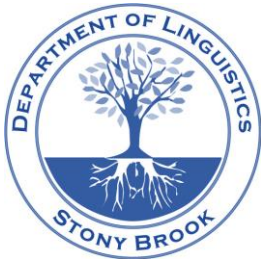# We don't need no classroom to do Linguistics!

Department of Linguistics
Stony Brook University

Talk presented at the Teaching & Learning Colloquium
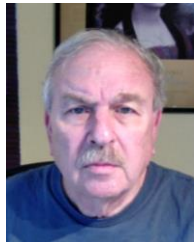**March 8, 2019**

Andrei Antonenko

Paola Cepeda

Lori Repetti

Team
Winner of the
Stony Brook Online Learning Development (S-BOLD) Initiative
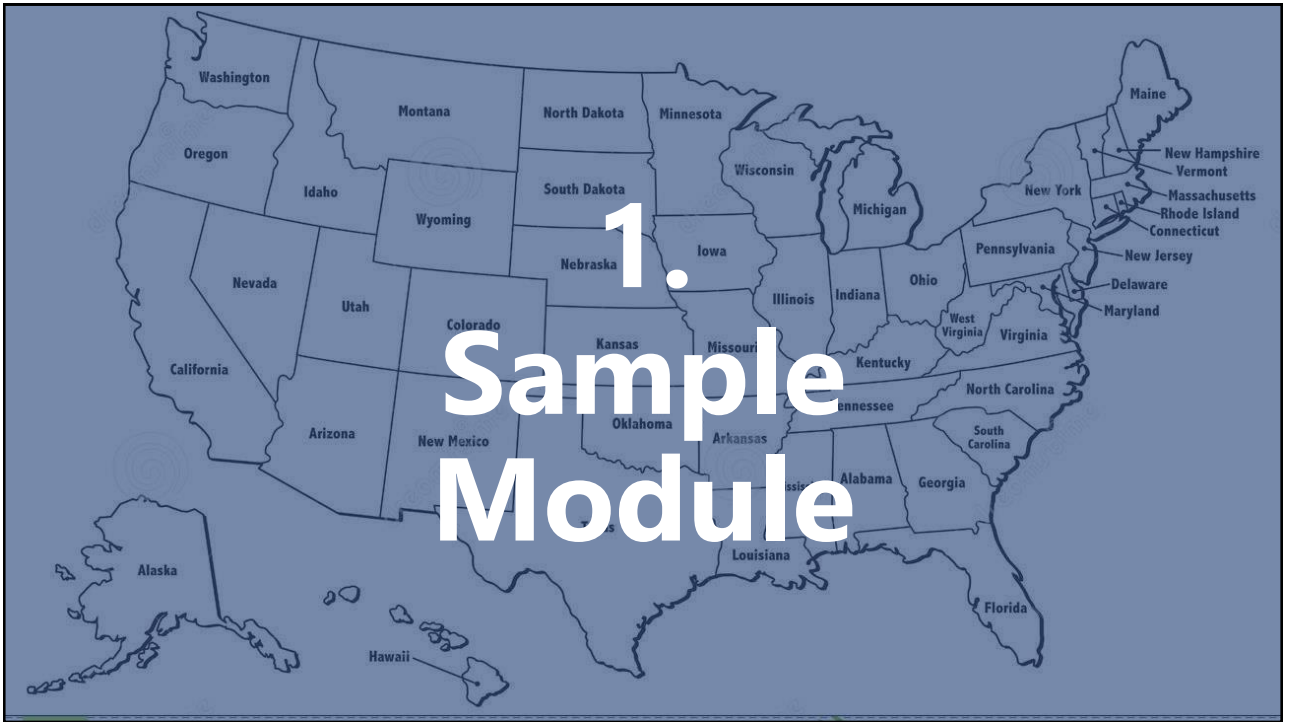
Mark Aronoff

Aniello De Santo

Language in the United States (LIN 200)

Outline of the talk

1. Sample module	2. Grading and assessment	3. Challenges and opportunities

1. Sample Module

Organization of the course

1. Language & Linguistics	2. The History of English	3. American English Dialects	4. New York English
5. African American English	6. Chicano English	7. Teen English	8. Native American Languages
9. American Sign Language	10. Spanish in the U.S.	11. Creole Languages	12. Language and Social Justice

Structure of a module

0. HOW TO STUDY THIS MODULE	4. READING
1. INTRODUCTION	5. PRACTICE QUIZ
2. BASIC NOTIONS AND THEORY	6. DISCUSSION BOARD
3. INVITED LECTURE	

Sample of a module

Module 4
New York English

Slide 0

Week

Contents

Goals

Study sequence

LIN 200 Language in the U.S.
Spring 2019

Prof. Paola Cepeda
Department of Linguistics
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Week 4
New York English
Guidelines to study

Contents of Week 4
1. Intro: **Bernie Sanders' accent, explained**
2. In-class lecture: **American English dialects – Part 2**
3. Invited lecture: **New York English, by Prof. Kara Becker (Reed College)**
4. Reading: **Newman (2006) New Yawk Tawk**
5. Reading: **Nosowitz (2016) Why there's no such thing as a Brooklyn accent**
6. Practice quiz: **New York English**
7. Discussion board: **New York English**

Goals of Week 4
Once you have finished studying Week 4, you must be able to:
- Identify the main classic features of New York English: r-dropping, "aw" vowel, short "a" split, etc.
- Explain why the main classic features of New York English are currently in recession.
- Define linguistic notions such as "change from above", "standard", "non-standard", "stigmatized variety", "prestigious feature", etc.
- Account for the social issues surrounding the situation of New York English.
- Use basic IPA transcriptions.

How to study Week 4
- Attend the in-class lecture, ask questions, request for clarifications. Take notes.
- Watch the intro. It contains a non-specialized approach to the topic of the module. Take notes.
- Watch the invited lecture. Pause as many times as you need to take notes, write down questions. Use the table of contents that appears at the beginning of the video as a guideline for your notes.
- Do the two mandatory readings. Take notes and make sure that you have learned the content.

How to participate in the Discussion for Week 4
- If your name is in the following list, you are a **Leader** this week. Provide a post of 200 words in direct connection to the discussion question. Support your opinion with the contents of the module and our class. Post your answer no later than **Friday, Febru**

1. **Regina Chen**
2. **Rachael Eng**
3. **Alexa Farraj**
4. **Steven Fink**
5. **Julia Gawronska**
6. **Barbara Huang**
7. **Fanny Hung**
8. **Chong Kang**
9. **Eric Lam**

- If your name is **not** in the above list, you are a **Commenter** this week. Provide a comment of 100 words on any of the Leaders' posts. Make sure to comment on the Leader(s) whose thread has less replies. Post your comment no later than **Sunday, February 24, 1:00 pm.**
- If you cannot access the discussion or if you have any questions, please contact me or any of the TAs in a timely manner.

Rubric for the Discussion
- Your score will be multiplied by 2 or 4, depending on your role as commenter or leader, respectively. **Example:** You get 2 points for formatting and 3 points for content. That makes 5 points. Your grade for this discussion will be 10 if you are a commenter or 20 if you are a leader.

	1 Below expectations		
Formatting	Answer falls short of the specified word range. It contains several typos or grammar errors. It fails to cite sources.		
Content	Answer provides very basic statements with minimal originality. No connections are made to the topic or class content, or connections are off-topic.		

Participation in discussion board

Rubric for discussion participation

0. How to study this module

Slide 1

Video inserted using the YouTube Mashup on Blackboard

Bernie Sanders' New York Accent

1. Introduction

Traditional New York English

"aw" vowel	r-dropping
Pronunciation of the first vowel in *coffee*, *office*, *daughter*, *broad*, etc.	Lack of pronunciation of the r in *sweater*, *cheerful*, *November*, etc.
What is [ɔ] in many dialects is pronounced as [oə].	The r is not pronounced in the coda of a syllable.

2. Basic notions and theory

Explanation of notions

"I'm walking here"

Leaving Brooklyn
Fuhgeddaboudit
Marty Markowitz
Borough President
Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

Mash your words together and spread your vowels out for the Long Island classic accent

Long Island → Lawn-Guyland
going → goin
here → hea

wikiHow to Talk Like a Stereotypical New Yorker

2. Basic notions and theory

Audios, videos, examples

3. Invited lecture

Dr. Kara Becker on NYC English

4. Reading

Language in Society **43**, 395–420.
doi:10.1017/S0047404514000372

The social motivations of reversal: Raised BOUGHT in New York City English

KARA BECKER

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a variationist analysis of the BOUGHT vowel
City English (NYCE) and finds that it has reversed the trajecto
outlined in Labov (1966). An acoustic analysis of producti
sixty-four native residents of the Lower East Side demonstrate
is lowering in apparent time, a change led by young peopl
Jewish speakers, and the middle classes. A second source o
from perceptions of raised BOUGHT gathered from a matched
iment, which highlights an indexical field (Eckert 2008) of soc
for raised BOUGHT that comprise a 'classic New Yorker' perso
white ethnic New Yorker from the outer boroughs who is me

Language Variation and Change, **26** (2014), 141–168.
© Cambridge University Press, 2014 0954-3945/14 $16.00
doi:10.1017/S0954394514000064

(r) we there yet? The change to rhoticity in New York City English

KARA BECKER
Reed College

ABSTRACT

Labov (1966, 1972b) described the variable production of coda /r/ in New York
City English (NYCE) as a change in progress from above in the direction of
rhoticity. Since then, scholars have commented on the slow rate of change toward
rhoticity in NYCE and characterized (r) as a superposed feature restricted to formal
speech (Fowler, 1987; Labov, 1994; Labov, Ash, & Boberg, 2006). This study's
ethnically diverse sample of speakers from the Lower East Side of Manhattan

Slide 1

New York English

Test your knowledge of the contents of this lesson!

5. Practice quiz

In the traditional NY English accent…

(1) T or F: "Coffee" is pronounced with the "aw" vowel.

(2) In which word is R dropped: BEAR or RED?

(3) The most stereotypical features are stigmatized.

Also appears in other American English dialects:

(4) The "aw" vowel

(5) R-dropping

Slide 2

New York English

Test your knowledge of the contents of this lesson!

5. Practice quiz

In the traditional NY English accent…

(1) TRUE

(2) "BEAR"

(3) TRUE

Also appears in other American English dialects:

(4) FALSE

(5) TRUE

6. Discussion: New York English

Enabled: Adaptive Release

Prompt

In the not-so-distant-past, some schools and companies considered that some New Yorkers had speech problems because of their accent. Even today, you can find workshops for New York accent reduction, which are advertised as beneficial to improve clarity in speech, so the participant can be understood in their schools, their workplace and within their community. What do you think about these workshops? Why do you think these workshops are specially targeting New Yorkers? Do these workshops have a solid linguistic base? In what circumstances do you think they are useful or worth the cost?

Please remember:

Roles & Deadlines

- Each **Leader** should open a new thread answering the discussion trigger (200 words) no later than **Friday, February 22, 1:00 pm.**
- **Commenters** should reply to at least once of the Leaders' thread (100 words) no later than **Sunday, February 24, 1:00 pm.**

6. Discussion board

2. Grading and assessment
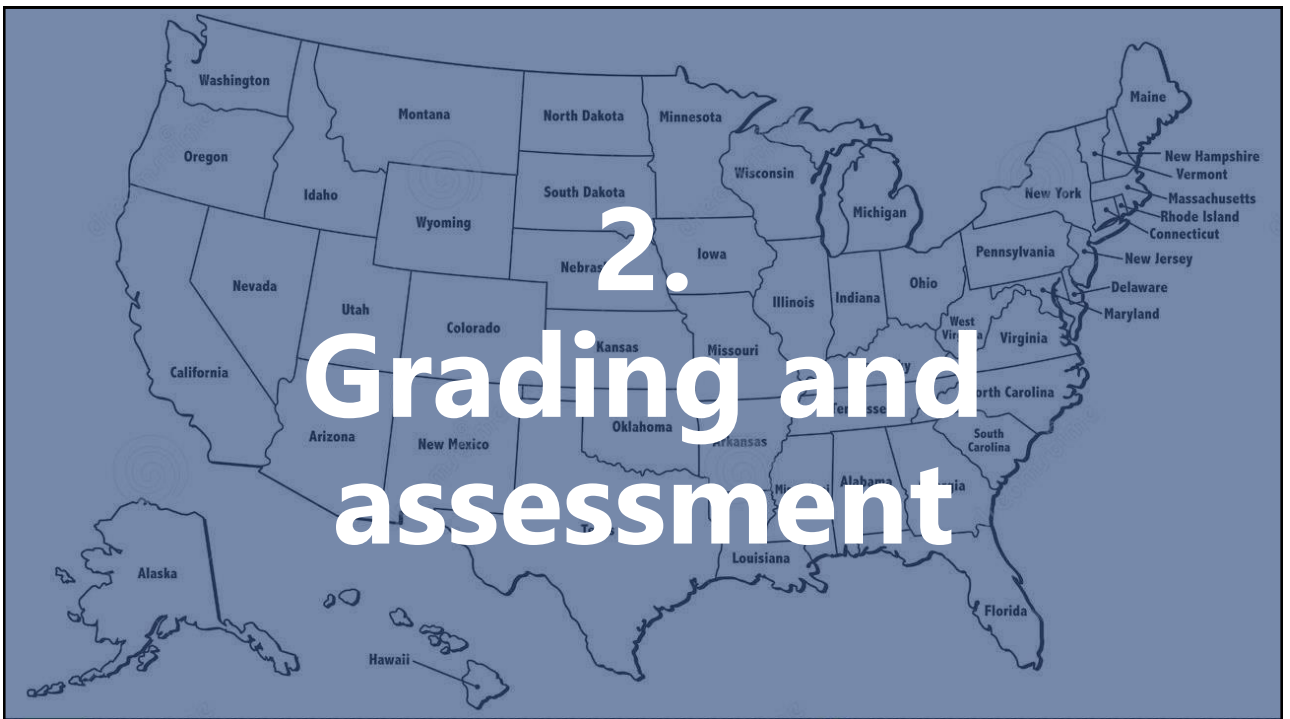
Discussion boards for large enrollment classes

How does it work in reality?

- Imagine a class with **200 people**, and **10 questions for discussion**.
- For each discussion board questions there are only 20 "leaders": 20 full-fledged short essay-style responses to the discussion board question.
- Remaining 180 students choose one of the leaders' essays to comment on: Each leader gets 18 responses to their post.
- Leader can then engage in a meaningful discussion with each respondent, if their comments seem interesting.
- This avoids the problem of 200 responses each week with just 0-2 answers to each of them.
- It also allows leaders to get students' opinion on their post.

Discussion boards for large enrollment classes

Relative ease of grading

- Of course, reading each response is time-consuming.
- It is participation that matters!
- But there is no need to do it: just scrolling through posts and responses gives instructor a good idea on how engaged the students are.
- Students-respondents will also notify the instructor if any of the leaders' posts are irrelevant to the topic.

Why "relative"?

- Unfortunately, Blackboard doesn't allow any automatic grading for participation in Discussion Boards – some manual labor is involved. But it's ok…

What else cannot be automated?

- Grading of **Discussion Boards**
- **Exams**
    - Exams might have to be conducted on site/exam centers.
    - Hard to prevent cheating if done from home!
    - Setting a strict time limit might help – but not if there is someone sitting next to the student or doing an exam for them.
- **Grading of exercises**
    - Multiple choice questions are not an issue, but:
    - Grading linguistic problems is!

Sample Homework

African American English sometimes does not use plural *–s*:

1. We bought two hundred **pound** o'fish.
2. It's about six **mile** down the road.

3. We caught two hundred **cats**.
4. They have a lot of **animals**.

What determined when plural –s is used?

Correct answer:

If there is a measuring unit, the standard plural *-s* is not used!

Homework Grading

- **Option 1**: if the **question is left as is**, it requires a large number of TAs to look over the answers and verify their correctness.
- **Option 2: reformulate the questions** to allow for a very short and precise answers, which can be matched to the patterns (using regular expressions, supported on BB) – but that might not always be possible, and also prevent students from coming up with creative answers!
- **Option 3: keyword-based grading** -- again, prevents students from creative answers, might be misgraded if students utilize different keywords than predicted.

Data Banks

Some problems are not fully suitable for Blackboard presentation: they have very specific formatting, tables, etc.

- Hard to deal with **complicated formatting** in Blackboard/Respondus
- **Formatting** is not always preserved when importing questions to Blackboard
- **Respondus** is not available for Mac
- Any better software that is independent of Blackboard/other learning management systems?

3.
Challenges and opportunities

Back to LIN 200 "Language in the USA"

Item	Status
Video modules	Many recorded and edited – some optional modules are still to be recorded
Homework problem banks	Problems identified, but need to be converted to a proper format (?)
Multiple choice questions	Database created, questions tagged with topics
Supplementary materials	Mostly identified and created

Assessment

- LIN 200 has been running as a hybrid since **Summer 2018**.
- Work on **comparison of the outcomes** of the in-class version with the the hybrid version

What made it all possible?

A large team of **faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students**

- Flow of ideas
- Verification of the ideas with former students of LIN 200
- Introducing concepts that might raise the interest level: memes, YouTube videos, reddit posts from *r/BadLinguistics* – UG students are essential!
- Departmental support

FAR
BEYOND
LIN 200

Looking into the Future

Changing nature of education

- **Cannot keep doing what you've always been doing!**
- But let's not sacrifice academic rigor!

Sharing of the materials

- **Department level**: problems can be given in other introductory linguistics classes (Human Language, Language and Technology, Sociolinguistics)
- **Social Sciences level**: the methods developed for online education in one SBS class can be adopted to other SBS classes – in psychology, sociology, etc. Ask us how!
- **SUNY level**: programs in linguistics and social sciences on other campuses.
- **Nation level**?