



WEEK 7 - Languages in the USA

Part 1 - Languages in the United States

- The USA is a nation created by centuries of immigration, settled by speakers of many languages.
- Now there is one dominant language: English
- How did this occur?
- Why is there no widespread multilingualism in the USA?
- What official policies govern the use of languages in the US?
- What linguistic rights do individuals have to use languages other than English?

The historical population of North America

- The first settlers in the Americas came from Asia, via a land bridge that connected Siberia to Alaska.
- This established the 'indigenous' population of North, Central, and South America.
- At the time of the arrival of the first Europeans, there were 2 million Native Americans in North America, speaking 300 different languages.

Early European settlers 1500-1800

- Speakers in English, Spanish, and French
- 'Anglos' (speakers of English) are the majority group.
- But the Anglos don't try to block other groups from using their own languages in territories they have settled as pioneers.
- A period of **linguistic tolerance**.

| Language: | Spoken in: |
|-----------|-------------------------|
| German | Pennsylvania |
| Dutch | New York, New Jersey |
| French | Lousiana |
| Spanish | SW: New Mexico, Arizona |

Anglo paranoia in the 19thC

- Changing patterns of immigration cause a rise in **paranoia** among the Anglos
- Previously, immigrants were heavily:
 - North European
 - Protestant
 - English-speaking
- 19thC new immigrants increasingly from:
 - South + S.E. Europe + Irish
 - Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Jewish
 - Asian – Japanese, Chinese

The ‘first defense’ of English

- New calls for restrictions on the use and teaching of **languages other than English/LOTEs**.
- Initiatives to close down schools offering other languages as mediums of education.
- Successful: By the early 20thC, LOTEs only taught as subjects, not used as languages of instruction.
- World War I (1914-1918): attempts to prohibit ALL use of German in schools.

Case: Meyer vs. Nebraska

- The first major legal case in the US involved the use of language.
- Robert Meyer, a teacher, was charged with violating Nebraska state law by teaching German to a student.

- The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Meyer, stating that attempts to forbid the teaching of LOTEs in schools violated the 14th

19thC/early 20thC Anglo pressure on Native American/NA languages

- The government attempts to stop the transmission of NA languages
- NA children are sent to boarding schools, off-reservation, where no use of NA languages is allowed.
- Pressured to assimilate completely into Anglo customs and language.

19thC discrimination against Asian immigrants

- From 1870 on, no US citizenship was granted to Asian immigrants.
- A ban on immigration 1882-1943
- 'The Chinese Exclusion Act.'

Warnings against learning LOTEs

- Psychologists and educators tell the public that learning more than one language can cause negative effects on children's progress in school.
- Claimed that learning LOTEs is nationally divisive, and non-patriotic.
- The teaching of LOTEs is banned from elementary schools until the 1960s.

Changes from the 1960s

- A new tolerance for ethnic diversity and LOTEs
- Caused by political events and situations in education.

Event: In 1958 the Soviet Union launches the Sputnik satellite.

- New attention is drawn to the USSR.
- Foreign languages and cultures were studied by Russians as part of attempts to extend Soviet influence in Asia/Africa.

The National Defense Act of 1958

- Promotes the study of non-western languages and cultures, to compete better with Russia.
- 1961 establishment of the Peace Corps
- Volunteers were sent to 140 countries to help local people as teachers, and technical advisors.

1959 revolution in Cuba

- Large numbers of immigrants from Cuba arrive in Florida.
- It was expected that Cuban families would return to Cuba after the revolution was over.
- A decision was taken to educate young Cuban children in both English and Spanish, to make them bilingual.
- Very successful new bilingual education programs.

1968 The Bilingual Education Act

- Proposed by the governor of Texas.
- To deal with the very high drop-out rate of Mexican-American students from schools in Texas (89%)
- Inspiration: the bilingual education programs in Florida.

The Ann Arbor Decision

- Martin Luther King School, Ann Arbor, Michigan
- African American students were not making good progress in school, often classed as having learning deficiencies.
- Parents filed a legal suit against the school.
- Claimed the school was failing to address **cultural, social, economic, and linguistic** factors specific to AA students.
- The judge ruled that economic, social, and economic factors were not legally relevant. But the **linguistic factors** might be.

- Linguists in court described many significant differences between **Standard American English/SAE** and **African American Vernacular English/AAVE**.
- The court ruled that teachers in the Martin Luther King School should get a better understanding of how differences between SAE and AAVE might cause difficulties when SAE was used in the classroom.
- Decision: teachers should learn more about AAVE, not treat AAVE negatively as sub-standard speech
 - Not told to teach AAVE but to get a better understanding of the difference

The Native American Languages Act

- 1990, a major change in government policy toward Native American languages.
- The Act states that:
 - 'the policy of the United States is to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice and develop Native American languages.'

The second defense of English

- The **US English/USE movement** is founded, 1983
- Three major *goals*:
 - (1) Have English recognized as the OL of the USA
 - (2) Stop all bilingual education programs
 - (3) Stop all government services in LOTEs
- *Claims* of the US English movement(the status of English in the US is being threatened, especially by Spanish)
 - (1) New immigrants are reluctant to learn English, especially Hispanic immigrants
 - (2) New immigrants are not integrating as Americans.
 - (3) National unity requires the speaking of one (and only one) language by the population. Linguistic diversity causes divisions in society.

- (4) Bilingual education is divisive, expensive, and unsuccessful, and impedes children's cognitive development.
- (5) Government services in LOTEs are very expensive.
- (6) If the speaking of Spanish is supported any further, it might lead to demands for official bilingualism in the USA.
- Goal (1) has never been successful
 - Campaigns for English to be the OL of individual states
 - 1986 Prop 63: English should be the OL of the state of California.
 - 73% of voters in CA voted in favor of Prop 63.
- Now 30 states have recognized English as their OL.
- What does this actually mean for everyday life? (Language rights in the workplace? In schools? Government materials in LOTEs?)
 - Vary from state to state. (e.g. in CA, the words are vague)

The Resistance (to USE)

- The **Spanish American League Against Discrimination (SALAD)**
 - 'SALAD' issues an important statement: '**English Plus**'
 - "We won't accept English only for our children. We want English Plus. English plus math, science, equal educational opportunities, and competence in the home language."
- A new nationwide coalition is formed: **EPIC - The English Plus Information Clearing-house**
- EPIC's claims/position on English, LOTEs, and immigrants in the US
 1. English is very important for all Americans for national unity and personal success.
 2. Immigrants all over the USA want to learn English
 - a. At the time of Prop 63, there were 40,000 people in Los Angeles on waitlists for English classes.
 3. Being American does not require people to be monolingual or monocultural.

- a. There are many successful, patriotic, bilingual, and bicultural Americans.
- 4. Bilingual education/BE can help the children of new immigrants learn English more efficiently
 - a. Most BE are **transitional**, helping children make a successful transition from their home language to proficiency in English.
 - b. BE programs are also not as expensive as suggested by USE

Prop 227 in CA

- 1998: Bilingual education programs should no longer be supported by the state of California.
- US English 'won', with 61% of the vote.
- The result: a very heavy reduction, but not full elimination, of BE programs in CA.
- From 29% down to 6%.
- Parents are still allowed to request BE for their children in schools with heavy concentrations of speakers of a particular LOTE, e.g. Spanish.
- Similar propositions in other states (e.g. Arizona, Prop 203) eliminated such waivers and criminalized the use of LOTEs in the classroom.

Positive moves: defending multilingualism

- **Hawaii**: English and Hawaiian as co-OLs
- **New Mexico**: a bilingual state – the state government can use Spanish in any way deemed useful for the state.
- **Alaska**: 20 Native American languages are recognized as co-official languages with English.
- **Louisiana**: the use of French is encouraged in education, commerce, and tourism.

Yniguez vs. Mofford

- A legal case in Arizona, 1998
- Arizona had established in English as the OL of the state in 1998.

- Two individuals are concerned about the continued use of Spanish in their jobs. Is it illegal?
 - Jaime Gutierrez: senator
 - Maria Kelly Yniguez: state insurance officer
- Legal suit against the state of Arizona.
 - Claim: limited to English restrict their freedom of speech
- Ruling by the judge:
 - Official English regulations only constrain official acts of the state government as an organization, not the daily activities of its employees.
- Yniguez, Gutierrez, and others could continue to use Spanish in their work interactions.

Garcia vs. the San Francisco Spun Steak Company, 1990

- Two factory workers were told to speak only English.
- They sued the company for unfair treatment.
- The legal question: Can companies impose English-only restrictions on their employees in CA?
- Final court ruling: The factory owners/management allowed to require that employees use only English while at work.

Bilingual Education revisited in CA, 2016

- Prop 227 inhibits most BE programs in CA in 1998.
- Prop 58, 2016. Allow schools to offer BE if they want to.
- Result: Prop 58 wins, with 74% of the vote.
- The difference between 1998 and 2016:
 - 1998 – BE programs not working well in urban areas. Many Hispanic voters were disappointed at the results.
 - Since 1998, much improvement in BE programs.
 - BE now very popular + big waiting lists.

- BE re-termed '**dual language immersion**' programs

Dual language immersion programs

- Increasingly popular among middle and upper-class parents.
- Major change of perspective:
 - From 'language as a problem' to 'language as a resource' - L2 skills are seen as an asset.
 - A new mentality that bilingualism is academically enriching and should be nurtured, not suppressed.

The Comparative costs of Bilingual Education

| Programs | Costs |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Pull-out supplementary ESL classes | \$875 |
| Special Education Programs | \$2,400 |
| Bilingual Education Programs | \$60 |

Conclusion: Bilingual education is much less expensive than other options to help L.E.P children learn English more effectively.

Major themes

- Tensions between the dominance of one language (English) and the existence of other languages in the USA.
- Part I: English as an Official Language, support for LOTEs, the US English Movement.
- Part II: Language in education
- Challenges for L1 speakers of LOTEs and dialects of English in classrooms where only SAE is used.

California

- 1 out of every 4 residents of CA was born outside the USA – L1 speakers of LOTEs
- 1/3 of the total foreign-born population in the US

- 25% of children in CA are classed as having **Limited English Proficiency (L.E.P.)**
= 43% of the total LEP children in the USA
→ CA has many young people whose L1 is not English, and who are struggling to learn English well in school.

Language in education

- Issues also for young speakers of different varieties of English.
- Regional and ethnic dialects of English.
 - **Appalachian English**
 - **African American English**
 - **Pennsylvania German English**
- What is the best way to help children from different language backgrounds succeed in school? 🙌

Language in the USA Part 2: **African American Vernacular English/AAVE** and language in education

What is AAVE?

- **Prototypically** the variety used in an informal speech by young, urban African Americans from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- African Americans from educated middle-class backgrounds use SAE.
- AAVE patterns are spreading into other ethnic groups as a unifying symbol of youth identity associated with hip-hop and rap.

Some terminology

- **Standard American English/SAE** is also referred to as:
 - **Mainstream American English**

- **Academic English**
- **AAVE** is also known as:
 - **African American language**
 - **Ebonics**
- We use 'SAE' and 'AAVE' as these are the most commonly used terms.

Major issues

- Combatting negative attitudes towards AAVE and other regional dialects of English as sub-standard 'incorrect' forms of English with no rules.
- Language-related challenges in the classroom for L1 speakers of AAVE (and other regional dialects of English, e.g. Appalachian English).
- What are the origins of AAVE? Where do the differences between AAVE and SAE come from?

Differences between AAVE and SAE

Grammar: omission of the verb 'be'

- AAVE often omits the verb 'be' in the present tense:
 - 'She _ real skinny.'
 - 'You _ the boss.'
 - 'Mary _ in the yard right now.'
 - 'We _ havin' a party.'
- Is this random grammar?
 - No! There are rules governing 'be' omission.
- 'be' is not omitted at the end of a sentence:
 - 'I know who he is.' NOT: 'I know who he _.'
 - 'How dirty you are.' NOT: 'How dirty you _.'
 - 'I wonder what it is.' NOT: 'I wonder what it _'

- Interesting discovery – AAVE only allows ‘be’ to be omitted in the same places that SAE allows ‘be’ to be ‘contracted’.
 - ‘She is really nice.’ → ‘She’s really nice.’
 - ‘You are the boss.’ → ‘You’re the boss.’
 - ‘I am here’ → ‘I’m here.’
- No contraction is allowed at the ends of sentences:
 - ‘I know who he is.’ NOT: ‘I know who he’s.’
 - ‘How dirty you are.’ NOT: ‘How dirty you’re.’
 - ‘Yes, I am.’ NOT: ‘Yes, I’m’
- When SAE allows ‘be’ contraction, AAVE allows ‘be’ omission.
 - AAVE ‘be’ omission is (a) clearly rule-governed, and (b) like ‘be’ contraction in SAE.

Contraction in SAE becomes an omission in AAVE.
- Contraction in SAE becomes omission in AAVE

Grammar: ‘invariant be’

- use of ‘be’ with ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘he’ etc:
 - ‘Lou usually be here around 9.’
 - ‘Sometime he be sleeping all day.’
 - ‘She be happy’
- AAVE ‘invariant be’ is only used for:
 - (1) actions which are habits = repeated: ‘He usually be here around 9.’
 - (2) long-lasting situations/states: ‘He be married since 1974.’
 - NOT used for short-lasting states: ‘She be busy right now.’ Instead: ‘She _ busy right now.’

Different types of ‘Aspect’

- Tense markers like 'will' and '-ed' indicate when an event occurs – in the past, present, or future.
- Aspect markers emphasize the way that an event occurs in different ways:
 - (a) '**habitual aspect**' – for repeated actions
 - (b) '**progressive aspect**' - ongoing actions
 - (c) '**completive aspect**' – emphasizes the completion of an event
 - (d) '**remote aspect**' – emphasizes that an event took place quite some time ago

Aspect in AAVE

- [1] '**invariant be**' = habitual aspect
- [2] '**done**' = completive aspect:
 - 'They done sol' all the good ones.'
 - 'Jerome done los' all his money.'
- [3] '**been**' = remote aspect:
 - 'He been talk' with us about that.'
- [4] '**steady**' = continuative aspect
 - 'She steady complainin' about somethin'.'

Conclusions

- AAVE does not result from a random simplification of SAE.
- AAVE has complex, different grammar.
- The rules of grammar and pronunciation in AAVE are just like rules found in other languages.
- Similar conclusions can be shown for other strong dialect forms of English (and other languages).

The origins of AAVE?

- Certain special characteristics of AAVE are also found in:

- Southern US English
- British English
- Pidgins and Creoles
- Two theories of its origin: (a) the English Origins Hypothesis, (b) the Creolist Hypothesis

The English Origins/Anglicist Hypothesis

- African slaves acquired English from British slave traders/owners
- Features of British dialects transferred to early black English in North America
- Later influenced by southern US English, adding special southern features

The Creolist Hypothesis

- Pidgins and Creoles developed among African slaves in the Caribbean
- These languages were brought to the US and used by later generations of slaves.
- In the 20thC, **de-creolization** changed the Creole and made it more like SAE.
- But some early Creole features remained.

Which hypothesis is correct?

- Difficult to know, due to the lack of good historical evidence on how early slaves spoke in the US.
- Not often an important issue for the AA community, until the **Ebonics Controversy**.
- Is AAVE a form of English, or derived from African languages, originally as a Creole?

Research can help

- Continuing, careful research into AAVE can help identify the problems that young speakers have in learning SAE.
- Teachers can use this knowledge in the classroom to help students acquire skills in SAE, reading and writing.

The Ebonics Controversy

Background: The Ann Arbor Decision, 1974

- Martin Luther King School, Michigan
- Judge rules that the school has to address the language problems affecting young AAVE speakers in the classroom.
- Teachers are instructed to learn more about AAVE, but little useful help is given.
- The initiative was abandoned after two years.

Oakland School Board, a similar initiative

- The **Ebonics resolution** was passed and publicized in December 1996.
- ‘**Ebonics**’/‘African Language Systems’ (ALS) derives from African (Niger-Congo) languages, and **is not a variety of English.**
 - → Need for **bilingual education** for young speakers of ALS/Ebonics

Important consequences

- **Financial** – if Ebonics/ALS is a separate language, schools with AA students would qualify for government support of bilingual education.
- Immediate government reaction:
- Richard Riley (Secretary of State):
 - ‘**Ebonics**’ **is not a different language. It is a dialect of English – ‘black English.**’
 - ‘**No bilingual education support is justified.**’

Social consequences

- Among the AA community, outrage and strong criticism of the Ebonics initiative.
- Jesse Jackson and other AA leaders:
 - ‘**AAVE is not a separate language.**’
 - ‘**AAVE should not be used to teach in the classroom.**’

- Worry: AA students would be taught in AAVE and not acquire SAE.
- The intentions of the Ebonics Initiative were often misrepresented in the media.
- Confusion due to the wording of the 1996 Ebonics Statement.

Two Ebonics statements

- 1997, January, a new Ebonics declaration
- Less provocative, intended to calm the public down, and clarify its position.
- [1996] '**AA students will be instructed in their primary language and English**'.
(implies their primary language is not a form of English)
- [1997] The goal is '**to move students from the language patterns they bring to school to English proficiency.**'
- 1997 statement stresses the learning of English + no longer says students will be taught with AAVE.
- But the damage had been done...
- Despite the new wording, the public had decided to strongly oppose the Ebonics Initiative *in any form*.
- The Oakland proposal for increased recognition of the role of AAVE in schools was abandoned.
- For some time after this, educators hesitated to attempt further innovations in the classroom.
- Until recent times...

Positive new approaches

- New programs making positive progress in the 21st century
- **Bi-dialectalism**: treat SAE and AAVE as two equally legitimate dialects, appropriate for use in different domains of life.
 - SAE: for reading, writing, and communication with non-AAVE speakers
 - AAVE: for family and friends
 - Both dialects are presented as having value.

- The promotion of bi-dialectalism, code-switching, and the use of contrastive analysis is proving highly effective.
 - **Code-switching** - Young speakers of AAVE are taught to code-switch between AAVE and SAE, when appropriate.
 - **Contrastive analysis** - Teachers compare and contrast differences between AAVE and SAE in grammar and pronunciation.
 - Students were taught to identify differences and how to translate between SAE/AAVE.
 - Positive psychological effects toward the home language AAVE.
 - Improved acquisition of SAE, skills in reading/writing.
- AAVE/SAE bi-dialectalism is similar to stable bi-dialectalism in Germany, Italy, China, etc.