



sociolinguistics

For MA students
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outline

- ▶ Language attitudes: attitudes to accents and attitudes to language
- ▶ Stereotypes and sociolinguistic universals.
- ▶ Language choice in multilingual communities
- ▶ Code mixing/switching
- ▶ Translanguaging
- ▶ Language and nationality

Language attitudes

- ▶ **Language attitudes** refer to socially shaped evaluative orientations toward languages, varieties, accents, or their speakers.
They involve:
- ▶ **Cognitive components** (beliefs and stereotypes)
- ▶ **Affective components** (feelings such as pride, shame, irritation)
- ▶ **Behavioral components** (discrimination, accommodation, ridicule)
- ▶ Language attitudes are central to the reproduction of **social hierarchies**, **group boundaries**, and **linguistic inequality**.

Accents

- **Which English accent do you associate with intelligence or education?**
- **Which accent sounds friendly or trustworthy to you?**
- **Which accent do you expect to sound less serious or less competent?**
- **Where do you think these judgments come from?**
 - School
 - Media
 - Personal experience
 - Popular culture

► 21 Accents

Accents

Which accent feels “neutral” or “standard” to you? Why?

- **At which accent did you first smile or laugh?**
 - **Did any accent trigger a stereotype in your mind?**
 - **If yes, which one?**
 - **Did your evaluation change once the speaker remained the same person?**
- ▶ Same speaker. Different accent.
What changed:
 - ▶ The voice
 - ▶ The identity
 - ▶ *Your judgment*

Which accent would you prefer them to use? Why?

What do people evaluate?

Danish is not a language, but a throat disease,' wrote one Norwegian respondent in reply to a 1950s postal questionnaire asking for Scandinavian people's opinions of the relative aesthetic qualities of Swedish, Danish and Norwegian.

Attitudes towards languages and accents

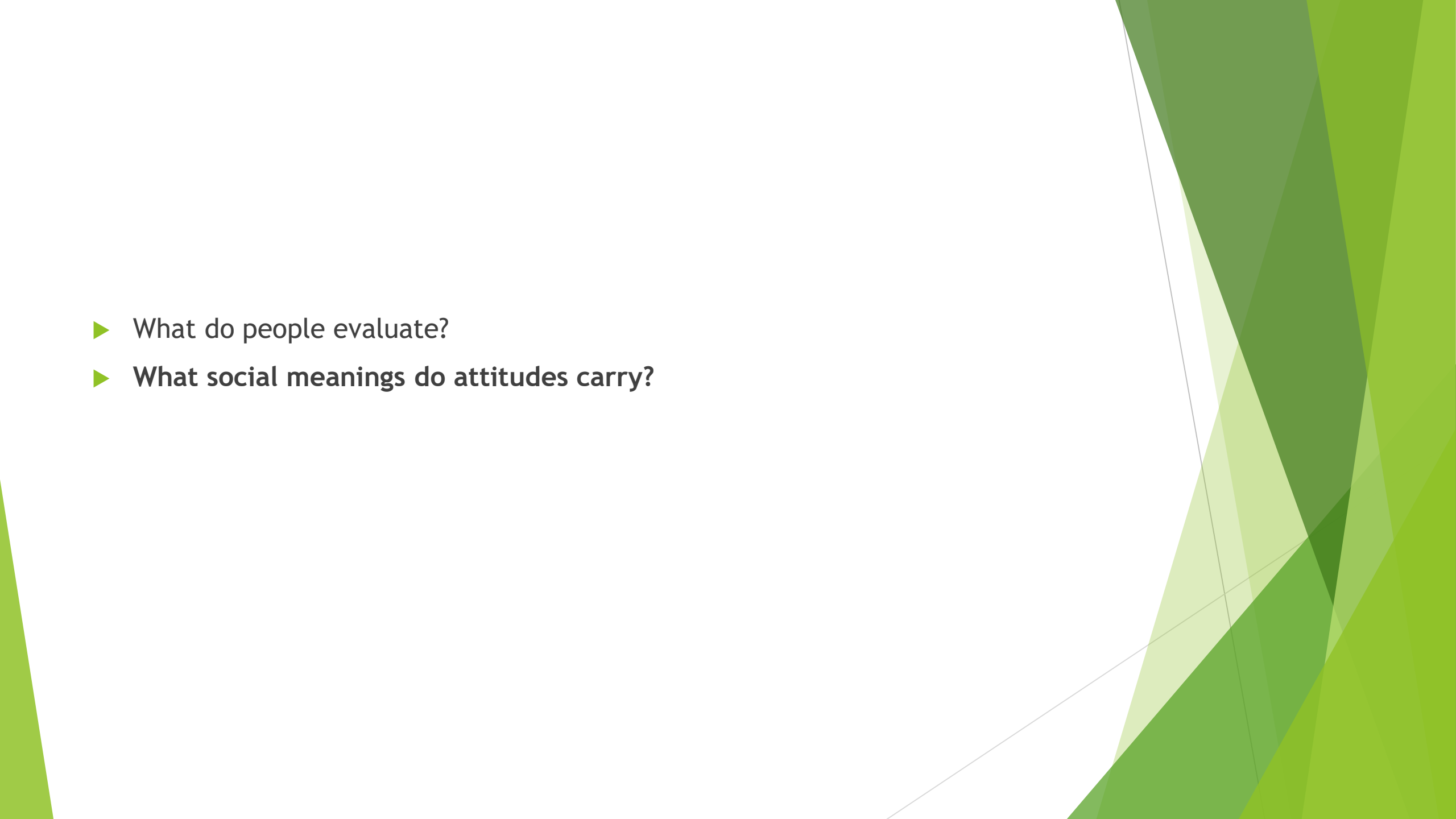
► Example 1: 'So I think across the island the stronger your accent, the more working class it's considered'

► Example 2: 'Here in [REDACTED], it depends on the language.'

If you're an anglophone speaking French with an accent than it's likely you'll receive ridicule.

If you're a francophone speaking English with an accent than people don't even bat an eye at it.

According to some of my anglophone friends, if you speak French with an accent than you'll usually get the same reaction to anglophones; but if you speak English with that accent, Anglos are more likely to be kind'

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- The background of the slide features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are concentrated on the right side of the slide, creating a modern, layered effect.
- ▶ What do people evaluate?
 - ▶ **What social meanings do attitudes carry?**

Accent modification

- ▶ In 2007, Scottish actor Sean Connery accused then British Prime Minister Gordon Brown of deliberately softening his Scottish accent to appeal to English voters. Connery remarked that Brown was attempting to “ride two horses” politically, navigating competing national audiences.
- ▶ The journalist suggested that Brown was seeking to “disguise his native tongue”, raising questions about:
 - ▶ the social meaning of accent modification
 - ▶ perceptions of authenticity and betrayal
 - ▶ the relationship between accent, power, and legitimacy

How Is This Viewed?

Anglo-British context

Accent is tightly linked to:

- class
- region
- trustworthiness

Accent modification may be perceived as *inauthentic* or *opportunistic*.

•French tradition

Accent reduction is often associated with:

- education
- professionalism
- upward mobility

It may be **praised rather than condemned**.

For reflection

- ▶ How could you test whether people's opinions about a language are based on the intrinsic linguistic features of the language (such as its sounds and its grammatical patterns) or derive from non-linguistic factors such as the social and political status of the speakers?

Thank you!