We don’t need no classroom to do Linguistics!

Department of Linguistics
Stony Brook University

Talk presented at the Teaching & Learning Colloquium
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Language in the United States (LIN 200)

Outline of the talk

1. Sample module
2. Grading and assessment
3. Challenges and opportunities
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
1. INTRODUCTION
2. BASIC NOTIONS AND THEORY
3. INVITED LECTURE
4. READING
5. PRACTICE QUIZ
6. DISCUSSION BOARD

Sample of a module

Module 4
New York English
0. How to study this module

1. Introduction

Bernie Sanders’ New York Accent

Video inserted using the YouTube Mashup on Blackboard

Week
Contents
Goals
Study sequence

Participation in discussion board
Rubric for discussion participation

How to study this module

Week 4
New York English
Guidelines to study

Contents of Week 4
1. Intro: Bernie Sanders’ accent, explained
2. Intro: American English dialects – Part 2
3. Intro: Intro New York English, by Prof. Zora Olejar (Westchester)
5. Reading: Rastall (1999) Why there’s no such thing as a Brooklyn accent
6. Practice out: New York English
7. Discussion Board: New York English

Goals of Week 4
Once you have finished viewing Week 4, you must be able to:
- Identify the main classic features of New York English
- State what the main dialect features of New York English are currently in motion
- Define regionalisms such as "change from about"/"standard","non-standard","regionalized variety","particular New York”, etc.
- Account for the social issues surrounding the situation of New York English
- Use basic IPA transcriptions.

How to study Week 4
- Prepare some ideas before starting your work on Week 4.
- Watch the video. It contains a step-by-step approach to the topic of the module. Note its name.
- Watch the video at least twice, as many times as you need to take notes, write down questions. Use the title of the content that appears at the beginning of the video as a guide 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 you are the Lead, post a comment of at least 100 words in direct connection to the discussion question. Support your opinion with the content of the module and your class. Post your answer no later than Friday, 24.
- If your name is in the list above, you are a Commentator this week. Provide a comment of 100 words of any of the Lead’s posts. Make sure to comment on the Lead’s response to the question. Post your comment no later than Sunday, 26, 11:00 am.
- If you do not receive the discussion on If you have any questions, please contact me at any of the e-mails in a timely manner.

Rubric for the Discussion
- Your score will be multiplied by 2 or 4, depending on your role as commentator or lead. In particular:
   - You get 2 points for submitting a comment, and 5 points for a comment that makes 5 points. Your grade for the discussion will be 10 if you are a commentator or 10 if you are a leader.
Traditional New York English

“aw” vowel

Pronunciation of the first vowel in coffee, office, daughter, broad, etc.

What is [ɔ] in many dialects is pronounced as [oə].

r-dropping

Lack of pronunciation of the r in sweater, cheerful, November, etc.

The r is not pronounced in the coda of a syllable.

2. Basic notions and theory

Explanation of notions

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

Long Island → Lawn-Guyland

going → goin

here → hea

Audios, videos, examples
3. Invited lecture

Dr. Kara Becker on NYC English

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

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**ABSTRACT**

This article presents a variationist analysis of the **bought** vowel in New York City English (NYCE) and finds that it has reversed the trajectory outlined in Labov (1966). An acoustic analysis of production by sixty-four native residents of the Lower East Side demonstrates that this is a lowering in apparent time, a change led by young people with Jewish backgrounds and the middle classes. A second source of evidence is from perceptions of raised **bought** gathered from a matched sample of the same age and gender. This work highlights an indexical field (Eckert 2008) of sociolinguistic change for raised **bought** that comprises a 'classic New Yorker' person, a white ethnic New Yorker from the outer boroughs who is not a 'classic New Yorker', and a 'classic New Yorker' person, a white ethnic New Yorker from the outer boroughs who is not a 'classic New Yorker'.

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**Language Variation and Change, 26 (2014), 141–168.**
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**Language in Society, 43, 395–420.**
doi:10.1017/S0047404514000372

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4. Reading
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

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

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:

- 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 question 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**.

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

**What determined when plural –s is 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”

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