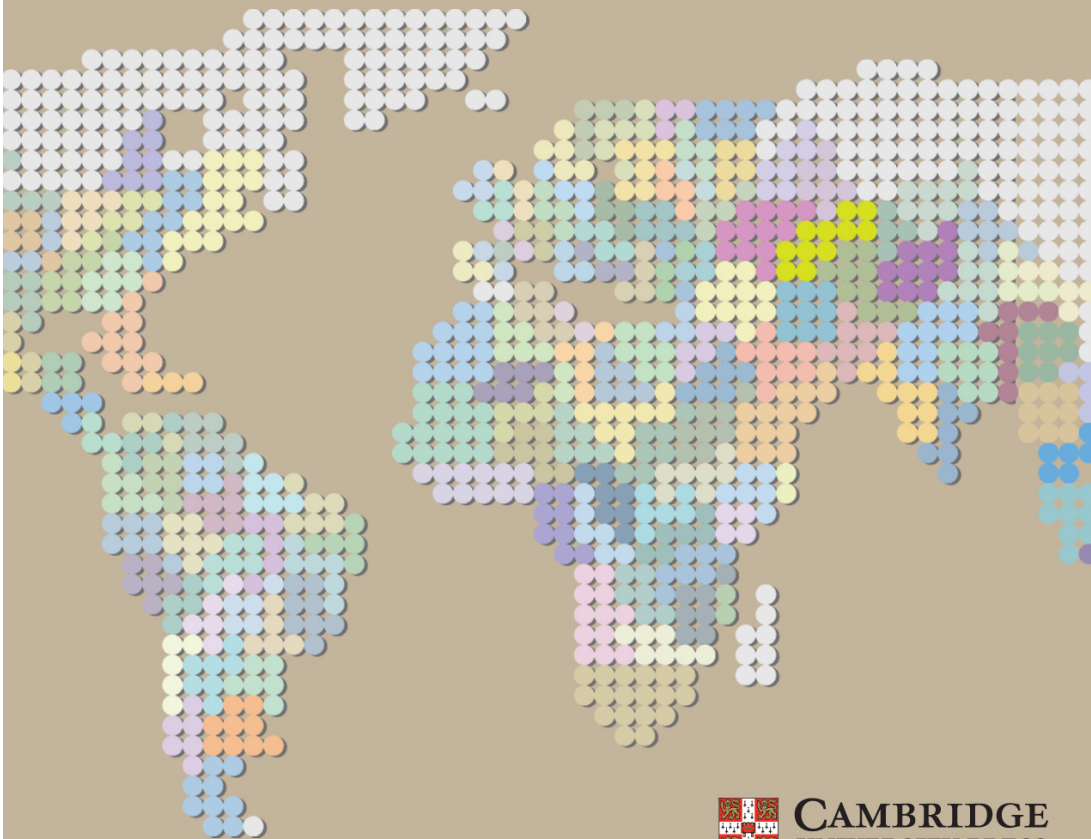


Volume 1 Number 1

Journal of Linguistic Geography

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

SHAMELESS ADVERTISING
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NB: Bill Labov is now the
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Harvard University

Historical Sociolinguistics & Historical Folk Linguistics

Dennis R. Preston

*Oklahoma State University &
Michigan State University Emeritus*

North American Research Network
in Historical Sociolinguistics
July 21-23

*LSA Institute
University of Kentucky*



- 1) What is “Folk Linguistics”?
- 2) How is it relevant to Sociolinguistics?
- 3) Historical Folk Linguistics and Historical Sociolinguistics
- 4) Data **in**, **of**, and **from** the discourse
- 5) Sample data and analyses

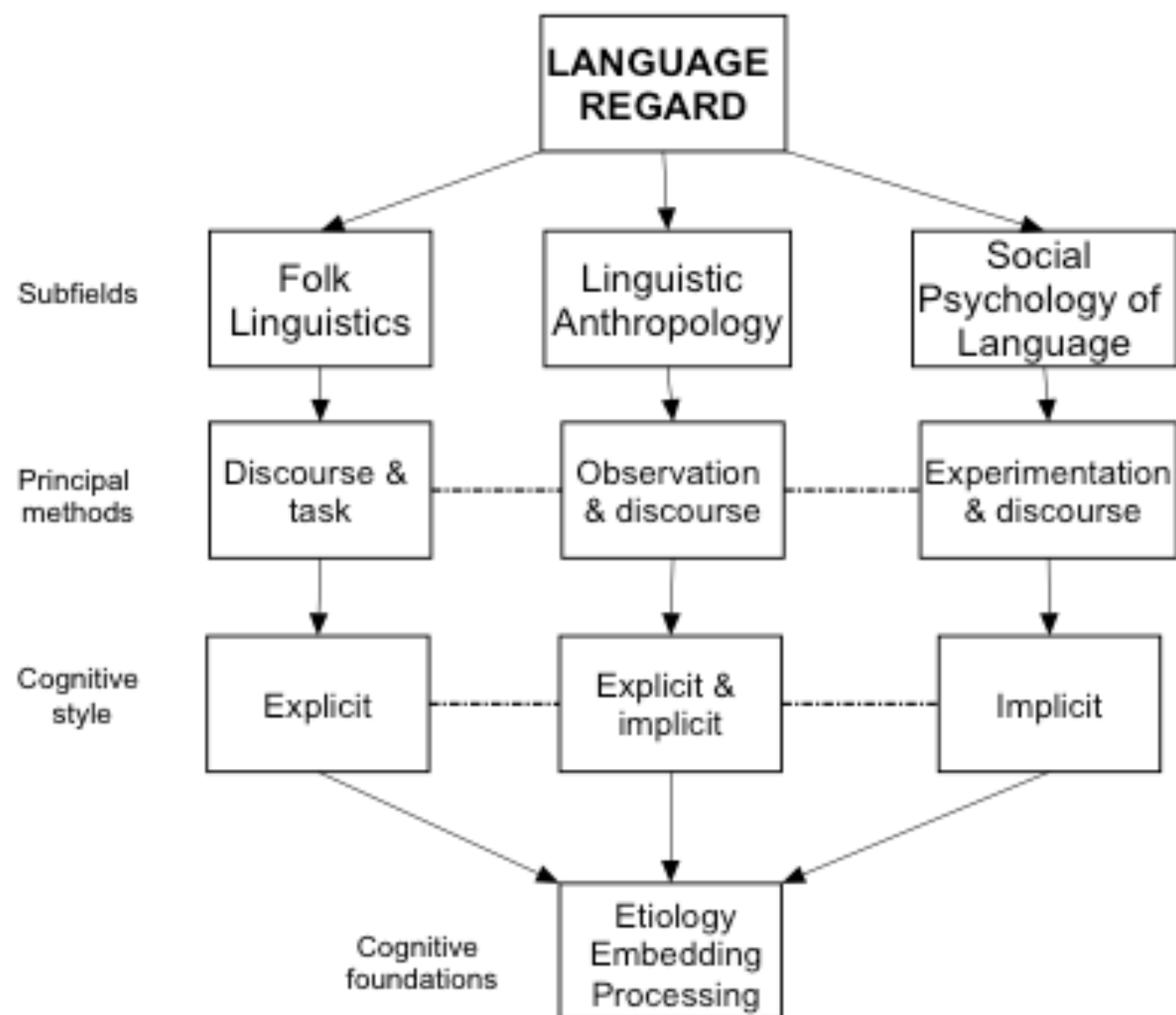
WHAT IS IT?

Research into folk linguistics, ideologies, and attitudes seeks to collect and analyze:

What people believe about language, how they react to “instances” of it, and how they act on those beliefs and reactions.

Traditionally,

- Folk linguistics → beliefs
- Language ideology → their organization and repercussions in culture
- Attitudes → evaluation



IS IT RELEVANT?

SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Analyses of variable and socially
meaningful data



FOLK LINGUISTICS

Analyses of comments on, the cultural
organization of, and reactions to language

The Relevance of Folk Linguistics to Sociolinguistics I:

“Labovian” sociolinguistics (i.e., language variation and change)

The Evaluation Problem. The theory of language change must establish empirically the subjective correlates of the several layers and variables in a heterogeneous structure. **Such subjective correlates ... cannot be deduced from the place of the variables within linguistic structure.**

(Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog 1968:186)

The Relevance of Folk Linguistics to Sociolinguistics II:

“Hymesian” sociolinguistics (i.e., ethnographic approaches to variety)

If the community’s own theory of linguistic repertoire and speech is considered (**as it must be in any serious ethnographic account**), matters become all the more complex and interesting.

(Hymes 1972:39)

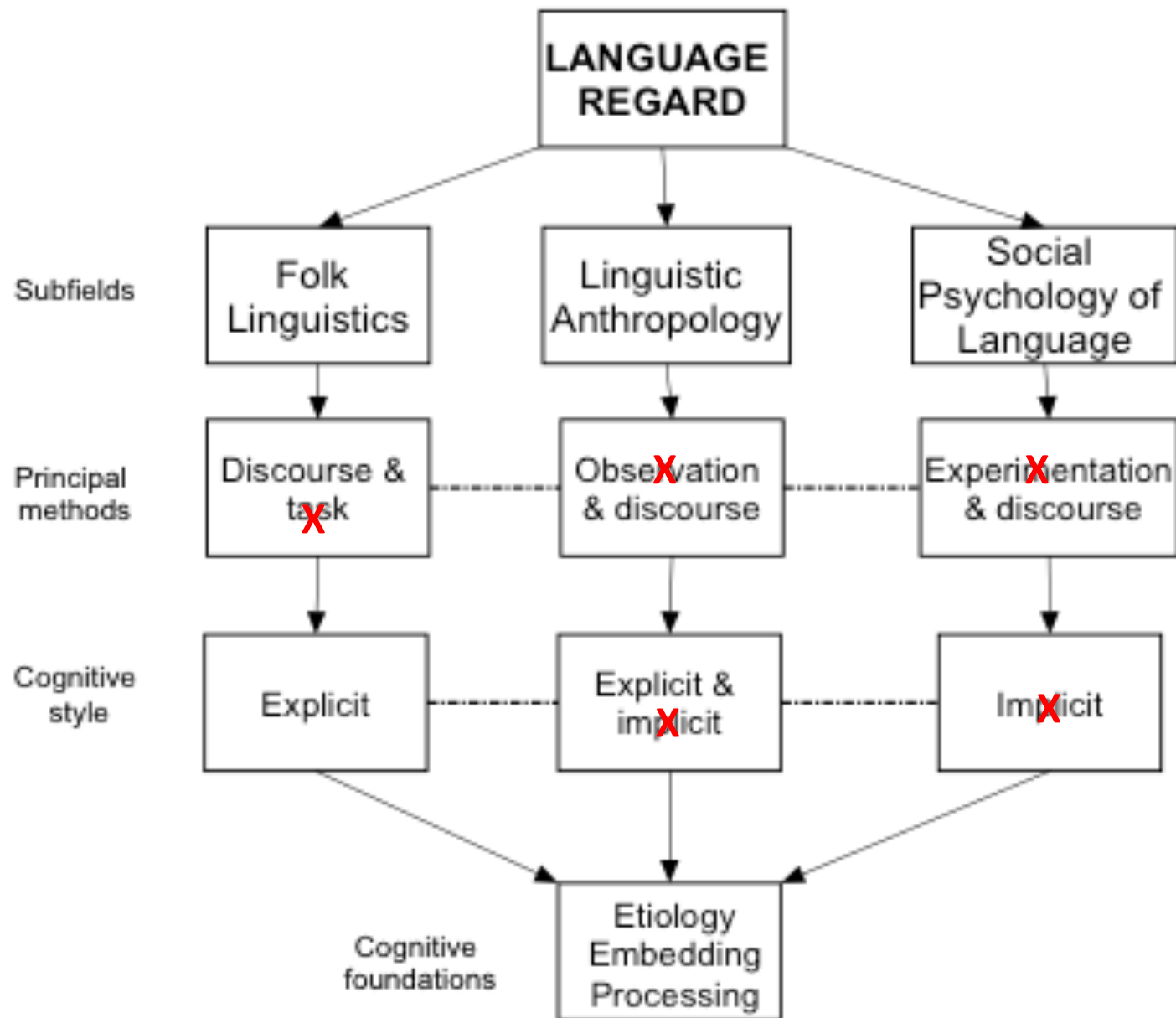
HISTORICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Analyses of variable and socially
meaningful data from the past



HISTORICAL FOLK LINGUISTICS

Analyses of comments on, the cultural
organization of, and reactions to language from
the past



THE DATA WE ARE INTERESTED IN:

- 1) **In** the discourse; “classic” historical sociolinguistic data
- 2) **From** the discourse; overt folk linguistic comment (“talk about talk”)
- 3) **Of** the discourse; historical sociolinguistic data with folk linguistic implications

DATA **FROM** THE DISCOURSE HISTORICAL FOLK LINGUISTICS (NOT RELEVANT TO HISTORICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS?)

If we turn back to what has been said, we have seen, on a narrow scientific question, how the people, in their utterances, have a definite and, I believe, decidedly true view in three respects.

First, that not an accidental, but a necessary bond ties the name to the object which carries it.

Second, that all that is can also be named, i.e., understood, and, conversely, what is not is also not entitled to a name.

Third, that with the naming, i.e., the understanding of a thing, humankind subdues it, gaining power over it.

Polle. 1898. *Wie denkt das Volk über die Sprache*, 124

**AMERICAN NOTES
FOR
GENERAL CIRCULATION
AND
PICTURES FROM ITALY**

BY
CHARLES DICKENS

WITH 8 ILLUSTRATIONS
BY MARCUS STONE, R.A.

LONDON
CHAPMAN & HALL, Ltd.
1913

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO
**THOSE FRIENDS OF MINE
IN AMERICA**

WHO, GIVING ME A WELCOME I MUST EVER
GRATEFULLY AND PROUDLY REMEMBER,
**LEFT MY JUDGEMENT
FREE**

AND WHO, LOVING THEIR COUNTRY, CAN BEAR
THE TRUTH, WHEN IT IS TOLD GOOD
HUMOUREDLY, AND IN A
KIND SPIRIT.



DATA **FROM** (AND **IN**) THE DISCOURSE HISTORICAL FOLK SOCIOLINGUISTICS

“Dinner, if you please,” said I to the waiter. “When?” said the waiter.

“As quick as possible,” said I.

“Right away?” said the waiter.

After a moment’s hesitation, I answered “No,” at hazard.

“NOT right away?” cried the waiter, with an amount of surprise that made me start.

I looked at him doubtfully, and returned, “No; I would rather have it in this private room. I like it very much.”

At this, I really thought the waiter must have gone out of his mind: as I believe he would have done, but for the interposition of another man, who whispered in his ear, “Directly.”

“Well! and that’s a fact!” said the waiter, looking helplessly at me:

“Right away.”

I saw now that “Right away” and “Directly” were one and the same thing

DATA FROM THE DISCOURSE

HISTORICAL FOLK LINGUISTICS RELEVANT TO HISTORICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

The first mention of a sociolinguistic “fact”
about English?

priata. Sicut in australibus Angliæ⁵ finibus, et præcipue circa Devoniam, Anglica lingua hodie magis videtur incomposita: ea tamen, vetustatem⁶ longe plus redolens, borealibus insulæ partibus per crebras Dacorum et Norwagiensium⁷ irruptiones valde corruptis, originalis linguae proprietatem, et antiquum loquendi modum magis observat. Cujus etiam rei non solum

Language of the South of England, of Devonshire especially, purer than that of the North.

Regional “purity”

...in the southern parts of England [...] the speech is nowadays purer than elsewhere. It may be that it retains more of the features of the original language and the old ways of speaking English, whereas the northern regions have been greatly corrupted by the Danish and Norwegian invasions.

Gerald of Wales 1984 [1193] *The Journey through Wales and the Description of Wales*. Trans. by Lewis Thorpe. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, p. 231.

Language & “character”

Richard Verstegan (c.1550–1620) notes that the “special virtues of English were to be found in the Saxon monosyllables whose preservation reflected the steadfast and conservative character of the people who spoke the language.”

Bailey, Richard W. *1991 Images of English*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 39.

Prescription

BETTER AMERICAN SPEECH WEEK

OCT. 27, to NOV. 2, 1918

ONE LANGUAGE FOR A
UNITED PEOPLE

SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF
YOUR FLAG.

SLOVENLY SPEECH BESPEAKS
A SLOVENLY MIND

WATCH YOUR SPEECH

PLEDGE:

I love the
UNITED STATES
OF
AMERICA.

I love my country's LANGUAGE.
I PROMISE:

- (1) that I will not dishonor my country's speech by leaving off the last syllables of words;
- (2) that I will say a good American "yes" and "no" in place of an Indian grunt "um-hum" and "nup-um" or a foreign "ya" or "yeh" and "nope";
- (3) that I will do my best to improve American speech by avoiding loud harsh tones, by enunciating distinctly and speaking pleasantly, clearly and sincerely;
- (4) that I will try to make my country's language beautiful for the many boys and girls of foreign nations who come here to live;
- (5) that I will learn to articulate correctly one word a day for one year.

Better American Speech Committee
Chicago Woman's Club
410 S. Michigan Ave.
Chairman
Katherine Knowles Robbins

Sociolinguistics (à la Trump)

[T]he American of today is much more honestly English, in any sense that Shakespeare would have understood, than the so-called Standard English of England. He believes, and on very plausible grounds, that American is better on all counts – clearer, more rational, and above all, more charming.

Mencken, H. L. 1936 *The American Language*. 4th ed., Corrected enlarged and rewritten. New York: Knopf, 608-609.

TWO REMAINING POINTS:

1) Folk linguistic data that allows for the consideration of historical sociolinguistic data at levels less frequently considered. (In)

2) The possibility of retrieving “implicit” data from the historical folk linguistic record. (Of)

Everybody talks to you or to anybody else who hits his fancy. If you are an Englishman, he expects that that railroad is pretty much like an English railroad. If you say “No,” he says “Yes?” (interrogatively), and asks in what respect they differ. You enumerate the heads of difference, one by one, and he says “Yes?” (still interrogatively) to each. Then he guesses that you don’t travel faster in England; and on your replying that you do, says “Yes?” again (still interrogatively), and it is quite evident, don’t believe it. After a long pause he remarks, partly to you, and partly to the knob on the top of his stick, that “Yankees are reckoned to be considerable of a go--ahead people too;” upon which *you* say “Yes,” and then *he* says “Yes” again (affirmatively this time); and upon your looking out of window, tells you that behind that hill, and some three miles from the next station, there is a clever town in a smart lo-ca-tion, where he expects you have concluded to stop. Your answer in the negative naturally leads to more questions in reference to your intended route (always pronounced rout); and wherever you are going, you invariably learn that you can’t get there without immense difficulty and danger, and that all the great sights are somewhere else.

Takesi Sibata: “It appears to be natural for forms which differ from those which one usually uses to attract one’s attention” (1971:374).

...and for forms which differ from those which one expects to hear.... (Preston 2005:148)

At dinner, there is nothing to drink upon the table, but great jugs full of cold water. **Nobody says anything, at any meal, to anybody.** All the passengers are very dismal, and seem to have tremendous secrets weighing on their minds. There is **no conversation, no laughter, no cheerfulness, no sociality,** except in spitting; and that is done in **silent fellowship** round the stove, when the meal is over. Every man sits down, dull and languid; swallows his fare as if breakfasts, dinners, and suppers, were necessities of nature never to be coupled with recreation or enjoyment; and having bolted his food in a gloomy silence, bolts himself, in the same state. But for these animal observances, you might suppose the whole male portion of the company to be the melancholy ghosts of departed bookkeepers, who had fallen dead at the desk: such is their weary air of business and calculation. Undertakers on duty would be sprightly beside them; and a collation of funeral-baked meats, in comparison with these meals, would be a sparkling festivity. The people are all alike, too. There is no diversity of character. They travel about on the same errands, **say and do the same things in exactly the same manner,** and follow in the same dull cheerless round.

“OF” (Implicit historical folk linguistics?)

I Promise:

(1) that I will not dishonor my country’s language by leaving off the last syllables of words;

Presupposes that leaving off the last syllables of words “dishonors” the language (Levinson 1983; note the “negation” test)

(2) that I will say a good American “yes” and “no” in place of an Indian grunt “um-hum” and “nup-um” or a foreign “ya” and “yeh” and “nope”;

Presupposes that “Indian grunt” and foreign ways of speaking are not “good American.” (See Libert 2016 for a discussion of the presuppositional character of “instead of.”)

(3) That I will do my best to improve American speech by avoiding loud harsh tones, by enunciating distinctly and speaking pleasantly, etc...;

Presupposes that enunciating distinctly etc... will “improve” American speech (& that it can be “improved”; see Fillmore 1971 “verbs of judging”)

.....

(5) I will learn to articulate correctly one word a day for a year.

Presupposes a correct “articulation” exists

More “Of”



1 C: We uh - linguistics, in this field, uh - from the book I s- I meant, I saw from the book that - many linguists quite interest in uh black English. So could you tell me - a little bit about - your dialect?

2 D: Dialects.

3 C: Heh yeah

5 D: Well, uh: - well - see the world's getting smaller=

6 C: ((laughs)) I- I mea- do you have-

7D: =there's not - even among all the ethnic groups we're- we're getting- getting less and less of dialectual in- inFLUence. (.hhh) Uh I'm- happen - not to be - from the South...

Presupposition types

Your dialects

Definite descriptions = dialects exist

Possessives = you have a dialect

The worlds getting smaller

Comparison = the world was bigger

I happen not to be from the South

Implicatives = This is an “unplanned” circumstance

Implicatures

Less and less dialectual influence

There are fewer dialects because the world is smaller.

Semantic And Pragmatic Approaches:

Assertions

Entailments

Presuppositions

Speech Acts

Implications

Argument structure

Metaphor

Discourse markers

More of course.....

Other presupposition triggers:

Change-of-state verbs (I quit...)

Iteratives (...again)

Temporal clauses (... before)

Cleft sentences (IT & WH)

It wasn't Bill who left.

What Bill didn't lose was his billfold.

Stressed constituents (implicit clefts)

Bill didn't lose his BILLFOLD.

Non-restrictive relatives

Counterfactual conditionals (If I'd known...)

Questions

Yes-no (usually vacuous)

Alternative (either-or, non-vacuous)

WH ("Who left")

SOME THINGS I'D LIKE FOR YOU TO REMEMBER:

- 1) Folk Linguistics (or “Language Regard”) is an important consideration in sociolinguistic investigation (historical or not).
- 2) That a text contains any linguistic representation of the “other” is often sufficient evidence that it is a folk fact.
- 3) That some representations are those of levels of language (e.g., interaction) that we often ignore.
- 4) That discourse, semantic, and pragmatic analytic tools at our disposal may allow us to see the implicit as well as the explicit in historical data.

lc pe pancung