The differences in language that I found from my surveyed population (a population of 6) were slightly surprising, but nonetheless made sense. I found every data point with a formal interview. My Excel data table is on the final page.

My first data topic, the pronunciation of the word “pecan”, gave me vastly varying results. The test subjects who’ve lived a large portion of their life (25+ years) (NM, JM) in urban Chicago pronounce it as [picɑn], whereas almost everyone else said it differently. My youngest member of the population, XB, grew up with his mother, AB, who says [pəˈcɑn], and (likely because of this) he says it that way as well. KR, the only test subject to come from an extremely rural origin, says [picæ̃n].

My second topic had to do with the difference between pronunciations of “caught” and “cot”. The results are crystal clear: those that grew up in the urban Chicago area say “caught’ as [kɔt] and “cot” as [kɑt], and those who did not grow up there say both as [kɑt]. I think this would change slightly with a larger survey population, showing that you don’t have to be from Chicago to say “caught” as [kɔt].

My third data topic showed that every one of my test subjects had a clear distinction between “pin” ([pɪn]) and pen ([pεn]). This is likely due to the fact that they’re all from a rather similar geographic area.

My fourth, sixth, and eighth data topic revealed distinctions in language across age. My younger members of the population tended to put stress on the first syllable of the word “Thanksgiving,” while the older members put it on the second. My youngest member, XB, uses the word “firefly” where the older members used “lightning bug.” Perhaps firefly just sounds cooler and/or more extreme to him (this is a quality that appeals to this particular person). The population members that were more than 30 years older than me (NM & JM) did not use the word “like” as a verb of communication, whereas the comparatively younger members did so (less frequently as the age of subjects increased). These age differences likely arose due to the older members having grown up with different language usage, and not needing to change; the younger members grew up with some of the words that the older members didn’t tend to use.

To conclude, I must disclose that every member of my test population was a native English speaker, and pretty much monolingual. I am socially close enough to all of them such that the interviews with them were not made uncomfortable by questioning, and so I don’t believe that that could’ve skewed the results at all. The sociocultural language differences that this assignment revealed were truly thought-provoking, and represent peoples’ quirks rather well.

