another way to express identity:

Kiesling (1998:70): "Linguistic variables, dress, comportment, etc., combine to form an ever-changing performance of identity."

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Investigating Style and Identity

Why do British singers often sound totally different when they're singing?

- ▶ Trudgill (1978) observed that British singers of all kinds of genres have been modifying their singing voices since at least the 1920s.
- ▶ Became particularly widespread in the late 1950s with rock-and-roll.

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Investigating Style and Identity

Some 'rules' for British rock and pop singers in the late 50s

1. The pronunciation of intervocalic /t/ in words like *better* as [t], which is the pronunciation used by most British speakers, is generally not permitted. In pop-singing, a pronunciation of the type [r] has to be employed.
2. It is not permitted to pronounce words such as *dance* and *half* with the /ɑ:/ that is normal in speech in south-eastern England. Instead they are pronounced with the /æ/ of *cat*.
3. Words such as *girl* and *more* tend to be pronounced with an [ɪ] even by those English English speakers (the majority) who do not have non-prevocalic [ɪ] in their speech.

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Investigating Style and Identity

Why would singers do this?

- ▶ Could British singers be attempting to sound more like their audience?? (The Audience Design)
 - Their audience was primarily other Brits!
 - The Audience Design doesn't work.

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Investigating Style and Identity

Acts of Identity Theory (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1986)

Speakers' linguistic behaviour is motivated by attempts to "resemble as closely as possible the group or groups with which from time to time speakers wish to identify."

- ▶ The British singers are modifying their phonology in the direction of a group with which they wish to identify.
 - **Americans**
 - All the "rules of pop-song pronunciation" are British **stereotypes** of American English.
- ▶ So why?
 - Most genres of twentieth-century popular music have (African-)American roots.
 - "It's appropriate to sound like an American when performing in what is predominantly an American activity."
 - cf. American Shakespearean actors.

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Investigating Style and Identity

The Acts of Identity theory argues that the extent to which speakers are able to modify their speech is constrained by four things:

1. The extent to which you can identify your model group.
2. The extent to which you have sufficient access to the model group and sufficient ability to work out the rules of their behaviour.
3. Your ability to modify your behaviour.
4. The strength of various (possibly conflicting) motivations towards one or another model and towards retaining your own sense of a unique identity.

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Investigating Style and Identity

The extent to which we are able to identify our model group.

- ▶ The singers are identifying their model group as Americans, generally, but this isn't exactly right!
- ▶ American pop singers also tend to imitate a group: Southern/African-American — the source of jazz, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll.
 - Southern/AAVE speakers tend to be r-less
 - American singers who are r-ful, tend to be r-less when singing
 - BUT British R&B/Rock'n'Roll singers who are normally r-less tend to be r-ful when singing (like a stereotypical American English)!
- ▶ Oops!

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Investigating Style and Identity

The extent to which you have sufficient access to the model group and sufficient ability to work out the rules of their behaviour.

- ▶ British singers analytic ability is lacking.
 - With respect to (r) again, they often insert [ɹ] in contexts that they don't belong.
 - *calm, taught, ideas*
 - "A Bachelor Boy" [ə bætʃələ bɔɪ] (Cliff Richards)

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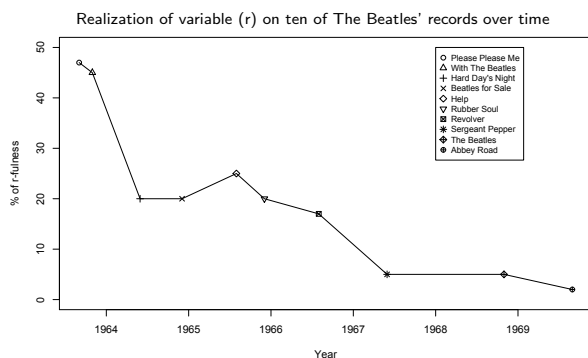
The Beatles

Your ability to modify your behaviour

- ▶ Pop song pronunciations are variable, irregular and inconsistent
- ▶ On The Beatles first album *Please Please Me* (1963), variable (r) was r-ful 47% of the time.
 - 'American' should be 100% and 'British' should be 0%!

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The Beatles



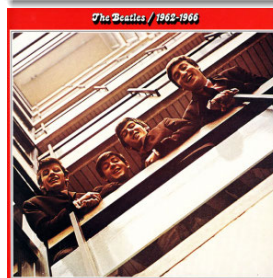
"I Saw Her Standing There" vs. "Oh Darling"

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The Beatles

Why this change for the Beatles?

- Change in genre and subject matter?
 - From rock-and-roll mould to more complex, contemplative, poetic music.
 - An increase in British themes.
 - Maybe?



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The Beatles

Around 1964, British singers generally began to try less hard to sound American.

- Within the Acts of Identity model, **the strength of the motivation towards the American model became weaker.**
- Beatlemania** extended to North American in 1964 when The Beatles performed on the Ed Sullivan show.
- A change in the cultural domination of American rock and roll in favour of "The British Invasion"
 - Being British was cool. British pop music developed **its own validity.**

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Punk

By the late seventies, a new genre of British pop music was well established: **punk**.

"The music of 'punk' groups is typically loud, fast and aggressive, and the songs are concerned often with themes such as violence, underprivilege, alienation, and rejection. The songs are also frequently — in non-punk mainstream societal terms — in bad taste. The intended primary audience is British urban working-class youth." (Trudgill 1978:154).

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Punk

Punk singers have a marked reduction of American features and have introduced a new set of linguistic 'rules' to singing that involve the use of **low-prestige**/non-standard south of England accents.

- The vocalization of /l/, as in *milk* [mɪʊk]
- Deletion of /h/, as in *house* [aws]
- Glottalization of /t/ intervocalically, where it is most social stigmatized *better* [bɛʔə]

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Punk

However, Americanisms still abound in punk music.

The strength of various (possibly conflicting) motivations towards one or another model and towards retaining your own sense of a unique identity

- Conflicting motivations towards British working-class model and American model

| | American | | | British |
|----------------|----------|-----|-----|---------|
| | (r) | (t) | (æ) | [ʔ] |
| Rolling Stones | 19 | 46 | 100 | 0 |
| The Clash | 6 | 71 | 24 | 10 |
| Sham '69 | 1 | 57 | 50 | 9 |

"I'm so bored with the U.S.A."

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Punx

In sum:

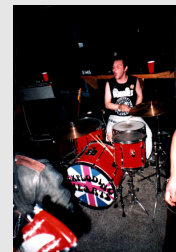
- British pop singers of the 50s and 60s had trouble identifying their model group — American? African-American?
- Singers aren't good at imitating their model.
- Singers are variable and inconsistent
- Strength toward American model reduced thanks to The Beatles
- A new motivation, urban working-class, cockney, is apparent in Punk music

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American Punks

A few years ago, after reading Trudgill's paper, I was inspired to look into this from a different perspective.

- Rather than British pop singers imitating an "American" model, I looked into American punk singers imitating a "British" model.
- Particularly in the sub-genre of punk/power pop cross over:
- Bands like The Exploding Hearts (from Portland)
- Punk identity; Lo-Fidelity/DIY recordings
- Overt symbols of British identity



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American Punks

Observed and expected frequency of r-ful realization of (r) for The Clash and The Exploding Hearts

| | Observed | Expected |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| The Clash | 21% | 0% |
| The Exploding Hearts | 40% | 100% |

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American Punks

Factors selected as significant to the probability of the rhotic realization of (r) for The Clash and The Exploding Hearts

| Factor Group | The Clash | The E-Hearts |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Following Segment | ✓ | !!✓ |
| Stress | ✗ | ✗ |
| Syllabic Structure | ✗ | ✓ |
| Number of Syllables | ✓ | ✗ |
| Morphological context | ✗ | ✓ |
| Preceding Vowel | ✓ | ✓ |

Note: ✓ – significant; ✗ – not significant; !!✓ – significant but in the wrong direction.

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American Punks

With respect to the Acts of Identity theory:

- Insufficient analytical ability to replicate the model
- Trouble identifying a model group with respect to (r)
- Influences are listed as:
 - The Undertones; Northern Ireland; r-ful
 - The Buzzcocks; Manchester; Partially r-ful
 - The Clash; London; r-less
 - The Jam; Surrey; r-less
 - The Only Ones; London; r-less
 - Nick Lowe; Suffolk; r-less

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Languages of Canada

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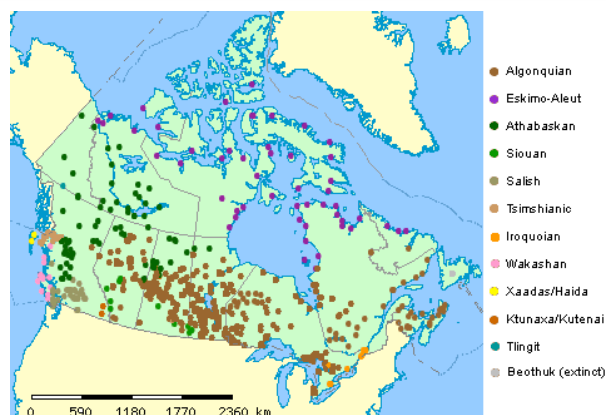
Languages of Canada

There is a wide diversity of languages that are indigenous to North America

- Once there were hundreds, maybe even thousands of languages and dialects.
- Today, the government of Canada recognizes 65 distinct languages and dialects from 11 different language families.
 - Most of these languages are moribund.
 - Only three** are predicted to survive the next 100 years without intervention.

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Language Families in Canada



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Algonquian

The Algonquian languages are the largest family with respect to the number of speakers and geographic distribution.

- Algonquian languages are spoken in:
 - British Columbia, Alberta, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Labrador, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Two of the three viable indigenous languages are Cree and Ojibwe/Anishinaabemowin

- However, several of the dialects of Cree and Ojibwe are **endangered**
 - Including dialects that are not mutually intelligible with other dialects.

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Algonquian

The Algonquian Languages of Canada

| Language | # in Canada | # outside Canada |
|--|-------------|------------------|
| Cree^a | 80 000 | 1 000 |
| Ojibwe/Anishinaabemowin^b | 45 000 | 5 000 |
| Mi'kmaq/Micmac | 7 000 | 1 200 |
| Blackfoot | 3 000 | 500 |
| Malecite-Passamaquoddy | 750 | 850 |
| Potawatomi/Neshnabémwen | <50 | 100 |
| Munsee Delaware | <8 | — |
| Western Abenaki | <5 | — |

^a(Dialects: Plains, Swampy, Woods, Moose, At(t)ikamek(w), Innu, Naskapi)

^b(Dialects: Odawa, Saulteau(x), Ojibwa/Chippewa, Algonquin, Severn/Oji-Cree)

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Eskimo-Aleut

Inuktitut, the third viable language, is an Eskimo-Aleut language.

- Official language of Nunavut. (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut uses Inuktitut).
- Spoken by two-thirds of the 44 000 Canadian Inuit in Labrador, Quebec, Nunavut, and NWT.
- The Greenlandic dialect is also viable.

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Eskimo-Aleut

Inuktitut in Canada

| Dialect | # in Canada | # outside Canada |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Eastern Canadian dialects | 24,000 | 46,000 (Kalaallisut) |
| Wester Canadian dialects | 4,000 | 3,000 (Inupiaq) |

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Na-Dené

The Na-Dené family has the most internal diversity.

- ▶ 17 distinct languages in Canada alone (more in the United States).
 - Most belong to the Athabaskan subfamily.
- ▶ Spoken in:
 - British Columbia, Yukon, NWT, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Na-Dené

The Na-Dené Languages of Canada

| Language | # in Canada | # outside Canada |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Tlingt | <100 | <400 |
| Dëne Sṵliné/Cipewyan | 15 000 | — |
| Slave(y) | 3 850 | — |
| Dogrib/Tłhçho Yatı | 1 900 | — |
| Tsilhqut'in/Chilcotin | 1 200 | — |
| Dakelh/Carrier | <50 | 100 |
| Tutchone | 450 | — |
| Kaska | 400 | — |
| Gwich'in/Kutchin | 350 | 300 |
| Beaver | 200 | — |
| Witsuwit'en-Babine | 185 | — |
| Sekani | 50 | — |
| Tsüüt'ina/Sarcee | <40 | — |
| Tahltan | <40 | — |
| Upper Tanana | 10 | 105 |
| Hän | <5 | 12 |
| Tagish | 2 | — |

Siouan-Catawban

Most Siouan-Catawban languages are spoken in the United States.

- ▶ Three languages spoken in Canada, in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The Siouan-Catawban Languages of Canada

| Language | # in Canada | # outside Canada |
|--|-------------|------------------|
| Stoney (Nakoda) | 1 500 | — |
| 'Sioux' (Yankton and Santee di- alects) | <400 | 15 000 |
| (Teton dialect) | <10 | 6 000 |
| Assiniboiné (Nakota) | 34 | 75 |

Salish

There are ten Salish languages of British Columbia but fewer than 2000 speakers in total.

The Salish Languages of Canada

| Language | # in Canada | # outside Canada |
|--------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Nsilxcín/Okanagan | 500 | 200 |
| Nlaka'pamuxtsín/Thompson | 400 | — |
| Comox-Sliammon | 400 | — |
| Secwepemctsin/Shuswap | 300 | — |
| St'át'imcets/Lillooet | 200 | — |
| Halkomelem | 125 | — |
| (Halq'eméylem) | | |
| Nuxalk/Bella Coola | 20 | — |
| Saanich/SenĆoten | 20 | — |
| Skwxwú7mesh/Squamish | 15 | — |
| Shashishalhem/Sechelt | 10 | — |

Tsimshianic

The Tsimshianic languages, spoken in Northern BC, are divided into two groups, Nass-Gitksan and Tsimshian

The Tsimshianic Languages of Canada

| Language | # in Canada | # outside Canada |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Gitxsan/Gitsenimx | 900 | – |
| Nisga'a | 500 | 200 |
| Sm'algyax/ | 430 | 70 |
| Coast Tsimshian | | |
| Klemtu/South Tsimshian | 1 | – |

Iroquoian

Iroquoian languages were spoken in this area.

- ▶ “Toronto” from the Mohawk name *tkaronto*
- ▶ “Ontario” from Huron (now extinct)

The Iroquoian Languages of Canada

| Language | # in Canada | # outside Canada |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Mohawk | <2 000 | 200 |
| Oneida | 150 | <15 |
| Cayuga | 50 | 10 |
| Onondaga | <50 | <15 |
| Seneca | <25 | 100 |
| Tescarora | < 7 | 30 |

Wakashan

The Wakashan languages of Canada are spoken on Vancouver Island and there is one other Wakashan language spoken in Washington State.

The Wakashan languages of Canada

| Language | Speakers in Canada |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Nuu-chah-nulth/Nootka | 200 |
| Kwakw'ala/Kwakiutl | 200 |
| Haisla-Henaksiala | 200 |
| Helitsuk | 200 |
| Ditidaht/Nitinat | <10 |
| Oowekyala | 2 |

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Isolates and Contact Languages

Isolates

Two languages don't seem to be related to any other languages. We call these **language isolates**.

- ▶ Haida, spoken in the Queen Charlotte Islands in B.C., 35 speakers
- ▶ Ktunaxa/Kootenay-Kinbasket, in the Rocky Mountains in B.C., 6 speakers.

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Isolates and Contact Languages

Contact Languages

Canada also has a few **pidgins** and **creoles**.

- ▶ A pidgin is variety of language that emerges when speakers of different languages come together in a stable contact situation. Pidgins have a mix of features of both languages and no native speakers.
- ▶ A creole is a variety of language that arises when children learn pidgins as their native language.

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Isolates and Contact Languages

Chinook Jargon

- ▶ A pidgin of the Pacific Northwest combining features of Nuu-chah-nulth and Canadian French. At one point there were more than 100 000 speakers, now there's no more than a dozen.

Mitchif

- ▶ The language of the Métis aboriginal group.
- ▶ A creole combining features of Plains Cree and French.
 - Cree verbs and pronouns, French nouns.

- (1) e:gwani-gi li: sava:z ki:pa:jamwak la vjād
 they the Natives dried the meat
 The natives dried the meat.

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The Decline of Aboriginal Languages

- ▶ At the time of Columbus' arrival, there were an estimated **5,000,000** Aboriginal people in North America
- ▶ By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were less than **half a million**.
- ▶ In 1925, there were approximately **120,000** who claimed aboriginal status in Canada; today there are about **a million**.
 - Not necessarily a huge increase, just more people claiming status.

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The Decline of Aboriginal Languages

During the decline of the aboriginal peoples due to war, famine, epidemics, and essentially genocide, many languages became extinct:

- ▶ Laurentian (Iroquoian, Quebec; last speaker died in late 1500s)
- ▶ Beothuk (Isolate, NFLD; last speaker died in late 1829)
- ▶ Nicola (Athabaskan, B.C.; last speaker died in late 1800s)
- ▶ Huron-Wendat (Iroquoian, Ontario/Quebec; last speaker died in early 1900s)
- ▶ Ts'ets'aut (Athabaskan, B.C.; last speaker died in early 1900s)
- ▶ Pentlatch (Salish, B.C.; last speaker died in 1940s)

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The Decline of Aboriginal Languages

One of the darkest parts of Canadian history is the residential schools system.

For over a century, the Canadian government also funded a Church-run residential school system with the explicit purpose to "civilize" and "assimilate" the "savages" into the mainstream working class [...]. Over multiple generations, more than 150,000 Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in bleak dormitories where they were given new English or French names, **forbidden to speak their languages** or practice their traditions [...]. Most children were underfed and poorly housed, many were physically and sexually abused, and thousands perished. Those who did survive were often caught between worlds: they were denied good jobs in mainstream society because of racial discrimination and inadequate education and they were alienated from their own communities because they had been removed for so long and taught to disdain their traditional ways of life. (J. Denis 2011:21–22)

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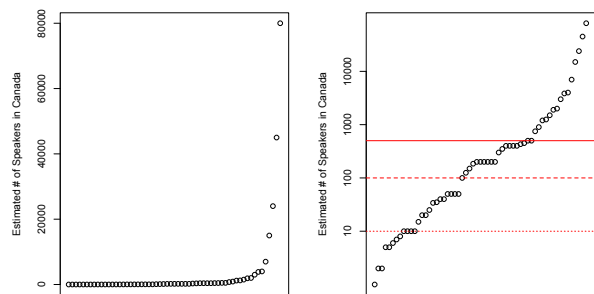
The Decline of Aboriginal Languages

One of the darkest parts of Canadian history is the residential schools system

[F]or much of the 19th and 20th centuries, the official state policy was forced assimilation[...]. Aboriginal societies were openly labelled as culturally inferior – as well as physical impediments to industrial capitalist development – and so the state embarked on an ambitious program to assimilate them into mainstream society. The pinnacle of this policy was the aforementioned residential school system. Its explicit goal was to "kill the Indian in the child" by, for example, teaching students that their traditions were "the ways of the devil", physically punishing them for practising such ways, and **seeking to erase their names, languages, religious beliefs, and "cultural toolkits" and replace them with alternatives supposedly consistent with those of Euro-Canadians.** (J. Denis 2011: 29–30)

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The Decline of Aboriginal Languages



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The Decline of Aboriginal Languages

Number of speaker's isn't everything...

UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger classifies languages at risk by means of intergenerational transfer:

- Vulnerable:** Most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains.
- Definitely endangered:** Children no longer learn the language as a mother tongue at home.
- Severely endangered:** Language is spoken by grandparents and older generations. Parent generations may understand the language but do not speak it to their children or among themselves.
- Critically endangered:** The youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently

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The Decline of Aboriginal Languages

Of 87 languages and dialects, UNESCO classifies...

- 24 as vulnerable.
- 18 as definitely endangered.
- 17 as severely endangered.
- 32 as critically endangered.

Around the world, it's estimated that 50% of languages currently spoken today and as many as 90% will disappear in your children's or grandchildren's lifetime.

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Why languages die

Government

- Choice of language of the government.
 - Encourages cultural assimilation.
 - Loss of Coptic in Egypt because of influence of Arabic.
- Choice of language of education.
 - Removes language from a major portion of a child's life; becomes non-dominant
 - Add prestige to the language of education.
- (Cultural) Genocide

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Why languages die

Economics and urbanization

- Learning the language of **trade** has major economic advantages.
 - Parent's want their children to have good jobs.
- Social mobility means fewer and fewer people are staying in small communities where local, minority languages are spoken.
 - Speaking the language of the urban centre is necessary; no opportunity to use the local language of your hometown.

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The case for saving languages

"A people's own language is a symbol of their ethnic identity as well as a repository of much of their cultural heritage; its loss threatens the life and vitality of the culture" (McKay and McKay 1987: 79).

"In native communities, [...], the transmission of a distinctive culture still depends upon the maintenance of native languages in their oral mode. Myths and legends, for example, are seldom, if ever, told in English, and the lessons they contain about history, human relationships, proper behaviour, and universal truths are thus lost to younger generations" (Leavitt 1987: 5).

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The case for saving languages

Cultural Identity

"A shared language strengthens a speech community's cultural identity and gives them a sense of cultural continuity with their ancestors and pride in their culture" (L4D pg. 218)

- An extremely strong tie between culture and language.
- If a language dies, speaker's no longer have that anchor to their culture.
- In the US, having a community language is a requirement of being recognized as a Native American group.

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The case for saving languages

Cultural Warehouse

Every language is a rich store house of culture and a unique knowledge base.

- Human history.
 - E.g. the meaning of place names.
- Local ecosystems.
 - E.g., Rich taxonomies of flora hitherto unknown to science.
- Medicinal knowledge.
- Mental maps of local terrain.
- etc.

"The loss of languages is tragic precisely because they are not interchangeable, precisely because they represent the distillation of the thoughts and communication of a people over their entire history" (Mithun 1998:189).

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Language revitalization efforts

Language Nests

Spaces for native-speaking elders to live and raise children entirely in an endangered language.

- Not schools; just places where only the language is spoken.
- Successful for revitalizing Māori.

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Language revitalization efforts

Master-apprentice learning

Pairs one young learner with a fluent elder for several hours a week.

- No formal teaching, just talking and communicating in the endangered language.
- Many languages of California are using this method.

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Language revitalization efforts

Immersion schools learning

Just like we have French immersion in Canada, where students are taught entirely in French, this has been implemented for endangered languages in a effort to revitalize.

- Highly-successful for Hawai'ian.
- Children can go from kindergarten to university entirely in Hawai'ian.

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Language revitalization efforts

Government intervention

The most successful revitalization efforts come with the full support of government.

- Māori, Hawai'ian, Inuktitut

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Little Things...



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Little Things...

Figure 16: Welcome in Three Languages (Native Canadian male, age 16)



"Visitors to the Fort Frances High School are greeted in three languages [English, French, and Anishinaabemowin]."

(J. Denis 2011:167)

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For Next Week...

1. I am extending the deadline for your final paper until Thursday, Dec. 5th (before 6pm)!
 - You can hand it in to the Department of Linguistics assignment dropbox.
 - Remember to include your Proposal/Outline/Annotated Bibliography and your Draft with your final paper!
2. Last class! :(
 - No readings.
 - Language and the Internet
3. Course evaluations! Please fill them out!!

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