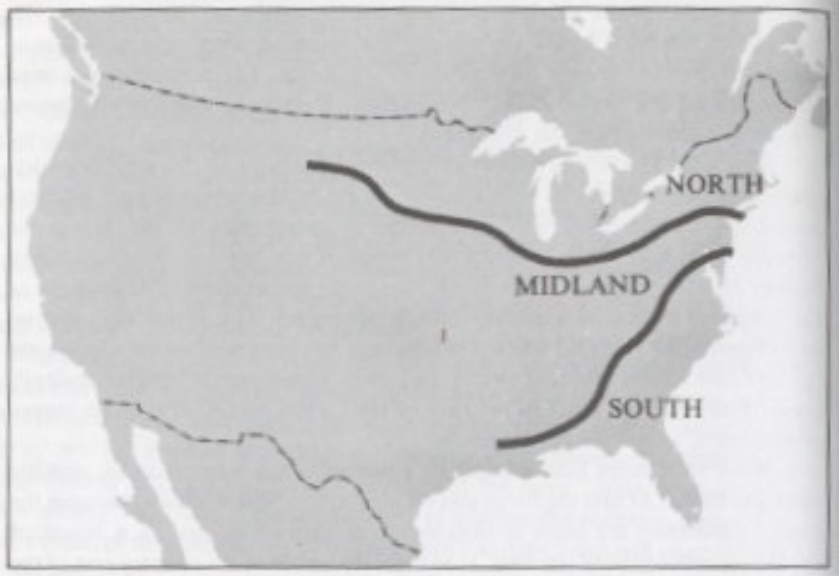


DIALECT AREAS OF THE UNITED STATES
EASTERN DIALECT BOUNDARIES[4]

Germans arrived in the Delaware Bay and spread out to Philadelphia and Ohio. This settlement is reflected by the linguistic boundaries of the Midland area.

A few examples of the distinctions between dialects of the rural North, Midland, and South must suffice here.[5] Of course the areas each have many subareas, each with its own characteristics. The data here are illustrative rather than definitive. However, they clearly demonstrate two facts already mentioned: Dialects are characterized by bundles of characteristics, not single features, and there are degrees of difference between dialects—the Midland and South have more in common with each other than with the North. The characteristics listed here are used by the social groups I, II, and III unless otherwise specified.

Northern Characteristics

Phonology: [r] kept after vowels except in Eastern New England, e.g., in **hoarse, four, cart, father**.

[o] versus [ɔ] in **hoarse** versus **horse**, **mourning** versus **morning**. This distinction is receding in Inland Northern dialects. Also found in Southern dialects.

[s] in **greasy**.

Morphology and Syntax:

dove [dov], past of **dive**.

hadn't ought "oughtn't." (I, II)

clim [klɪm], past of **climb**. (I, II) Also Southern.

Lexicon: **pail**. (Midland and Southern "bucket.")

spider "frying pan." (I, II) Receding in Inland Northern. Also Southern.

Midland Characteristics

Phonology: [r] kept after vowels. Also Inland Northern.

[ɔ] in **on**. Also Southern.

[z] in **greasy**. Also Southern.

Morphology and Syntax:

clum [klʌm], past of **climb**. (I) Spreading in Inland Northern.

you-all, plural of **you**. Also Southern.

I'll wait on you "for you." (I, II) Also South Carolina.

Lexicon: **skillet** "frying pan." Spreading.

snake feeder "dragon fly." (I, II)

a little piece "a short distance." Also South Carolina.

Southern Characteristics

Phonology: [r] sometimes lost after vowels.

[o] and [ɔ] contrasting in **hoarse-horse**, **mourning-morning**. Also Northern.

[æw] diphthong in **mountain**, **loud**. Also Midland.

[ɔ] in **on**. Also Midland.

[z] in **greasy**. Also Midland.

Morphology and Syntax:

clim [klɪm], past of **climb**. (I, II) Also Northern.

he belongs to be careful. (I, II)

he fell outn the bed. (I)

you-all, plural of **you**. Also Midland.

Lexicon: **spider** "frying pan." Also Northern.

carry "escort." (I, II)

SOCIAL VARIETIES

The intensive study of social, especially urban, language variation is considerably more recent than that of regional dialects. It gets much of its impetus from a study of English varieties in New York made in the early sixties by William Labov.[6] Although not all the necessary variables have been distinguished in studies of social variation, attempts are usually made to obtain adequate samples from the social spectrum of the urban community, including groups defined by ethnicity, education, age, and sex, as well as socioeconomic status. Among problems still to be rectified in much sociolinguistic work is the tendency to take sociologists' class-scalings as givens, and to assume that language is dependent on them. However, it is conceivable that class stratification actually depends in part on language differences and that language and class do not coincide. Nevertheless, as has often been pointed out, the correlations between social rank and social dialects do seem to hold. Furthermore, in many cases they support the distinctions that sociologists make between working- and middle-class groups. Another problem is that both sociologists and linguists have tended to classify women according to the social status of their husbands. This classification is valueless in predicting networks of linguistic interaction if, for example, a woman works as a domestic and her husband is a road-mender.

Unlike regional studies, social studies have for the most part been conducted in a very small number of urban areas, most notably New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit in the United States, Montreal in Canada, Glasgow and Norwich in Great Britain. Unlike regional studies, they have been conducted exclusively through verbal (not postal) interaction. Emphasis has been primarily on phonetics, inflections, and function words such as pronouns or forms of the negative. Vocabulary has barely been considered, partly because distinctions in vocabulary are not as great in urban as in rural areas, and partly because the sophisticated recording equipment now used can ensure massive and reliable collection of phonetic data and also of lengthy

verbal interactions, something which was impossible in the early days of regional studies. In nearly all studies, the focus is on the interrelation of social stratification with style-shifting from casual to more formal varieties, especially in reading. This has been of central interest because it illustrates not only the variability of individual speakers' usage, but also the general tendency of all speakers in a certain community to shift in similar ways.

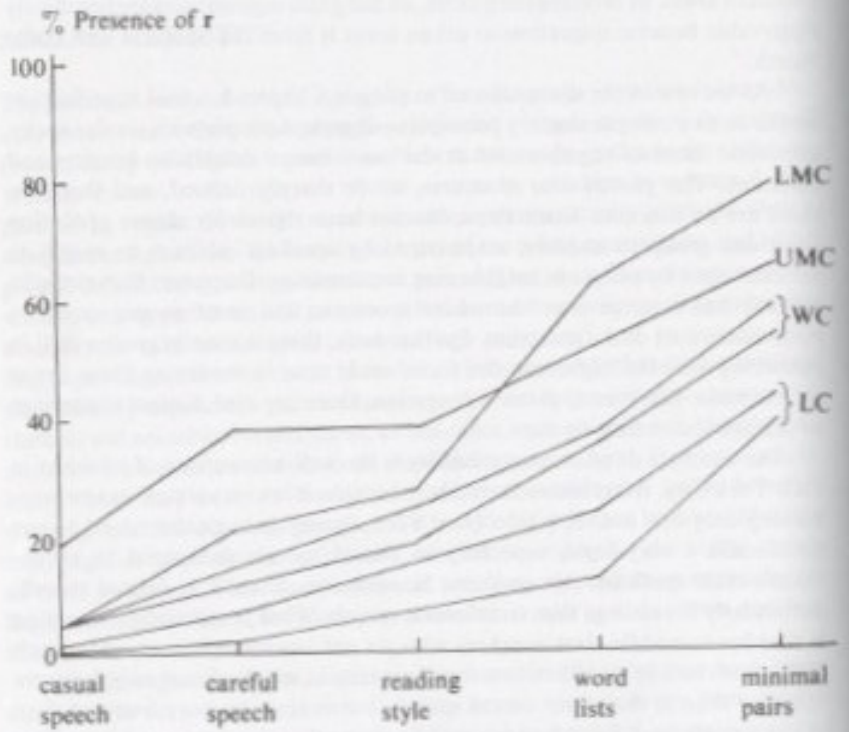
It is often said that the modern city is a kind of melting pot where sharp differences of culture, religion, and language disappear. While it is true that regional language differences tend to become minimized in an urban setting, social language differences atypical of rural situations arise. The extent to which regional differences disappear depends on the extent of migration. Broad features of Southern American English persist in the South even in dense urban areas because migration to Southern cities is largely from Southern areas. In Northeastern cities, all but gross regionalisms are less clearly observable because migration to urban areas is from the South as well as the North.

As we saw in the discussion of naming in Chapter 6, social stratification works on two complementary principles—it groups people with similar socioeconomic interests together and at the same time it establishes barriers and distances. The groups are, of course, never sharply defined, and therefore there are no absolute distinctions. Studies have repeatedly shown gradation from one group to another, emphasized by speakers' abilities to switch to varieties used by people in neighboring communities. It appears that virtually nobody has a range over the whole spectrum, but most people master a continuous part of the spectrum. Furthermore, there is usually greater skill in mastering varieties higher on the social scale than in mastering those lower on the scale. But even if there is gradation, there are also distinct clusterings of features according to class.

An example of phonetic variability is the well-known case of *r*-fulness in New York City. It has been selected here because it is a very simple example involving only one sound, [r]. In New York, lower-class speakers tend to use postvocalic **r** very little, especially in casual speech, compared to upper-middle-class speakers. All speakers, however, use more **r** in formal speech, particularly in reading, than in informal speech. What is especially interesting is that lower-middle-class speakers who do not use **r** much in casual speech shift when reading word lists to a speech variety in which **r** is not only far more frequent than in their own casual speech, but is also far more frequent than in the variety used by the upper middle class when reading word lists. This suggests that lower-middle-class New Yorkers regard *r*-fulness as highly prestigious. In situations such as in reading, when they are paying a lot of attention to speech, they "hypercorrect" or overdo the *r*-ful forms in an attempt to sound like members of a higher class.

These facts are plotted in Figure 8–1. The vertical axis indicates the percentage of *r*-ful pronunciations of words with postvocalic **r**, such as **guard, car, beer, beard, board**. The horizontal axis indicates the degree of attention

paid to speech, from most casual on the left to most careful on the right. "Minimal pairs" refers to reading pairs of words that differ primarily or exclusively in one phonemic feature, for example, **guard** and **god**, or **dark** and **dock**, which for most New Yorkers have essentially the same vowel. The designation LC refers to lower class, WC to working class, LMC and UMC to lower- and upper-middle-classes, respectively.[7] Thus the bottom line of the graph reads: Lower-working-class speakers use *r*-ful forms about 2 percent of the time in casual and careful speech, about 4 percent of the time in reading style, about 10 percent of the time in reading word lists, and over 30 percent of the time when reading minimal pairs like **dark** and **dock**.

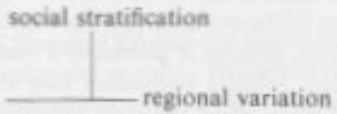


PRESENCE OF POSTVOCALIC r[8]

Figure 8–1.

Comparison of Figure 8–1 with the regional map would readily demonstrate that regional studies are concerned with "horizontal" variation, that is, variation through geographical space, while urban studies are concerned with

"vertical" variation, that is, variation through social space. If we think of a model somewhat like:



we can see how the two types of variation study can and indeed must intersect. The influence of social or regional variability is not entirely unidirectional. Migration patterns can affect language, and in the case of New York English, the influx of Midwesterners brought distinct Midwesternisms into speech, such as the use of postvocalic [r]. Nevertheless, in general, innovations spread out from a center of social and cultural importance. Thus we need to think of the relation between the two axes of the model as a dynamic one, each influencing the other, but with the main thrust of change at a social center. Social centers and prestige groups, of course, constantly change, as demonstrated by migration patterns, whether from rural areas to cities, from inner cities to suburbs, from city to city.

Labov and his associates have shown that at least in large urban areas like New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit, the greatest degree of change in speech patterns can be found among those who at the same time have the greatest hope for upward mobility and nevertheless are in the greatest jeopardy of falling back to a lower socioeconomic status. In other words, the greatest change is found linguistically where there is the greatest degree of social insecurity. The group that is linguistically most insecure is the lower middle class, and lower-middle-class teenagers in particular. The lower middle class more than any other demonstrates the phenomenon called "hypercorrection" that we saw in Figure 8-1. Because lower-middle-class speakers, especially teenagers who are just beginning to actively enter the economic system, feel that a linguistic feature such as *r*-fulness is a marker of social acceptability, they cultivate it so much that in self-conscious speech they actually use it more than the class they are modeling themselves on. That the hypercorrection is actually motivated by a stereotype of prestige and is not a chance phenomenon is strongly supported by evaluation tests in which hearers were asked to listen to recordings and to judge the acceptability of the speech patterns for certain kinds of jobs, such as salespeople in lower-class department stores versus salespeople in upper-class and exclusive stores. Invariably informants in New York rated *r*-ful utterances higher than *r*-less ones; if the same speaker had used [ka] in casual speech and [kar] in more formal speech and these two utterances had been spliced in one tape, they were taken to be by different speakers of different social status.[9] A similar kind of test is one where people are asked to evaluate their own speech. Speakers almost always think they speak a more prestigious and consistent variety than they actually

do, and New Yorkers were sometimes quite shocked to hear that they actually used *r*-less forms, while not being at all shocked to hear that they used *r*-ful forms. In other cities, of course, one might find the reverse.

In language as in other fields of human activity, prestige is a complex factor. Our examples so far have shown prestige accruing to the highest socio-economic class. However, prestige is ultimately a matter of allegiance, not of socioeconomic standing. Positive evaluation may therefore be assigned to features of any social class, given the right conditions. For example, male high school students in South Africa have been shown to evaluate lower-class forms relatively highly, associating them with virility and active life, while their female counterparts evaluate upper-class forms more highly.[10] On Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, Labov found linguistic evaluation correlated with lifestyle and values. Groups who associate themselves with mainland culture modify their speech toward upper-class mainland speech, but groups who wish to retain the older fishing culture of the island have adopted certain linguistic habits directly opposed to upper-class mainland English. For example, they have retracted their low diphthongs [ay] and [aw] to something approaching [əy] and [əw] (an archaic pronunciation).[11]

"STANDARD ENGLISH"

What is a "standard" variety? Although most people have intuitive answers, there is often confusion about this question. One of the difficulties is that there are, broadly speaking, two views of what "standard" means, and they frequently get mixed up. One is the view that Standard English is the variety used in formal situations by educated people, especially those commanding local or national respect as leaders. That is, in one view, Standard English is defined descriptively on social and stylistic parameters. It is not conceived as an absolute, but as the appropriate variety for communication, whether spoken or written, in activities of social prestige. It is the variety, then, that is appropriate to a particular intersection of social class (educated, usually but not necessarily upper middle class), topic, style, and medium. Given this view, one could claim that there are a number of Standard Englishes, not only regional varieties such as British and American, but ethnic ones too. Indeed there is considerable evidence that a standard variety of Black English is developing, as used by congressmen, writers, radio and TV reporters, and especially teachers.[12] There is, however, another, very different view of Standard English, which is essentially "prescriptive" rather than descriptive, and which regards the standard as an absolute, as a thing apart, recognizable primarily through the written form of the language. This is the view of the standard as an ideal rather than as a norm, as the repository of refinement in the language, and as something that can be legislated upon. It underlies evaluation of the language of works to be published and of the acceptability of new vocabulary items into the language. In certain countries, such as France and Tanzania, it

underlies actual legislation by an academy whose sole or prime function is to pronounce judgment on style and lexicon. For those who hold the prescriptive view of Standard English, the written variety alone is usually considered standard, and the definition is therefore far narrower than for those who hold a descriptive view.

The two concepts of Standard English are largely traceable to the rise of the middle class in the eighteenth century. The upper classes felt threatened in urban communities, especially London, by the growing importance of the lower middle class and the rapid increase in their mobility. At the beginning of the eighteenth century we find grammars that were based on descriptions of the language spoken by educated people. These grammars were aimed primarily at "maintaining caste," that is, establishing for the upper classes a linguistic code based on their own behavior that would, along with moral and other codes, separate them from the threat of middle-class "upstarts." By the end of the eighteenth century, however, we find a new kind of grammar, primarily prescriptive, codifying the language of the upper classes as models or ideals for the social betterment of those with less social status. Such prescriptive grammars dominated thinking about language until this century, when linguists' insistence on the importance of description in analyzing language led to greater interest in the schools in descriptive approaches to English. The prescriptive idea is still markedly present in the average person's expectations of a dictionary—dictionaries are often regarded as Bibles, telling you what you ought to write or say, whereas in fact serious dictionaries simply record the current lexicon as used by educated people. It was the assumption that a dictionary ought to legislate that caused the widespread furor in the sixties over Webster's Third International Dictionary. Painstakingly determined to record more than "educated," "standard" uses of the lexicon, the editors of this dictionary included certain regionalisms and colloquialisms, that is, forms unacceptable in written language, including **ain't**, with explicit indication of the region and style for which such forms were appropriate. But many readers were horrified and wrote outraged reviews.[13]

Another prescriptive approach with very wide currency holds that there is a "best" English, even a "pure" English. There is no intrinsically "best" English, although one can with full justification speak of the more appropriate or effective variety of a language for some particular type of communication. The prime function of standard varieties is public rather than private. Therefore standard language is most appropriate to relatively formal styles and genres, for media addressing large numbers of people, and especially for utterances intended to have some permanence (for example, those that appear in print). Other varieties better fit functions that are private or personal, and expressed in informal genres through impermanent media.

Prescriptive attitudes that regard the standard written language as the only "good" language or regard the language of the educated classes as the "best" language gave rise to the idea that varieties other than the standard were "substandard," in other words, inadequate, sloppy, even unsuitable for

logical thought. This, of course, is a judgment based on a feeling of social (even moral or genetic) superiority and on evaluation of different varieties for the *same* function. Since different varieties serve different functions, they cannot be judged fairly by one function alone. Linguists have insisted on the adequacy of different language varieties for their particular functions (they have, however, often been misunderstood as claiming the adequacy of any one variety for all functions, especially those of the standard, which is patently absurd). Clearly a language-user who does not know a standard variety is more limited than one who can use it as the verbal repertoire relevant to public communication and certain types of employment. On the other hand, language-users who know mainly the standard often lack the verbal repertoire relevant to other social activities of the community. "Verbal deficit," about which so much is said in the schools, is not used to refer to inability to use language in structured and effective ways in native settings, but rather to the inability to perform in expected ways in particular formal test situations. Nevertheless, one can say that the fewer linguistic options a speaker has command over, the less power that person has, unless he or she is a member of the standard language-speaking community. Rejection of the prescriptive notion of the standard has led to rejection of the term "substandard" and its replacement by "nonstandard." Less loaded than "substandard," "nonstandard" is still far from an ideal term, since it takes the standard as the norm.

The notion of an English "pure and undefiled" has no basis in the language itself, though it well serves the purpose of those who wish to establish a model for writing and of those who (often dangerously) attempt to equate language with social mores—an idea lurking behind many etiquette books. From the eighteenth century on, it has been traditional to imitate Dr. Johnson, who compiled the first modern dictionary, and to talk of the "decay" of language. As Dr. Johnson himself saw (though with regret), the language necessarily changes since each child has to make his or her hypotheses about the language and develop a grammar. Another reason for inevitability of change is that people change from one social group to another or interact with other groups and are necessarily influenced by those whom they talk to and especially those whom they try to emulate. The sense of decay is primarily due to the fact that the standard language is written as well as spoken, whereas other varieties are usually only spoken. Change in the written language is obviously far more easily perceived than in the spoken.

In both the descriptive and prescriptive sense, Standard English is clearly socially defined. That certain regional varieties such as London British English in England or Middle Western American English tend to become associated with the standard does not change the essential nature of the definition, since all such associations are correlated with the social importance of the region in question. Fundamentally, standard varieties serve a combination of unificational, prestige, and frame of reference (or code of correctness) functions. They tend to obliterate regional associations except of a gross kind and in this sense are unificational. Designed for communication beyond the family, town, state, or even country, they can be learned by speakers of any class, and therefore, although rooted in upper-class language, can even obliterate social distinctions under certain circumstances, resulting in a group defined not so much by class but by education.

ETHNIC VARIETIES: BLACK ENGLISH

There is an enormous mix of ethnic groups in the United States and Great Britain. Members of any one ethnic group will probably speak a variety of English distinct from other varieties. Many speakers have as their native language a language other than English. Others, like Black Americans, speak as their native language varieties that originally derived from other languages in contact with English. Whatever the particular situation, there are gradients from ethnically distinct varieties of English to Standard English.

Because immigrating ethnic groups tend to settle in specific regions, for example, Swedes in Wisconsin, Germans in Pennsylvania, Cubans in Florida, and tend to have similar occupations, it is never possible to make clear distinctions between ethnic, regional, and above all socioeconomic varieties. Should Black English be considered an ethnic variety or a socioeconomic variety? In his extensive studies of speech patterns in New York, Philadelphia, and other urban areas, Labov has treated Black English primarily as a social variety (or rather group of varieties). This approach has led him to stress the view that Black English shows very few absolute differences from White English; the vast majority of differences are quantitative. For example, the speech of Blacks shows greater absence of word-final consonant clusters than the speech of Whites in the same socioeconomic group, but essentially no differences in type. This matter will be discussed further below. Other linguists have treated Black English primarily as an ethnic variety and have concentrated on its differences from White English.[14] The two perspectives can be clearly correlated with different political and pedagogical attitudes. The social approach emphasizes unity, the ethnic approach can be used to promote separatism. Pedagogically, the first approach suggests teaching Standard English as another variety of English, socially more useful in a get-ahead society; the second suggests teaching Standard English as a language so different that it is really a second language. Both perspectives take a stand against traditional prejudices which had branded Black English as an inferior variety, lacking structure and logic and not suitable for complex or abstract communication.[15] This prejudice had a particularly strong effect on pedagogy, leading to a policy that the job of schools was to obliterate Black English and replace it with Standard English in the verbal repertoire of Black speakers. The research of people like Labov refutes this view by demonstrating that

though very different in surface structure from Standard English, Black English is a logical and cohesive system, as highly structured as other, more standard varieties. In view of the fact that Black English refers to the type of language spoken by Black Americans in large urban areas, and of the fact that Black leaders, especially politicians and educators, are tending more and more to use a phonetically distinctive pronunciation (accent) when speaking Standard English, it appears appropriate to consider Black English as primarily an ethnic variety, but one that has been largely assimilated into the mainstream of English and that has strong correlatives with socioeconomic varieties in America.

Like other varieties of English, Black English is by no means monolithic. There is a gradation from varieties that are very different from Standard American English (hereafter abbreviated as SAE) to varieties that are very similar. Those that are very different are largely spoken by speakers in the lowest socioeconomic ranges; they are called Black English Vernacular (hereafter abbreviated as BEV), and are the main topic of most research on Black English.

As we have seen, the urban mix tends to wipe out strong regional features, but promotes social stratification. This stratification accounts for many of the characteristics of BEV, although certain features can be related to Southern American characteristics, and others to the historical origins of Black English, specifically the linguistic contact between African slaves in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries and British, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and other slave traders or plantation owners. This historical aspect of Black English will be explored briefly in Chapter 9. Here some of the major characteristics of BEV will be reviewed, with some indication of social and stylistic variations, and of characteristics shared with other varieties of English.[16]

Phonology

(1) Postvocalic r: Many Black speakers, whatever their regional affiliations, do not have postvocalic **r** in words like **court** and **core**. This feature can readily be compared with East Midland and Southeastern British English and to Southern American English, but may also have its origins in the phonologies of West Africa. Lack of postvocalic **r** is also found in SAE in parts of the Northeast. Lack of postvocalic **r** is therefore not critical for BEV, although it may be distinctive in certain communities, such as Chicago, where White speakers use predominantly *r*-ful varieties.

(2) Use of [ɪn]: The present participle is usually [ɪn], not [ɪŋ]. This is characteristic of most nonstandard varieties of English and of the rapid speech of some standard varieties. However, [ɪn] tends to be found more frequently in the speech of Black than White speakers in comparable regions or social groups.

(3) Lack of [θ] and [ð]: SAE [θ] and [ð] tend not to occur in some varieties of BEV in word-initial and word-final positions. Such varieties are to be found largely among speakers of the lowest socioeconomic ranks and in least formal situations. SAE [θ] corresponds to BEV [t] word-initially as in [tɪŋk] **think**, and to [f] word-finally and sometimes medially, as in [mawf], [nəfɪn] **mouth**, **nothing**. SAE [ð] corresponds to word-initial and occasionally final BEV [d], as in [dey] and [wid] **they** and **with**, and to word-medial [v] as in [brəvə] **brother**. Such correspondences are characteristic of contact languages —[θ] and [ð] are rare in the languages of the world; and speakers of languages without these interdentals, when in contact with English, tend to reinterpret them as the nearest alveolar stop, or as labiodental fricatives (New Yorkers of Italian origin often demonstrate similar features). However, similar correspondences can be found in the speech of many White Americans, not necessarily as the result of some other contact situation; for example, [v] is common for medial [ð] in the speech of many Whites in Kentucky.

(4) Deletion of word-final [l]: Often word-final [l] is deleted, so that **coal** is pronounced [ko]. Again, this is not a criterial feature of BEV. Word-final [l] is lost in various parts of England in contemporary English. During the history of the language it has been lost in many words preconsonantally, as is attested by spellings like **folk** and **talk**. Some regional dialects differ in the United States according to whether a speaker says [kalm] or [kam] for **calm**.

(5) Reduction of word-final consonant clusters: Reduction of word-final consonant clusters (as in **walks**) is a widespread phenomenon. It may be a universal of rapid speech, at least when a word ending with two consonants precedes another starting with a consonant (as in **wax seal** [wæks sil, wæksil]). The history of English has seen the reduction of many clusters both initially and finally. The difference between spelling and pronunciation reveals this clearly, since many clusters were reduced after the development of printing with its subsequent fossilization of the spelling system. Consider, for example, Middle English [wrɪŋg] and Modern English [rɪŋ] **wring** or Middle English [lamb] and Modern English [læm] **lamb**. Sometimes the old consonant cluster remains in phonological alternations, such as [yəŋ-yəŋgər] or in related words such as [məlayn-məlɪgnənt].

A characteristic of most word-final consonant cluster reductions is that both members of the cluster share the same feature of voicing—both are voiced, or both are voiceless. Most speakers of English have a rule of the type:

$$-C_1C_2 \Rightarrow -C_1$$

Condition: C_1 and C_2 are both voiced or both voiceless.

Rapid Speech.

Preferred in position preceding word with initial consonant.

BEV, however, has a much more general (i.e., less constrained) rule:

$$-C_1C_2 \Rightarrow -C_1$$

Condition: C_1 and C_2 are both voiced or both voiceless.

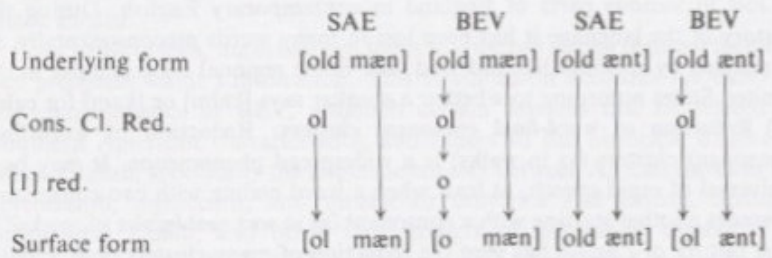
Some examples of correspondences are:

SAE	[old]	[maynd]	[ɛnd]	: BEV	[ol]	[mayn]	[ɛn]
	[tɛst]	[wasp]	[lɛft]		[tɛs]	[was]	[lɛf]

but

SAE	[jəmp]	[kræŋk]	: BEV	[jəmp]	[kræŋk]

Where reduction of a cluster results in retention of a consonant that can itself be reduced, we will find even further modifications. Thus SAE [old] is BEV [ol] by consonant cluster reduction; [l] is in the appropriate position for [l] deletion, and we therefore find [o]. The rules operate systematically like any other rules. We can compare the SAE and BEV forms of **old man** and **old aunt** as follows, assuming rapid speech in both cases:



([l]-reduction is disfavored in BEV before a word beginning with a vowel.)

Since the nominal and verbal inflections of English are largely realized by sibilants and alveolars that agree in voicing with the preceding consonant, this difference between BEV and other varieties of English makes BEV appear very different indeed in inflectional structure. This issue will be discussed further in the next section.

(6) Pitch patterns: Less extensively studied than the consonant and vowel patterns of BEV are the pitch patterns.[17] These are, however, equally characteristic, and likewise involve questions of tendencies rather than absolute distinctions. In comparable speech situations, pitch contours of Black speakers tend to have a wider range than those used by White speakers. Frequent changes of pitch into high falsetto are characteristic, often indicating ingroup relatedness and friendship. In informal situations, sentences including statements end more often in level or rising contours than do sentences spoken by Whites. The fact that we are speaking here of informal situations is crucial. The tendency to use falling intonations even for yes-no questions seems to be

a feature of formal talk and may be a hypercorrection but is often interpreted as hostile by teachers. Believing that they use rising intonations too much, speakers may compensate by going too far in the opposite direction in not using them when talking to superiors, and say, for example:

2. You the teacher = "Are you the teacher?"

Intonational patterns play a very important semantic role. Logical connectors like **if** that are so often considered by teachers to be "missing" in BEV are in fact present in the form of intonational contours. Specifically, the subordinate clause often ends in a rise, where in White varieties it would end in a level contour or less of a rise:

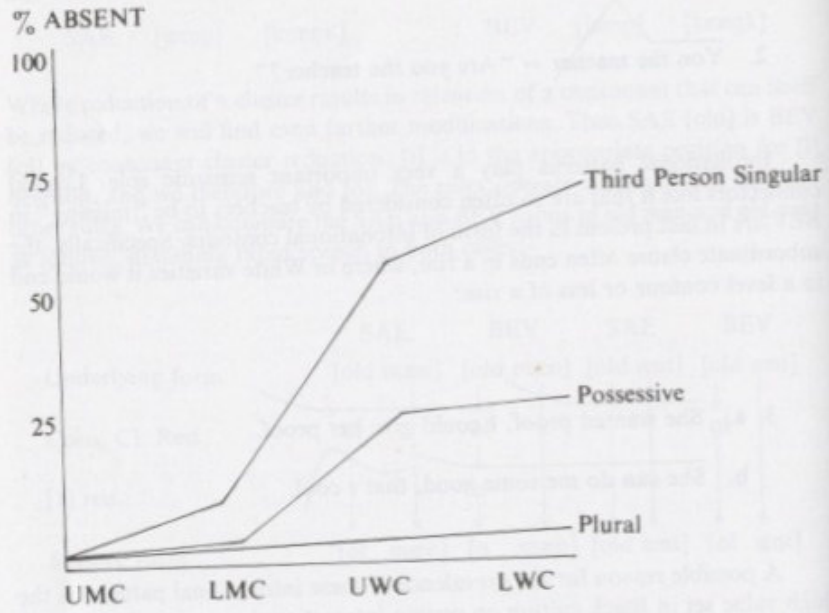
3. a. She wanted proof, I could give her proof.
   b. She can do me some good, that's cool.

A possible reason for the prevalence of these intonational patterns is the high value set in Black culture on certain interactional genres such as verbal dueling and the call and response components of church services. Middle-class White culture tends to value topic oriented discourse—or at least that is what is most highly valued in school. It also values the written word very highly, a form notorious for its inadequacy in reflecting intonational patterns, and for necessitating substitutes for oral rises and falls in pitch. Although the same kinds of rising intonation patterns can be found in both Black and White speech, they are less highly favored in White speech and tend to be stigmatized, whereas in Black culture they are not.

Inflections

As indicated earlier in this chapter in the fifth part of the section on phonology, the surface absence of consonant clusters in word-final position is not just a phonological phenomenon. It has far-reaching consequences for inflections. For example, BEV [tu kæt] is equivalent to SAE [tu kæts] **two cats**, BEV [də dag lɛg] to SAE [ðə dagz lɛgz] **the dog's legs**, and BEV [ši sɪt] to SAE [ši sɪts] **she sits**. Although final [s] and [z] both function as noun plural,

noun possessive, or third person singular present tense-markers, the likelihood of their being absent in surface structure depends on their function. Absence of all three [s, z] morphemes in the variety of BEV spoken in Detroit in an interview situation is noted in Figure 8–2.



ABSENCE OF THREE -s INFLECTIONS IN DETROIT BLACK ENGLISH[18]

Figure 8–2

Why is this? Since it is used only for the third person singular present (**she walks**, but **I, you, we, they walk**), the verb inflection **-s** really does not indicate tense so much as number in Standard English. But even here it is redundant. Number is normally a function of nominals and is not needed on the verb to communicate effectively. It appears that some speakers of BEV do not have the third person singular present tense inflection in underlying structure since they never express it. Others have a verb inflection that on first sight corresponds to the Standard English one, but it is used with all persons (e.g., **I walks**) and in fact functions as a present tense-marker, not a number-marker. For these speakers the inflection is sometimes present and sometimes not. In acquiring Standard English, they have to learn not only to use the form more frequently, but also to assign a different function to the inflection.

In the case of the possessive there is considerable redundancy too. Word order alone can indicate the relationship between a possessive and its head; this is common in Standard English compounds such as **table-legs**. The possessive relationship can also be expressed by alternate prepositional phrases such as the **legs of the table**. However, constructions like **taleteller** (where **tale** is the object) render possessive constructions potentially ambiguous in some contexts, and this may account for the greater use of possessive inflections than of third-person-singular-present-markers.

Finally, the plural of the noun is given surface manifestations more often than the other two inflections because, in the absence of quantifiers such as **many**, **some**, or **three**, nothing else indicates number. This explains why the plural-marker is usually absent when some other pluralizer, such as the quantifiers just mentioned, is present that would render the inflection redundant.

While some BEV speakers appear not to have the third person singular present inflection in underlying structure, all seem to have underlying noun possessive and plural, and also underlying past tense (realized as [t, d, əd], etc.). Evidence for this is the use of distinct plural, possessive, and past forms where vowel alternation is concerned (e.g., **man-men**, **ride-rode**) or where the inflection forms a whole syllable (e.g., **horse-horses**, **pit-pitted**). Particularly interesting are cases of nouns that have undergone consonant cluster reduction in the singular and then have [əz] added in BEV, where in SAE the plural would be [s], e.g., BEV [tɛs, tɛsəz], equivalent to careful SAE speech [tɛst, tɛsts] (this is usually [tɛss] in less careful speech). The conclusion that we can draw is that BEV speakers learning SAE do not have to learn the possessive and plural noun inflections; what they do have to learn is that consonant cluster deletion should not apply except in rapid, casual speech.

Although past tense inflections are present in deep structure, certain very frequent verbs such as **come** and **say** are treated as invariant (i.e., the past-marker is ∅), as are **put**, **cut**, and similar verbs in SAE. Combined with the effect of consonant cluster deletion, this generalization of the ∅ past can give the casual observer the false impression that past tense is not expressed.

Syntax

(1) Verbal auxiliaries: One of the factors most characteristic of BEV is the system of verbal auxiliaries. Much has been written about them,[19] but there are still some puzzles. Here we will mention only a few major points. Most interesting is the way in which time relations are expressed. In SAE only adverbs, not tense-markers, distinguish something that has happened a long time ago from something that has happened very recently. In BEV, however, the distinction can be made by auxiliary verbs. Thus there is a contrast between:

4. BEV He done gone. SAE He has recently gone.
5. BEV He bin gone. SAE He has been gone a long time.

Bin (where ′ signals stress) is currently disappearing, but **done** is widely used. Unlike **bin**, it has counterparts in White dialects, for example, Appalachian English.

Similarly, in SAE, adverbs like **right now** and **often** distinguish states of affairs that are momentary from those that recur at intervals. In some varieties of BEV, however, the first meaning is expressible by an inflected form of the verb **be** (e.g., **am, is, are**), while the second is expressible by an uninflected one. Since the latter **be** never changes according to person or number, it is often called "invariant **be**." Examples are:

6. a. BEV She's tired. SAE She's tired (right now).

7. a. BEV She be tired. SAE She's (often) tired.

The invariant **be** is most often used in the context of adverbs like **sometimes, often, always**, and **whenever**, which clearly indicates its iterative nature, as in:

7. b. Sometime she be angry.
c. Whenever she be tired she be cross.

but it is not limited to adverbial contexts.

There is another invariant **be** with quite a different function (that of expressing intention), as in:

8. a. He say he be going.

This is derived from:

8. b. He say he will be going.

Constructions of this type are also found extensively in White Southern speech, and so are others like **Be you George's son?** where **be** expresses identity. By contrast, invariant iterative **be** as in 7 is not common in White Southern speech. Indeed, many White speakers do not understand iterative **be** unless they know BEV well. The iterative **be** seems to have its origins in the pidgin and creole languages spoken by Black slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

(2) Absence of copula: Another characteristic of BEV is that the inflected *be*-verb (frequently called a "copula") is not often present in surface structure if it signals present tense. The form **She's tired** given in 6a is somewhat formal. More often the form is:

6. b. She tired.

especially in casual speech. As Labov has often pointed out, this "zero copula" occurs where phonologically reduced forms of inflectional **be** occur in SAE; thus:

9. a.	BEV	She hungry.	SAE	She's hungry.
b.	BEV	I leaving.	SAE	I'm leaving.
c.	BEV	That where he is.	SAE	That's where he is.
d.	BEV	*That where he.	SAE	*That's where he's.

This suggests that the BEV system essentially parallels the SAE system in this respect. But, because phonological reduction has been carried further, the form disappears in surface structure.

Zero copula in the present tense is actually quite common among the languages of the world. It is attested, for example, in Latin and Russian. In these languages and in BEV, the past tense form appears in surface structure, but often not the present. This is presumably because the present can be inferred from the speech situation, whereas the past cannot be inferred.

(3) Use of *It's a*: Another often mentioned feature of BEV syntax is that where SAE uses **There's a . . .** as a device for thematizing an indefinite NP in certain sentences with locatives. BEV tends to use **It's a . . .**, as in:

10. It's a boy in my room name John.

Since it is usually pronounced [ɪss] (with "long **s**") this form in fact appears not to be understood as **it** plus **is**, but rather as a unit word the function of which is to shift indefinite nominals from initial position in the sentence.

(4) Multiple negation: Multiple negation, while characteristic of most non-standard varieties of English, is particularly common in BEV.[20] In other dialects, multiple negation is largely used for emphasis, as in:

11. Nobody don't like a boss hardly.

For such speakers it is optional. However, for some speakers of BEV it is nonemphatic and obligatory. Multiple negation is so fundamental to BEV syntax that it can affect not only the main clause but even spread to subordinate ones:

12. We ain't askin' you to go out and ask no pig to leave us alone.

It should be noted that in these two examples there is one underlying negative which spreads in surface structure to all indefinites (**some, ever**, and so forth). In effect, multiple negation is a kind of agreement rule; it is not fundamentally different from the rule (in languages like Russian) that requires adjectives to agree with the nouns they modify in number, gender, and case, or the English rule that requires the present tense verb to agree with the subject (**He walks**

but **They walk**). Those who proscribe multiple negation on the grounds that two negatives make an affirmative (just as two minuses make a plus in mathematics) are confusing surface structure with underlying function.

(5) Question transformation: The question transformation in BEV is for many speakers considerably simpler than in SAE. In yes-no questions there is frequently no auxiliary verb shift, and **He left?** rather than **Did he leave?** is typical. Yes-no questions indicated by intonation and not by word-order shifts are of course characteristic of spoken English of all varieties, therefore such question forms in BEV are notable only for their frequency. Content questions, too, tend to remain in the underlying Subject-Auxiliary-Verb order, with only the question word in initial position, as in **Where the white can is?** However, those speakers who do use auxiliary inversion in questions generalize it to subordinate as well as main clauses: **Where did he go? I want to know where did he go?** This, too, is a feature of casual spoken English in general.

Speech Acts

Certain kinds of speech acts may be associated with specific groups of people, not merely particular situations. For example, much reference has been made in recent linguistic studies to certain ritualized speech acts of Black speakers, especially ritual insults, known as "playing the dozens," "sounding," or "signifying." Ritual insulting is highly stylized and forms a significant part of the predominantly oral culture of the BEV speech community. It is a competitive game in which players make up elaborate obscenities with which to describe one another's relatives, especially the opponent's mother, for example:

> Yo mama is so bowlegged, she looks like the bite out of a donut.[21]

Playing the dozens involves exchanging insults in a highly formulaic way. The pattern is almost invariably: Speaker A starts with **Your mother (Verb) . . .** or **Your mother is like . . .** . Speaker B parries, trying to outdo A. Third parties present evaluate the game.

For example, here is an excerpt from a ritual insult exchange recorded in New York City:

> *Boot:* His mother go to work without any draws on so that she c'd get a good breeze.
> *Money:* Your mother go, your mother go work without anything on, just go naked.
> *David:* That's a lie.
> *Boot:* Your mother, when she go to work and she had—those, you know—open-toe shoes, well her stockings reach her be—sweeping the ground.
> *Ricky:* (laughs)
> *Roger:* Ho lawd! (laughs)
> *Money:* Your mother have holes—potatoes in her shoes.
> *Boot:* Your mother got a putty chest (laugh).
> *Money:* Arrgh! Aww—you wish you had a putty chest, right?[22]

Money loses his first turn because it is less funny than Boot's initiating turn; his loss is confirmed by David's **That's a lie**. Money loses again when he asks a question (**You wish you had a putty chest?**), instead of retorting with a more preposterous claim, and gives up with **Aww!**

As the example suggests, the dozens are well formed only if they are intended and understood to be impersonal, which is usually achieved by making claims so exaggerated as to be obviously false. Among members of a group who can assess the insult's referential truth value or lack of it, such speech acts are acts of friendly verbal dueling. As a ritual they are exempt from consequences other than approval for winning; however, between groups ill-acquainted with each other, they are inappropriate and often meant as (or taken as) acts of aggression, frequently provoking fights.

Age-Grading

All the characteristics we have been discussing here are socially graded, with the greatest differences from SAE being in evidence in the speech of the lower working class (cf. Figure 8–2). They are also heavily age-graded, with young children evidencing the greatest number of forms different from SAE. In particular, it is often noted that in any BEV speech community invariant **be** is used mainly by preteenagers. Comparative studies of the speech of Black and White children of the same class might show similar kinds of stratification, though probably with some statistical differences. Unfortunately, to date most of the acquisitional studies of Black children have focused on school-age children in ghetto communities, especially from the age of eight up, while acquisitional studies of White children have for the most part focused on the speech of preschool children and children up to the age of six, with little emphasis on social stratification. Therefore we know next to nothing about similarities and differences between age-graded social and ethnic groups.

ATTITUDES TO THE USE OF LANGUAGE VARIETIES IN LITERATURE

The extensive use of colloquialisms or of regional, social, or other varieties in literature to portray character or indicate social meanings is fairly recent. In the early periods of English literature, authors wrote mainly in their own

dialect. Whatever social meaning this dialect conveyed derived from the use of English as opposed to Latin, or, in the Middle English period, French. It did not derive from contrast with other varieties of English. Authors simply accepted their variety of English as the norm. Even the most obvious way of indicating social meaning through use of language varieties—interpolation of a passage in one variety within the context of a different one—is rarely found before the sixteenth century. Among the few examples extant is the use of Northern English dialogue by two Cambridge students in Chaucer's "The Reeve's Tale." The advent of printing in the late fifteenth century inevitably had a homogenizing effect on the language. In his famous introduction to the first printed edition of a translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, published in 1490, Caxton discusses how he agonized over selecting a suitable language variety for use in print, and cites an incident in which a Northerner asking for **egges** "eggs" got into an altercation with a Southern innkeeper who insisted she knew no French. Finally they came to an understanding when she realized that his **egges** were the Northern dialect form for her **eyren**. Caxton selected a fairly Southern variety of English, essentially that of London in the later fifteenth century, setting a precedent for what eventually came to be Standard British English.

In the sixteenth century, a growing interest in people as social and secular beings rather than as moral and religious ones was reflected in new literary forms, particularly the drama and "picaresque" stories telling of wild, often bawdy adventures by characters of less than noble background. These new forms of literature brought attention to various forms of language, including colloquial versus formal, regional versus nonregional. Even so, the prime use of varieties other than the author's own was for comic purposes. In Shakespeare's plays, for example, regionalisms are mainly reserved for rustics and clowns, and verse and prose function as separate varieties, the former being considered more formal than the latter. This distinction extends itself to genre, verse being used for tragedy and prose for comedy. Good examples of all these different language types can be found in the *King Henry IV* plays and in *Henry V*. An additional use of regionalisms can be found in *King Lear*, where Edgar adopts distinctly Southwestern speech when he pretends to be mad.

During the eighteenth century, interest focused on developing a distinctly literary language, and the tradition of an elevated poetic diction became established (for some examples see Chapter 3, page 117). In this context, the derogatory attitude to dialectal varieties that had developed in the preceding centuries naturally became more marked. However, from the late eighteenth century on, a new attitude to nonstandard varieties emerged, beginning with the Romantic movement. Among other things, this movement was characterized by its search for spontaneity and authenticity of feeling, and for a reunion of human beings with the natural world as opposed to the urban industrial one. These ideals, it was believed, were exemplified by primitive peoples (so-called "natural man") and rural peasantry (so-called "common man"). Many Romantics, such as Wordsworth in England and Rousseau in France, took an interest in the language, thought, and customs of such groups and undertook to represent them in literature. Wordsworth's search for the language of human beings in their natural state did not lead him to the use of dialect, but rather to a search for a diction that was not elevated, but that remained poetic. Others after him sought to represent language closer to actual speech, sometimes with great attention to details of language variation. The Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759–96) exemplifies the transition to this new Romantic attitude from the older comic view of nonstandard varieties. Burns, one of the most popular poets of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, wrote many poems in Standard British English, but is best remembered for his representations of his native Lowland Scots dialect in poetry. Sometimes he used Scots dialect in the traditional way, for comic purposes, as illustrated by the opening stanzas of his poem "To a Louse":

HA! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin' ferlie°?
Your impudence protects you sairly:
I canna say but ye strunt° rarely,
Owre gauze and lace;
Tho' faith, I fear ye dine but sparely
On sic° a place.

Ye ugly, creepin', blastit wonner,
Detested, shunn'd by saunt an' sinner,
How dare you set your fit upon her,
Sae fine a lady!
Gae somewhere else and seek your dinner,
On some poor body,
Swith°, in some beggar's haffet° squattle°;
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle°
Wi' ither kindred, jumpin' cattle,
In shoals and nations;
Whare *horn* nor *bane* ne'er dare unsettle
Your thick plantations.[23]

1 **ferlie:** wonder (term of contempt) 3 **strunt:** walk sturdily 6 **sic:** such 13 **swith:** get away **haffet:** head **squattle:** settle 14 **sprattle:** scramble

This sort of usage is in keeping with the comic tradition. What marks Burns as a Romantic, however, is his use of dialect in serious poetry as well, where it is intended to convey sincerity and emotional fervor, and to give a kind of linguistic authenticity.

. . . were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,
The desert were a paradise,

If thou wert there, if thou wert there.
Or were I monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign;
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.[24]

Neither Burns nor his nineteenth-century successors succeeded completely in overcoming the traditional condescension toward nonstandard varieties, however. For example, Burns's poems on the whole are clearly more standard the more serious they are. And he as well as other nineteenth-century poets were not above using nonstandard dialects as a comic screen for taboo material (a device still common in contemporary television). Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that Romanticism did show far greater interest in social and regional varieties than was shown in earlier literature.

A major turning point in American writing, the point at which American style came into its own as distinct from British style, is the point at which nonstandard language came to be used not for local color, but for character. Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, published in 1885, is often thought to signal the beginning of this new idiom. It is the first sustained attempt to break through the leveling force of the standard written language to an individual voice by using a "poor White" boy as the narrator, and hence the boy's language for the frame of reference of the novel. It is also the first major work in which the level of incongruity between standard and vernacular is drastically reduced by rendering the narrative itself (as a first-person narrative) in the vernacular, not just the dialogue.

From then on, the use in American literature of all kinds of linguistic varieties, whether colloquial, ethnic, regional, or other, became very widespread not only in dialogue but also in first-person narrative. It is interesting to consider how radically different a twentieth-century *Moll Flanders* could be. In the eighteenth century, Defoe had no choice but to use Standard English, because Moll would have appeared comic and unsympathetic to a contemporary audience if she had used the vernacular. Had he been writing in this century, Defoe would have had a choice and would probably have used vernacular forms at least in part of the novel. Instead, he has a fictional editor explain in a preface that Moll's language is less vulgar and more modest than would be expected because her penitence led her to alter and purify her speech.

STEREOTYPIC VERSUS VARIABLE REPRESENTATIONS OF LANGUAGE VARIETIES

In studying the use of nonstandard varieties in English literature, it is important to remember that English spelling does not represent any existing dialect phonetically. By convention, therefore, when a writer uses normal

English spellings in dialogue, for example, we infer that the pronunciation intended is the standard of the audience for which the work is written, while special deviant spellings indicate the pronunciation of a dialect that is not the audience's standard. This can lead to some rather unusual variations. For example, a writer representing an Irishman to a predominantly English audience might be inclined to use spelling to indicate Irish pronunciation, while the same writer might not do so when presenting an Irishman to a predominantly Irish audience.

No writer can capture all the features of spoken language. The intonation, all the minute phonetic details, speakers' tendency to leave sentences unfinished, to hesitate and make false starts are naturally omitted. So too, are certain features of any regional, social, or ethnic variety—selection is imperative if the reader's attention is to be held, and if focus is to be placed on meaning rather than form.[25] Nevertheless, it is possible to render a wealth of detail about language varieties in writing; careful evaluation of the language varieties used in a text can be useful to the literary critic. A recognition of the presence and function of variability is a valuable tool in assessing what an author is attempting to do, while knowledge of the variety in question makes it possible to assess how successful and accurate an author is in representing speech.

We have seen that the speech of any individual, far from being consistent, varies a great deal according to such contextual factors as degree of formality, identity of addressee, attitude being conveyed, and speech act being performed. We have also seen that there is unsystematic variation at many points, which is why studies of variation speak of tendencies and probabilities rather than strict presence or absence of a characteristic. Written representations of different language varieties often overlook both these sorts of variability, and simply select a few markers of a particular variety, using them consistently without real attention to the details of the variety in question. This is the kind of representation we speak of as stereotypic. Until the mid-nineteenth century, most attempts to represent language varieties in literature were stereotypic, and many still are. The quality of stereotyping varies, but is often quite thin. At the weakest end of the scale is "eye-dialect," which consists of nothing but the use of "spelling errors" that in fact reflect no distinctive phonological, lexical, or syntactic structure whatsoever, like the familiar **ennything, exkusable, wimmin, thuh**. Truer to linguistic reality, but still far removed is the use of phonological-morphological markers like **runnin'** or of stigmatized lexical forms like **ain't**, which indicate no specific linguistic variety, just "general nonstandard" or "colloquial."

In addition to oversimplifying, writers often make outright mistakes in representing language varieties, especially varieties of which they are not native speakers. Notorious in this regard are the attempts of British mystery writer Agatha Christie to characterize American English. Here is an example from Christie's *The Secret of Chimneys*, in which the American speaker is one "Mr. Hiram P. Fish of New York City":

"I opine," said Mr. Fish, "that you are seeking for fingerprints?"
"Maybe," said the superintendent laconically.
"I should say to that, on a night such as last night, an intruder would have left footprints on the hardwood floor."
"None inside, plenty outside."[26]

Mr. Fish's language here is distinguished by (a) the archaic verb **opine** and (b) the nonstandard **seeking for**. These forms clearly stand out, but there is nothing particularly American about either of them. Moreover, Mr. Fish uses some very non-American forms, notably the auxiliary **should** rather than **would** in **I should say**. In a slightly later excerpt, some other, more distinctive features are added:

The American bowed. "That's too kind of you, Lady Eileen."
"Mr. Fish," said Anthony, "had quite a peaceful morning."
Mr. Fish shot a quick glance at him. "Ah, sir, you observed me, then, in my seclooded retreat? There are moments, sir, when far from the madding crowd is the only motto for a man of quiet tastes."
Bundle had drifted on, and the American and Anthony were left together. The former dropped his voice a little. "I opine," he said, "that there is considerable mystery about this little dust up?"
"Any amount of it," said Anthony.
"That guy with the bald head was perhaps a family connection?"
"Something of the kind."
"These Central European nations beat the band," declared Mr. Fish. "It's kind of being rumored around that the deceased gentleman was a Royal Highness. Is that so, do you know?"[27]

Here again, we find the bizarre **I opine**. In addition, a dash of phonology is added in **seclooded** (as opposed to British [stklyudəd]). But what stands out most here are Fish's American colloquialisms: **this little dust up, guy, beat the band**, and **kind of**. The reason these expressions stand out, however, is not merely that other characters don't use them, but that Hiram Fish uses them in a way that would be most unusual for any American speaker, for in Fish's usage the colloquialisms occur incongruously in a noncolloquial speech situation and in the midst of such formal expressions as **considerable mystery, sir, family connection, deceased gentleman**. Moreover, they clash with marked Britishisms in Fish's speech, like **That's too kind**. Fish's inconsistency here does not make him sound like any real American, but it does make him sound different, and different in a way that lets Christie's well-known biases show through: Fish comes across as a person who, though useful and well-meaning enough, has simply not mastered the manners of polite society—a traditional British stereotype of the American. All these patterns are summed up in Fish's final remarks in the book:

A little stir of excitement passes round. "That'll do, sonny," says Mr. Fish. "We shall do nicely now." . . .
"I guess," said Mr. Hiram Fish *sotto voce* to himself and the world at large, "that this has been a great little old week."[28]

Errors like Christie's are common, as are stereotypic representations of regional and social varieties of English. Nevertheless, there are many authors since Twain who have been extremely successful in reflecting the variability of spoken language, despite the limitations of print and English spelling. Before looking at some examples, it may be useful to point out that just as writers often write carelessly and stereotypically, readers often tend to read carelessly and stereotypically, that is, they often notice only a few features of the language they read without paying attention to what particular variety has been chosen, or to how it is represented. Indeed, when critics discuss literary works that reflect speech varieties, they simply tend to speak vaguely about "colloquial" or "nonstandard" or "dialect" English, without distinguishing one variety from another. Yet these three labels refer to quite different phenomena, as we can see by examining a few short passages from prose fiction.

Consider, for example, the first few lines of *The Catcher in the Rye* again (quoted on page 257). We hear a boy who is using a variety without regionalisms and, at least in this part of the text, without nonstandard forms. His language is colloquial, or "vernacular," the variety identified with relatively casual street speech. It is colloquial in its use of **you'll** rather than **you will**, its string of loosely connected coordinate sentences, and in its personal tone: for example, the injection of personal evaluations like **lousy** and **if you want to know the truth**. In addition there are distinctly nonliterary locutions like **that David Copperfield kind of crap**. When *The Catcher in the Rye* was published in 1951, "four-letter words" were taboo in much speech and nearly all writing. To use **crap** was daring in a way that is hard to imagine today, and carried with it a meaning of social insult that contributes to the rejection of the reader even more than **really** and other features already discussed that cast doubt on the reader's supposed interest in the story.

In the first lines from Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* we hear a rather different voice:

You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied, one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly—Tom's Aunt Polly, she is—and Mary, and the Widow Douglas, is all told about in that book—which is mostly a true book; with some stretchers, as I said before.[29]

Huck uses the same kinds of colloquial features as Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*: contraction, tagged-on phrases like **but mainly he told the truth** or **as I said before**. He also uses interpolated explanations such as **Tom's Aunt Polly, she is** and repetition of words like **mainly**. Unlike Caulfield, Huck also uses widely attested nonstandard features like double negatives

and **ain't**, as in **that ain't no matter**. **Ain't** was not as stigmatized when Mark Twain was writing as it is now, and was presumably not intended to have the same kind of effect as it has on a modern audience, but there are enough other features like the multiple negation to indicate that Huck's speech is meant to be nonstandard. While the novel contains many regionalisms, particularly in the quasi-phonetic spelling of the dialogue, there is nothing distinctly regional about the first lines, at least not sufficiently so for a reader to identify the "Pike County dialect" that Twain says he is representing.

Contrast the first lines of a novel entitled *Sitting Pretty* by Al Young:

> Maybe it was on accounta it was a full moon. I dont know. It's a whole lotta things I use to be dead certain about—like, day follow night and night follow day—things I wouldnt even bet on no more. It's been that way since me and Squirrel broke up and that's been yeahbout fifteen-some-odd years ago, *odd* years—July the Fourth.[30]

This is colloquial in the same ways as the other two passages: the forms **don't** and **it's**, the tagged-on phrases, and the indicators of hesitation like **maybe**, **yeahbout**. It is also nonstandard, as reflected by the multiple negatives: **things I wouldn't even bet on no more**. We know that the narrator, whose name is the title of the book, is at least middle-aged since he broke up with Squirrel some fifteen years before, just as we can guess that Huck is a child because he refers to Aunt Polly, but the language itself is not distinctly age-correlated in either passage. Sitting Pretty's language is, however, different from Huck's because, in addition to the colloquialisms and nonstandard forms, there are some features that indicate Black English vernacular, such as **It's a whole lotta things I use to be dead certain about**.

Another feature which sharply differentiates Sitting Pretty's language from Huck's is the absence of some apostrophes (**dont**, **wouldnt**) and run-together phrases like **on accounta**, features which are indicators to the reader that the norms of writing are consciously being broken, and the sound, not the written word, is all-important.

Contrast Andrew Lytle's beginning, also with colloquial and nonstandard features, but with distinct regionalisms in addition.

> "I want to speak to Mister McGregor."
>
> Yes, sir, that's what he said. Not marster, but MISTER McGREGOR. If I live to be a hundred, and I don't think I will, account of my kidneys, I'll never forget the feelen that come over the room when he said them two words: Mister McGregor. The air shivered into a cold jelly; and all of us, me, ma, and pa, sort of froze in it. I remember thinken how much we favored one of them waxwork figures Sis Lou had learnt to make at Doctor Price's Female Academy. There I was, a little shaver of eight, standen by the window a-blowen my breath on it so's I could draw my name, like chillun'll do when they're kept to the house with a cold. The knock come sudden and sharp, I remember, as I was crossen a T. My heart flopped down in my belly and commenced to flutter around in my breakfast; then popped up to my ears and drawed all the blood out'n my nose except a little sack that got left in the point to swell and tingle. It's a singular thing, but the first time that nigger's fist hit the door I knowed it was the knock of death.[31]

This passage is clearly colloquial, as signaled by the contractions **don't** and **I'll**, presence of **-en** for **-ing**, and expressions like **sort of**, **shaver**. Nonstandard features here include the past tenses **come**, **drawed**, and the deictic **them**. Among the regionalisms indicating this is a Southern variety of American English are the prefix **a-** on the progressive verb form **a-blowen'**, and the lexical items **out'n**, corresponding to **out of**, **commenced** and **singular** as non-formal terms, **favored** meaning "preferred," **chillun** for "children." The address form **marster** here gives an interesting example of Southern "eye-dialect." Most Southern varieties are *r*-less, consequently the **r** in **marster** indicates not the pronunciation [marstər], but the pronunciation [mastər], as opposed to standard [mæstər].

Representing the variability of language requires a considerable degree of linguistic attention, since a feature will carry no significance if it is used too sporadically, and will become stereotypic if it is used too consistently and if it is not apparent. An example of remarkably detailed variability is provided by the passage cited below from Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. This passage is cited at considerable length, since it is only in extensive materials that one can fully appreciate the details of variability, its function, and its systematization.

Zora Neale Hurston was a Black writer who wrote in the 1930s about the Black experience in the Deep South in the period just after Emancipation and during her own time. An anthropologist as well as a novelist, she was primarily concerned with Black culture, and she saw in the manipulation of language one of its most distinctive characteristics, and one of its great strengths.

> Long before the year was up, Janie noticed that her husband had stopped talking in rhymes to her. He had ceased to wonder at her long black hair and finger it. Six months back he had told her, "If Ah kin haul de wood heah and shop it fuh yuh, look lak you oughta be able tuh tote it inside. Mah fust wife never bothered me 'bout choppin' no wood nohow. She'd grab dat ax and sling chips lak uh man. You done been spoilt rotten."
>
> So Janie had told him, "Ah'm just as stiff as you is stout. If you can stand not to chop and tote wood Ah reckon you can stand not to git no dinner. 'Scuse mah freezolity, Mist' Killicks, but Ah don't mean to chop de first chip."
>
> "Aw you know Ah'm gwine chop de wood fuh yuh. Even if you is stingy as you can be wid me. Yo' Grandma and me myself done spoilt yuh now, and Ah reckon Ah have tuh keep on wid it."
>
> One morning soon he called her out of the kitchen to the barn. He had the mule all saddled at the gate.

"Looka heah, LilBit, help me out some. Cut up dese seed taters fuh me. Ah got tuh go step off a piece."

"Where you goin'?"

"Over tuh Lake City tuh see uh man about uh mule." . . .

"Ah'll cut de p'taters fuh yuh. When yuh comin' back?"

"Don't know exactly. Round dust dark Ah reckon. It's uh sorta long trip—specially if Ah hafter lead one on de way back."

When Janie had finished indoors she sat down in the barn with the potatoes. But springtime reached her in there so she moved everything to a place in the yard where she could see the road. The noon sun filtered through the leaves of the fine oak tree where she sat and made lacy patterns on the ground. She had been there a long time when she heard whistling coming down the road.

It was a cityfied, stylish dressed man with his hat set at an angle that didn't belong in these parts. His coat was over his arm, but he didn't need it to represent his clothes. The shirt with the silk sleeveholders was dazzling enough for the world. He whistled, mopped his face and walked like he knew where he was going. He was a seal-brown color but he acted like Mr. Washburn or somebody like that to Janie. Where would such a man be coming from and where was he going? He didn't look her way nor no other way except straight ahead, so Janie ran to the pump and jerked the handle hard while she pumped. It made a loud noise and also made her heavy hair fall down. So he stopped and looked hard, and then he asked her for a cool drink of water.

Janie pumped it off until she got a good look at the man. He talked friendly while he drank.

Joe Starks was the name, yeah Joe Starks from in and through Georgy. Been workin' for white folks all his life. Saved up some money—round three hundred dollars, yes indeed, right here in his pocket. Kept hearin' 'bout them buildin' a new state down heah in Floridy and sort of wanted to come. But he was makin' money where he was. But when he heard all about 'em makin' a town all outa colored folks, he knowed dat was de place he wanted to be . . . . Where was Janie's papa and mama?

"Dey dead, Ah reckon. Ah wouldn't know 'bout 'em 'cause mah Grandma raised me. She dead too."

"She dead too! Well, who's lookin' after a lil girl-chile lak you?"

"Ah'm married."

"You married? You ain't hardly old enough to be weaned. Ah betcha you still craves sugar-tits, doncher?"[32]

(This passage is not the opening of the novel, but it is the opening section of Janie's story.)

All three speakers in the passage use language variably, but if we look at overall tendencies in the dialogue, it is clear that Janie's husband Logan is being presented as the least standard of the three. When Janie talks back to him, her **first chip** (11) contrasts with his **fust wife** (5), her **can** and **to** contrast

with his **kin** and **tuh**, her **If you can stand not to chop and tote wood** (8–9) stands out as markedly standard and formal after his **If Ah kin haul de wood heah and chop it fuh yuh** (4). Hurston thus uses variability to set up a power hierarchy, where Janie's standardness and formality correspond with her power over her husband, while later on Starks's ability to flatter with standard language and condescend with nonstandard (54–58) corresponds with his power over Janie.

It would be tedious to detail all the linguistic variability Hurston has incorporated into this text, but a few examples will illustrate two points: Most features that are currently considered quantitatively characteristic of BEV are present in this text, and where certain features are rare, such as consonant cluster reduction, there appears to be a correlation with anticipated reader difficulty.

In phonology we note: initial and final **d** for SAE /ð/ in function words: **dat** (6), **wid** (13) (this is regular in the dialogue, but variable in the indirectly narrated talk); variable rapid-speech forms of auxiliaries: **kin** (4), but **can** (9); and centralized forms of high back vowels (typical of spoken American): **fuh** (*r*-less) **yuh** (4), **tuh** (5), but **you** (9), **to** (9). There are also variably reduced consonant clusters: **girl-chile** (54), but **old** (57). Consonant cluster deletion is very rare in this novel. In the 1930s BEV would presumably have had fewer rather than more consonant clusters than the contemporary language, considering that BEV developed from a relatively uninflected system (see Chapter 9). Perhaps consonant cluster reduction is absent because it would hamper the reading process; perhaps the reasons are also aesthetic—the number of necessary apostrophes, given the graphic representation adopted here, would establish too much of a barrier between narrator and reader. Finally, we may note monophthongization of diphthongs in function words like **Ah**, **mah**, **lak**, but not content words (we do not find **wahf**). It appears that most content words remain standard, even though the function morphology may be nonstandard, because readers need norms on which to peg the variation. This seems to be a common feature of dialect writing, and distinguishes it sharply from bilingual writing and from experiments such as Joyce's in which new forms are created. Examples of these kinds of writing will be discussed in the next chapter.

Several syntactic features are especially noticeable in the Hurston passage. One is the presence of the BEV present tense-marker **-s** for all persons (as opposed to the third person singular present tense-marker of SAE), as in: **you is** (8), **you craves** (58). Hurston appears to be taking this feature as a particularly salient marker of BEV; this may also help explain why consonant cluster deletion is disfavored—it would wipe out the present tense-marker entirely except in the case of verbs like **be**. Another is the variable use of zero copula. While absence of copula is favored, as in **Dey dead** (52), **You married** (57), it is present in the first person **Ah'm married** (56). This is in fact a well-known feature of current BEV, and is just one more example of the care with which the spoken language is represented. Closely connected with

absence of copula is the preference for noninverted forms of the question, as in: **When yuh comin' back?** (21). But again this absence is variable, in keeping with spoken BEV, cf. **Who's lookin' after a lil girl-chile lak you?** (54–55).

Noticeably absent among BEV syntactic features is invariant **be**. One can only speculate about the reasons for this—possibly it was not used by Black speakers in Florida at the time Hurston was writing. This, however, is doubtful, particularly in the light of the fact that other BEV-markers like **bin** are also absent. More probable is the constraint mentioned earlier—the variability used is limited to what the author conceived as the potential passive knowledge of her White readers, and she may have felt that it did not include **be** and **bin**. In the case of **bin**, even speakers of BEV have inconsistent responses, and as we have seen, in the case of invariant **be**, White speakers use it as a form of **will be**, but not of the iterative habitual. Therefore use of such forms could cause misunderstandings.

Another very important aspect of this passage is the fact that BEV features are not restricted to the dialogue, but occur also in the language of the narrator. At both the beginning and end of the text, we can see a sharp split between the standard language of the narrator and the BEV of the dialogue, but toward the middle, the narrative shifts into a stream of consciousness mode in which Janie's point of view becomes uppermost, and the language of narration changes accordingly. The first indication of this shift is the appearance of deictics oriented toward Janie: **she heard whistling coming down the road** (line 29) and **that didn't belong in these parts** (31). Then in (36) we hear the so-called free indirect style characterized by **would** in **where would he be coming from?** With these shifts come, first, colloquialisms like **stylish dressed** (30), then nonstandard **nor no** (37). Lines 44–50 give a third person version of Starks's own speech as heard by Janie, and here we get the first nonstandard phonology: **workin'** (45), **hearin'** (47). This section effectively blurs the distinction between narration and dialogue. From 51 on, we shift back to the original pattern of SAE narrative and BEV dialogue.

This shift into Janie's mind in the opening paragraphs of her (Janie's) story is Hurston's way of engaging the reader, particularly the non-Black reader, into Janie's personal and ethnic point of view. Thus though she chooses overall to narrate in SAE, Hurston makes an intricate effort to overcome any incongruity or distancing that may result, and to make clear at the outset that the point of view in the novel is Janie's, even if the narrator's language is generally not the same as Janie's.

Of course, one is immediately led to ask why Hurston didn't simply have Janie tell her own story in the first person, and in BEV. Part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that the reading public for novels in the 1930s in the U.S. was predominantly Whites with little knowledge of BEV, and that the cumbersome typography for writing BEV would have been too hard to read at length. But these facts point to a more general communicative problem confronted by minority writers. Whether they belong to racial, regional, or social minorities, for them the standard language is not the norm of the culture with which they identify and which they are trying to represent. Rather, the

standard is a superimposed variety, the language often identified with oppression or defeat. The linguistic problem, then, is essentially how to use the conventions of written language to convey a different set of values, in other words, to break the norms of Standard English writing and establish new ones. In this context, writing becomes in some sense a revolutionary act, a conscious effort to create a dynamics of power. As the Hurston passage exemplifies, the difficulties of such an effort begin with very basic questions like narrator point of view. The first major Black writer in America, Charles Chesnutt, dealt with this problem differently from Hurston. In his first collection of stories, *The Conjure Woman* (1899), Chesnutt used a White Northerner as narrator of tales told him by a former Black slave, in direct imitation of Harris's Uncle Remus stories. On the one hand, such a maneuver sounds like a cop-out and a betrayal of ethnic identity; on the other hand, it should also be thought of as a communicative strategy. Given a White literary tradition in which Blacks were viewed from the outside and from above, as it were, and given an almost exclusively White reading public unaccustomed to the idea of reading a Black writer, one might easily decide that communication would be better effected if the authoritative position of narrator were occupied by a White rather than a Black. Chesnutt's strategy can be compared to that of nineteenth-century women who adopted male pen names (like George Eliot, George Sand, or Ellis Bell) in the hope of being taken more seriously.

It was not until several decades after *Their Eyes Were Watching God* that narrative totally in BEV began to appear. Al Young's novel *Sitting Pretty* (1975), already quoted briefly, is one very successful example. Here is a somewhat longer excerpt from this work:

> Well, they sure got a whole lotta colored faces into that promo. He and Patricia ended up passin out one-dollar bills left and right to keep some of the brothers and sisters from clutterin up the set and ruinin everything.
>
> "Yall gon play this flick over television?" one particularly obstreperous teenager come askin Crews just when we bout to do a take.
>
> "That's correct," Patricia answer, runnin interference.
>
> "I wasn't talkin to you, sister," the little dude say. "I was askin this white man that's actin like he in charge."
>
> "I am in charge here," Crews say. "What can I do for you?"
>
> "Yall comin down here in the community, exploitin us to make this picture and we wanna know what's in it for us?"
>
> Crews say, "If you dont mind, sir, I beg to differ with you. Far from exploiting the community, it's our intention to rectify a number of inaccurate and distorted images which have previously been projected by media regarding the community. I should think you would welcome our presence."
>
> "You aint answered my question, faggot. I wanna know what's in it for us."

"You mean what's in it for *you*, dont you?" Crews tell him, noddin at Patricia.

She walk over and hand the joker a five-dollar bill. That's all it took. He break out into a big chesscat grin, rub his chin, cram the money in his pocket and turn to a coupla his buddies and shout, "See, what I tell you? You gotta assert yourself and confront these honkies and bullshit toms. We cant just hang back when our rights is bein violated and have them run all over us."

Kid couldna been more'n thirteen. I couldnt imagine what rights of his was being violated, but I did catch myself thinkin: *Well, more power to you, son, for loudtalkin the man outta five U.S. dollars!* At the same time I'm wonderin whether white folks that be in commercials have to go thru the same kindsa headaches.

The sky cloudin up and it look like it might rain, so we pack up and rush over to do the final commercial which take place down by the ocean on the beach where Playland use to be before it shut down. I still miss all them rides and amusement machines.

I'm perched up on topa one of them giant rocks with waves washin in and out and breakin all around me. My only lines go somethin like this: "As you can see, I'm Sitting Pretty. Just like KRZY Radio, I'm on the scene wherever it's happenin. Set your dial to KRZY and youll be sittin pretty too."[33]

Here, in contrast with *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the narrative point of view is uniformly first person and the narration uniformly BEV, with little discontinuity between the language Sitting Pretty uses to narrate and the language he uses in dialogue with the other characters. Notice that the BEV narrative does slow down the reading process, something Hurston may have been trying to avoid. Young demands that the reader take time to read and to listen, in part to deliberately counteract the speed and simultaneity of multimedia expression such as is experienced in TV and films. On the other hand, he eases the reader's task typographically by omitting apostrophes and using fewer unusual spellings than Hurston.

Like Hurston, Young is very sensitive to details of language, and there is a lot of variability in his representation of BEV. The advertisement in lines 40–42 is a particularly good example. **I'm Sitting Pretty** (line 40) with **-ing** contrasts with line 42 **you'll be sittin pretty too**. This is not to be understood as a switch from a more standard to a less standard variety in an effort to create camaraderie. Instead, it reflects a fact of BEV—that only the participle **-ing** and **-thing** in indefinite pronouns are normally rendered [ɪn] (or [−θɪn]). To the reader, the variability is an indication of ethnicity, not degree of formality or intimacy.

Rather than analyze the variability in Young's text in detail, we have given you the opportunity to do so in an exercise. Here we will comment instead on the way Young's use of variability differs from Hurston's. In Hurston's text, we saw considerable variation within the language of each character and within the language of the narrator. Moreover this variation

was meaningful as an expression of differing relationships between characters and differing relationships between narrator and reader. In Young's text, on the other hand, the narrator's language is consistent and the reader's relationship to the narrator is also stable, the reader's engagement having been assumed. Except for Sitting Pretty, the characters themselves rarely shift in their speech patterns. In the main, the variability in Young's novel lies in two areas: variation within speech that simply reflects the inconsistency of speech, and contrasts between characters that reflect their differing social roles. For instance, Crews and Patricia both speak Standard English. Crews is White, Patricia is Black, but both speak the same way as a function of sharing the same social status. Both are pompous and, by implication in the context of the novel as a whole, so is Standard English in general. The teenager is ridiculous in his own way, like Crews spouting clichés, but the clichés of another social group. In this novel, differences in language, then, are primarily a function of different people, and reflect the enormous disparity of individuals.

The difference between Hurston's use of variability and Young's can be seen in part as indicators of the different narrator-reader relations they establish, and also of the different contexts they portray. Hurston's characters comprise a small range of people in an essentially rural setting where details of phonology and small syntactic differences are all-important in distinguishing social roles. Young writes about a large spectrum of San Francisco Bay Area characters from many walks of life and ethnic backgrounds, and many age groups. The variety of the characters reduces the possibility and the importance of detailed linguistic variability. The latter can only be given full rein in the character of Sitting Pretty who, as the narrator and hero, represents an eclectic but unifying force among the diversity.

There is yet another step from using a variety other than the written standard in first-person narrative to using it in third-person narrative. Relatively speaking, few such narratives exist in any distinctly local, social, or ethnic variety of English. One of the more successful ones in BEV is June Jordan's story, *His Own Where*, about two Black teenagers who make their own world, alienated from the rest of society. It begins:

> First time they come, he simply say, "Come on." He tell her they are going not too far away. She go along not worrying about the heelstrap pinching at her skin, but worrying about the conversation. Long walks take some talking. Otherwise it be embarrassing just side by side embarrassing.[34]

Like Young's *Sitting Pretty*, Jordan's *His Own Where* develops the ethnic perspective over the universal, even though it is in third-person narrative. It is hardly surprising that this is so, since in the current linguistic situation the standard has as its function the public, "objective" mode of expression, while the vernacular, whether merely colloquial or also regional, social, or ethnic, is associated with personal and "subjective" modes of expression.

In writing such as this, the norms of Standard written English have been completely broken. It is far from clear at present whether any new norms are being established. However, partly because of recent successes in using a wide spectrum of linguistic varieties in literature, and partly because of changing attitudes to writing, serious attention has in the last few years been paid to the possibility of using BEV even in nonliterary writings. An example of note is Alex Haley's use of BEV dialogue in *Roots* (1978), an example of a genre which might be called fictionalized history. A far more radical departure is the occasional use, especially for positive evaluation of BEV, of distinctly Black lexical items and exaggerated phonetic spellings such as **baaad** (in the BEV sense of "powerful") in the descriptive prose of Geneva Smitherman's *Talkin and Testifyin; the Language of Black America* (1977), a book on Black language. We can expect to see many more experiments of this type in the future.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

Among several introductions to "sociolinguistics," Trudgill's *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction* covers the widest range of topics with the greatest clarity for the beginner. Another far-ranging book, with focus on cultural contexts for language, is Burling's *Man's Many Voices: Language in Its Cultural Context*. Useful collections of readings include Allen and Underwood's *Readings in American Dialectology*, Williamson and Burke's *A Various Language: Perspectives on American Dialects*, Bailey and Robinson's *Varieties of Present-Day English*, and Pride and Holmes's *Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings*, all of which focus on both regional and social varieties. Journals with a similarly broad range of interest are *Language in Society*, *Sociolinguistics*, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, and with limitation to America, *American Speech*.

Reed's *Dialects of American English* summarizes regional dialect studies in the United States. McDavid's "Dialects of American English," in Francis's *The Structure of American English*, provides an excellent survey of regional distinctions in the Eastern United States, with some discussion of sociological and demographic backgrounds. For British dialects, which we have not been able to discuss here, Wakelin's *English Dialects: An Introduction* is invaluable; it includes some detailed comments on historical backgrounds.

Social variation is the focus of Labov's *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. A series of articles modified into a book, this details the key methodological and theoretical work of one of America's most influential sociolinguists. Less advanced reading is Wolfram and Fasold's *The Study of Social Dialects in American English*. Trudgill's *The Social Differentiation of English in Norwich* is an important study of social variation in eastern England.

Basic reading for Black English is Labov's "The Logic of Non-Standard English." Considerably more advanced is another collection of his papers, *Language in the Inner City*. DeStefano's *Language, Society, and Education: A Profile of Black English* and Stoller's *Black American English: Its Background and Its Usage in the Schools and Literature* are both collections of key articles on Black English, many of them of particular interest to teachers. Both contain Fasold and Wolfram's "Some Linguistic Features of Negro English," which provides an indispensable checklist of BEV features. Other books that pay attention to historical, cultural, and communicative characteristics of BEV are Dillard's *Black English* and *Lexicon of Black English*, and Kochman's *Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America*. As the title of the latter suggests, its particular focus is on the speech act functions of BEV.

One topic that we have not been able to discuss here is sex-correlated language variation. This is well represented in Thorne and Henley's *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*, which contains some articles and an extensive annotated bibliography. Particular works on the subject are R. Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place*, Key's *Male/Female Language*, and Nichols's "Black Women in the Rural South: Conservative and Innovative." Although the latter is a study of a creole-speaking community in South Carolina (see Chapter 9), the findings are valid for a large number of other communities as well.

Language varieties in literature have not been studied extensively from a linguistic point of view. Bridgman's *The Colloquial Style in America* exemplifies a literary approach to language variation, especially colloquial and regional variation. More strictly linguistic is Page's *Speech in the English Novel*, which is a valuable study of the problems facing the writer of dialogue. The section on dialect in literature in Williamson and Burke's *A Various Language: Perspectives on American Dialects* provides several models for discussing details of linguistic variation, including papers on the language of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Catcher in the Rye*; it also provides easy access to Ives's important paper, "A Theory of Literary Dialect."

Exercises

1. "Translate" a paragraph or so of any well-known historical document, such as the Gettysburg address, or a much-used text, such as The Lord's Prayer, into modern colloquial English. Then discuss the difference in effect between the original version and yours.

2. Examine your own regional dialect or that of a friend with respect to the dialect features for American English mentioned in this chapter. Take your research beyond those features mentioned, if you can.

3. Select a product advertised by one company (e.g., a brand of cigarette or deodorant) in a variety of magazines. Discuss the way in which the language of the advertisements for this product varies according to the audience expected, in terms both of what is said about the product and of how the audience is addressed. Given the right company, you should be able to find differences that correlate with social status, ethnic group, age or sex, or some combination of these.

4. Read the passage from Al Young's *Sitting Pretty* (pages 347–48) very carefully and comment on the variability in the passage. What are the main features of BEV that Young both has and has not selected? Are there any noticeable differences between the BEV of the narrative and that of the dialogue? If so, why might they be present? What is the function, as far as you can tell, of lack of apostrophes in **wasnt**, **dont**, and so forth?

5. In the manuscript of her novel, *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë represented the servant, Joseph, as speaking with a broad Yorkshire dialect (Yorkshire is in the Northeast of England). One speech assigned to him was:

> "Noa!" said Joseph . . . "Noa! That manes nowt—Hathecliff maks noa 'cahnt uh t'mother, nor yah norther—bud he'll hev his lad; und Aw mun tak him—soa nah yah knaw!"

Emily Brontë's sister Charlotte, who edited the second edition of the novel, felt that this speech was too inaccessible, and modified it to:

> "Noa!" said Joseph . . . "Noa! that means naught. Hathecliff maks noa 'count o' t'mother, nor ye norther; but he'll hev his lad; une I mun tak him—soa ye knaw!"[35]

Why do you think Charlotte Brontë made these particular emendations? Might you make any different changes if you were editing the book, and if so, what are they and why would you make them?

6. The following is the beginning of an elegy by Robert Burns:

ELEGY

ON

CAPTAIN MATTHEW HENDERSON,

A GENTLEMAN WHO HELD THE PATENT FOR HIS HONOURS IMMEDIATELY FROM ALMIGHTY GOD!

But now his radiant course is run,
For Matthew's course was bright:
His soul was like the glorious sun,
A matchless, Heav'nly light!

O DEATH! thou tyrant fell and bloody;
The meikle° devil wi a woodie°
Haurl thee° hame to his black smiddie,
O'er hurcheon° hides,
And like stock-fish come o'er his studdie°
Wi' thy auld sides!

He's gane, he's gane! he's frae us torn,
The ae best fellow e'er was born!
Thee, Matthew, Nature's sel° shall mourn
By wood and wild,
Where, haply, Pity strays forlorn,
Frae man exil'd.

Ye hills, near neebors o' the starnz,
That proudly cock your cresting cairns!
Ye cliffs, the haunts of sailing yearns,
Where echo slumbers!
Come join, ye Nature's sturdiest bairns,
My wailing numbers . . .[36]

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2 **meikle:** great **woodie:** rope made of willows 3 **haurl thee:** drag thyself
4 **hurcheon:** hedgehog 5 **studdie:** anvil 9 **sel:** self

a. What is the function of the stanza in Standard English?
b. Why might Burns write more markedly in Scots at the beginning of this poem than later on in the poem?
c. What linguistic features characterize the language of the "Elegy" as Scots dialect?

7. The following scene from Harriette Arnow's novel *The Dollmaker* takes place in a poor working-class housing development in Detroit. Mr. Daly, a Detroit Irishman, and Gertie, a newcomer from the Kentucky hills, are quarreling:

> A sigh of disappointment went up from the alley, then Mr. Daly, by her bottom step now, was saying loudly: "Listen, yu overgrown hillbilly; yu kid's lyen. He did too beat up on mu little kid. My kids don't lie—see."
>
> Gertie's hand dropped from the door, and she turned and looked at him. "Th very first mornen mine went to school, yer youngen—"
>
> "Huh? Youngen, whatcha mean youngen? In Detroit youse gotta learn to speak English, yu big nigger-loven communist hillbilly. Yu gotta behave. I, Joseph Daly, will see to ut yu do. I'm a dacent, respectable, religious good American. See?" Gertie opened her mouth, but shut it as he went on, laughing a little, one ear cocked for the audience behind him: "Detroit was a good town till da hillbillies come. An den Detroit went tu hell."

Somewhere down the alley a voice cried, "Oh, yeah?"

Mr. Daly gave it no heed. He came onto the bottom step, and looked up at Gertie, shaking his fist to emphasize his words: "If one a youse touches one a mine, I'll have youse all inu clink, see. Du cops listen tu Joseph Daly, see. I letcha git by wit too much awready." He straightened his shoulders, attempted to make his chest stick out further than his stomach, failed, but continued in his injured-good-citizen tone: "An why for because didjas beat up mu wife, a great big overgrown hillbilly like youse on a little woman like mu wife? Why, because she barred da evil doctrine a communism from her door—yu call yuself a Christian, I prasume."

Gertie gave a slow headshake. "I recken I try tu be, but," she went on in a low, choked voice, "whether I'm a Christian or not is somethin' fer God to decide, not me."

"So yu don't know, huh." He laughed again, and the alley laughed with him.

The laughter somehow loosened her tongue. "I didn't hit yer wife. I kept her from hurten a woman she'd already haf blinded. Th woman was jist tryen to spread some kind a religion, an th Constitution says, 'Congress shall make no—'"

"Communist," he was screaming, waving his fist, and for an instant so choked with wrath he could not go on. "Yu communists allatime yu gotta spout u Constitution. Don'tcha know they's a war? Oh, if u good Father Moneyhan could be President. He'd settle u likes a youse. Yu an yu Constitution, yu commies an heathen hill——"

A soft but dirty snowball splattered the side of his face. He whirled toward Sophronie's coalhouse, now covered with children, including Amos, Enoch, and Wheateye. "Who true dat?" he cried, his grandstand manners lost in fury.[37]

a. The two characters here obviously speak different varieties of English. What dialect features do they have in common? At what points do they contrast? At what points does the text show variability? What significance have the spellings **haf** (line 34) and **true** (45)?

b. In this chapter we pointed out that most of the features that characterize Black English are also found in other varieties of English. What characteristics does Mr. Daly's speech share with BEV?

c. In what ways does Gertie's speech become more standard in lines 28–30, and why?

d. Comment on turn-taking and terms of address in this passage.

e. Comment on the use of progressive versus past tense in the narration here, and in particular on the tense shift in line 37.

8. Discuss the ways in which the reader is invited to share the woman's thoughts in the following passage from Richard Wright's short story "Bright and Morning Star." Consider not only such factors as the use of **the** and other structures discussed in Chapter 7, but also the way in which Wright gradually shifts from written to spoken language, and then to dialect. Include comments on the difference between the woman's actual words and indirect thought, on the orthographic devices used to reflect dialect, and also on the function of the phrase **with her black face** (line 1). The neutral word "dialect" is used here deliberately. As in Hurston's writing, no criterial feature of BEV is used; but unlike Hurston's White characters, Wright's in this short story speak the same way as the Blacks, using essentially the same nonstandard Southernisms rather than ethnically identifiable linguistic features. This reflects Wright's concern with the essential humanity of all people, overriding ethnic, social, or other groupings.

She stood with her black face some six inches from the moist windowpane and wondered when on earth would it ever stop raining. It might keep up like this all week, she thought. She heard rain droning upon the roof and high up in the wet sky her eyes followed the silent rush of a bright shaft of yellow that swung from the airplane beacon in far off Memphis. Momently she could see it cutting through the rainy dark; it would hover a second like a gleaming sword above her head, then vanish. She sighed, troubling, Johnny-Boys been trampin in his shop all day wid no decent shoes on his feet. . . . Through the window she could see the rich black earth sprawling outside in the night. There was more rain than the clay could soak up; pools stood everywhere. She yawned and mumbled: "Rains good n bad. It kin make seeds bus up thu the ground, er it kin bog things down lika watahsoaked coffin." Her hands were folded loosely over her stomach and the hot air of the kitchen traced a filmy vein of sweat on her forehead. From the cook stove came the soft singing of burning wood and now and then a throaty bubble rose from a pot of simmering greens.

"Shucks, Johnny-Boy coulda let somebody else do all tha running in the rain. Theres others bettah fixed fer it than he is. But, naw! Johnny-Boy ain the one t trust nobody t do nothin. Hes gotta do it *all* hissef. . . ."

She glanced at a pile of damp clothes in a zinc tub. Waal, Ah bettah git t work. She turned, lifted a smoothing iron with a thick pad of cloth, touched a spit-wet finger to it with a quick, jerking motion: *smiiitz!* Yeah; its hot! Stooping, she took a blue work-shirt from the tub and shook it out.[38]

NOTES

[1] William Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), Chapter 2.

[2] William Labov, "Some Principles of Linguistic Methodology," *Language in Society*, 1 (1972), 97–120.

[3] These are well represented in Harold B. Allen and Gary N. Underwood, eds., *Readings in American Dialectology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Meredith Corporation, 1971).

[4] Adapted from a more detailed map drawn specially for this book by Virginia McDavid, Professor of English, Chicago State University and Associated Editor, Linguistic Atlas of the North-Central States.

[5] Based on Raven I. McDavid, "Dialects of American English," in W. Nelson Francis, *The Structure of American English* (New York: Ronald Press, 1958), with revisions made for this book by Virginia McDavid.

[6] William Labov, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1966).

[7] Social status in the United States is largely identified according to economic criteria (as well as job classification, etc.). Given this classification, the middle middle class and upper middle class are very small, and usually insignificant linguistically. This is why they do not figure in the statistics in this chapter.

[8] Adapted from Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, p. 114. The figures are based on a survey made in the early 1960s.

[9] Known as the "matched-guise" technique, this method of subjective evaluation was developed by Wallace E. Lambert, especially in "A Social Psychology of Bilingualism," in *Problems of Bilingualism*, ed. John Macnamara; special issue of *The Journal of Social Issues*, 23, No. 2 (1967).

[10] Peter Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction* (Harmondsworth, Mssex.: Penguin, 1974).

[11] Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, Chapter 1.

[12] See Orlando Taylor, "Responses to Social Dialects in the Field of Speech," in *Socio-Linguistics: A Cross Disciplinary Perspective*, ed. Roger Shuy (Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1971).

[13] See James Sledd and Wilma R. Ebbitt, eds., *Dictionaries and THAT Dictionary* (Chicago: Scott Foresman and Co., 1962) for a representative sample of arguments for and against Webster's Third International Dictionary.

[14] See J. L. Dillard, *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1972); and William A. Stewart, "Continuity and Change in American Negro Dialects," *The Florida Foreign Language Reporter*, 6, No. 1 (1968); rpt. in *Readings in American Dialectology*, eds. Allen and Underwood.

[15] William Labov, "The Logic of Non-Standard English," *Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics*, Georgetown University, 22 (1969); rpt. as Chapter 5 of Labov, *Language in the Inner City* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1972; rpt. in *Language in Context*, ed. Pier Paolo Giglioli (Harmondsworth, Mssex.: Penguin, 1972); rpt. in *Black American English; Its Background and Its Usage in the Schools and Literature*, ed. Paul Stoller (New York: Dell, 1975).

[16] Materials are largely drawn from Labov, *Language in the Inner City*; and Ralph W. Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," in *Teaching Standard English in the Inner City*, eds., Ralph W. Fasold and Roger W. Shuy (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1970); rpt. in *Language, Society, and Education: A Profile of Black English*, ed. Johanna S. DeStefano (Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones Publishing Co., 1973); rpt. in *Black American English*, ed. Paul Stoller.

[17] This section on intonation is indebted to Elaine Tarone, "Aspects of Intonation in Black English," *American Speech*, 48 (1973), 29–36.

[18] Adapted from Walt Wolfram, *A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1969), p. 144.

[19] For example, Ralph W. Fasold, *Tense Marking in Black English: A Linguistic and Sociological Analysis* (Arlington, Va.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1972).

[20] See especially Labov, *Language in the Inner City*, Chapter 3; and Labov, "Where Do Grammars Stop?" *Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics*, Georgetown University, 25 (1972), 43–88.

[21] Thomas Kochman, ed., *Rappin' and Stylin' Out; Communication in Urban Black America* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1972), p. 261.

[22] Labov, *Language in the Inner City*, pp. 328–29.

[23] Robert Burns, "To a Louse; on Seeing One on a Lady's Bonnet at Church," in *The Works of Robert Burns; Containing His Life*, ed. John Lockhart (New York: William Pearson, 1835), p. 42.

[24] Robert Burns, "Address to a Lady," in *The Works of Robert Burns*, ed. Lockhart, p. 73.

[25] For further discussion, see Sumner Ives, "A Theory of Literary Dialect," in *A Various Language: Perspectives on American Dialects*, eds. Juanita Williamson and Virginia M. Burke (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971). Slightly revised version of an article by the same name in *Tulane Studies in English*, 2 (1950), 137–82.

[26] Agatha Christie, *The Secret of Chimneys* (New York, Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), p. 96.

[27] Christie, *Secret of Chimneys*, p. 118.

[28] Christie, *Secret of Chimneys*, pp. 223–24.

[29] From Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, ed. Henry Nash Smith (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., and Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1958), p. 3.

[30] From Al Young, *Sitting Pretty* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1975), p. 3.

[31] From Andrew Lytle, "Mister McGregor," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 11 (1935), 218.

[32] From Zora Neal Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1937), pp. 45–48.

[33] From Al Young, *Sitting Pretty*, pp. 125–26.

[34] From June Jordan, *His Own Where* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, Inc., 1975).

[35] These two passages are cited in Norman Page, *Speech in the English Novel* (London: Longman, 1973), p. 66.

[36] Robert Burns, "Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson," in *The Works of Robert Burns*, ed. Lockhart, pp. 49–50.

[37] From Harriette Arnow, *The Dollmaker* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), pp. 282–83.

[38] From Richard Wright, "Bright and Morning Star," in *Uncle Tom's Children* (New York: Harper and Row, 1940), pp. 181–82.

[28] From William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 23.

[29] Richard Llewellyn, *How Green Was My Valley* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 1.

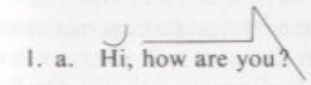
[30] From Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1925), p. 3.

CHAPTER 8

Varieties of English: Regional, Social, and Ethnic

We have seen how language-users shift their speech habits according to the degree of formality required, the subject about which they are talking, the genre, and medium. All such shifts contribute greatly to the variability of language. There are other types of variation too. Indeed, the phrase "varieties of English" probably makes us think first and foremost of the pronounced differences in the linguistic habits of people from different regions, social classes, and ethnic groups. It is these kinds of variation that we will be discussing in this chapter. In more traditional terminology, this topic would be referred to as "dialects of English," but for reasons outlined below, we adopt the term "variety" as well as the more familiar "dialect."

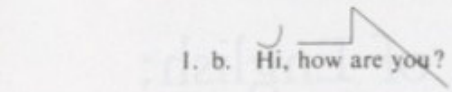
When you greet someone you don't know and ask formulaic questions, you are not only establishing lines of communication and setting up social roles, you are also finding out something about where the person is from and perhaps also what the person's socioeconomic status is—or at least what he or she would like you to think it is. Dress, style of walk, gesture all indicate such factors too, but language plays a crucial role. Formulaic openings, such as comments on the weather, allow an apparently objective context to reveal delicate differences. Even a formula as simple as



1. a. Hi, how are you?

tells a lot about the speaker, revealing, for instance, that the speaker wants to be informal (**Hi** as opposed to **Hello**), and is from the United States (**Hi** is

rarely used in England), and probably from the Southeast United States. In many other parts of the United States the intonation pattern in 1a with rise-fall on **you** can be used only for a real question, not a greeting. Speakers from these regions use an intonation pattern with a rise on **are**:



for the greeting. Another greeting formula, **Mornin'**, tells something about regional or social background through presence or absence of **r**, and presence of [ɪn] versus [ɪŋ], where [ɪn] indicates familiarity, casual speech, or lower-class economic status. There are very few utterances that do not give us at least some extra-linguistic information.

In most speech communities, we find language variation along lines of regional or ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, and also sex, age, and education. All speakers have at least some internalized knowledge of how their language varies along these parameters, and in most cases we find culturally shared attitudes to certain varieties. For instance, in England before the Second World War, a social dialect known as the King's or Queen's English was the high prestige variety, mandatory for anybody aspiring to a civil service or academic post, and speakers of this variety were socially approved of while nonspeakers were not. This attitude was immortalized in Shaw's *Pygmalion* and the musical based on it, *My Fair Lady*. Since the 1960s, however, a considerable number of regional and even social varieties have become widely acceptable in England. Indeed, many prospective professors who twenty-five years ago would have cultivated "the Queen's English" now studiously avoid it and announce their social and regional origins proudly (in some cases we may even find a "reverse snobbism," the adoption of a variety typical of a socioeconomic class lower than that into which the speaker was born). This cultural attitude depends for its existence on the knowledge that language varies, and that language varieties can have social meaning. That is, they can function as indicators of social identity.

In sum, when we consider why people speak the way they do, all of the following factors must be considered separately in addition to the structure of the code itself:

1. type of speaker (regional and ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, education, sex, age)
2. type of addressee (as in 1)
3. topic of speech (politics, sex, linguistics, a drunken brawl)
4. genre (sermon, casual talk, interview)
5. medium (spoken, written; radio, television)

6. situation (classroom, bar, a walk in the fields)
7. degree of formality (casual, formal)
8. type of speech act (statement, command, question).

These factors form the basis of study in the discipline called "sociolinguistics." All are essential to a full understanding of language as communication and of the structures that control it. We are concerned with the first of these factors here. Particular attention will be paid to ways in which variation depends on regional or ethnic origin, and social status. Even within these limits, there are dozens of varieties of English on which we could have focused, for example, Irish, Australian, Cockney, Appalachian, or Texan. The one we have chosen is Black American English Vernacular. It has been selected as the focus of this chapter because many recent theoretical and methodological developments in sociolinguistics have been worked out primarily in research on this variety (or rather cluster of varieties), and an extensive, coherent body of research is available on the subject. It is also a language variety that has been used in many highly successful literary experiments.

Before going on to a specific look at some ways in which English varies according to "type of speaker," let us note some of the methodological problems in studying language variation.

THE DATA ON VARIABILITY

Preceding chapters have considered aspects of language that can be established through introspection. However, when we consider the question of variability according to type of speaker or addressee, introspection is no longer of any use. This is because any individual controls only some of all the possible varieties of a language. Also, most people imagine they speak very differently from the way they actually do. People hearing themselves for the first time on a tape recorder are amazed and sometimes shocked by what they hear. Many people think they speak more homogeneously, even more standardly, than they really do. To find out what different kinds of regional or other varieties there are, then, one must use data collected through questionnaires, interviews, tape recordings of free speech, and the like. This method in turn raises problems of its own.

First, one can never be sure the collected data is complete; in fact, one can be pretty sure that it is incomplete, that there are relevant forms that have not shown up. This is particularly true of syntactic structures. A second, related problem is the fact that data is always skewed by the presence of the person collecting it. It is particularly difficult to collect samples of people's most spontaneous, informal speech because people are likely to speak very self-consciously and formally when they know they are part of a linguistic inquiry. Interviews tend to elicit what people think they ought to say, rather than what

they do say. Postal questionnaires elicit even more formal and less spontaneous responses, because writing itself triggers formality. Oral questionnaires are more effective, but interviewees are still watchful of their speech in this context. With either medium, material to be elicited often cannot be asked for directly, particularly if it is phonetic. For example, there are some varieties of English in which the vowel in **wash** is [ɔy]. If one wants to investigate presence or absence of [ɔy] in such words, a question like "How do you pronounce **wash**?" would probably make people too conscious of their pronunciation. Their response might be influenced by spelling, by prestige norms, or by the interviewer's own pronunciation—the relevant factor could not be determined. A far better way to approach the problem would be to ask for relevant lexical data: "What is another term for laundry?" If it is lexical variants one wants to study, extensive discussion is often needed to capture stylistic differences or slight meaning differences. For example, a question such as "What is the name of the thing you fry eggs in?" might elicit "A skillet"; only further questioning such as "Do you use or know any other terms?" might elicit **frying pan**, and only a third question would get to appropriate contexts for the two terms.

Various research methods have recently been developed in attempts to overcome such problems, mainly under the inspiration of William Labov. In an early study he investigated a very widespread phenomenon called "*r*-fulness." This has to do with presence or absence of [r] after a vowel in such words as **car**, **barn**, and **farmer**. Brooklynese, for example, is famous for not having [r] in words such as [boyd] "bird." Labov studied the correlation of *r*-fulness with social prestige by asking sales personnel for the location of the shoe department at three large New York department stores. These three stores appealed to very different kinds of clientele, and all had their shoe department on the fourth floor. He jotted down the presence or absence of **r** in the responses, which were almost uniformly "On the fourth floor," and found that the personnel in the highest prestige store used **r** far more frequently than in the middle prestige store, and hardly at all in the lowest prestige store.[1] Such a technique has the advantage of interviewer anonymity (none of the sales personnel knew that this was any other than a shopper's ordinary question), but it has the grave disadvantage of providing only impressionistic results, and no reliable information on the speakers' social or regional background, their education, attitudes to language, and so forth. Although never able to eliminate consciousness of the interviewer and of the tape recorder, Labov found that lengthy interviews, including reading of a passage and casual conversation, tend to relax people, and that questions like "Were you ever in danger of death?" almost always prompt answers in the least self-conscious speech, marked by a switch to a less standard or formal style. The more emotionally involved the speakers, the closer they come to the variety most natural to them. Most recently, Labov has found that one can best collect casual speech by group interviews; this, however, requires extremely fine recording equipment and a group of people who know each other well.[2]

Even when one has collected reasonably reliable data, the task of identifying language varieties is not immediately solved. For one thing, differences between varieties often involve not the bare presence or absence of a form, but the quantitative likelihood of a form being used or not used. Let us take an example from Black American English. It is extremely unlikely that upper-middle-class Black speakers would use multiple negatives in formal speech, such as **Nobody never did nothing** in the sense of **Nobody ever did anything**. At the other end of the scale, working-class Blacks speaking informally are extremely likely to use multiple negatives. But the same upper-middle-class Black speaker who does not use multiple negatives in formal situations will occasionally use them in informal ones. Similarly, the working-class Black speaker who uses multiple negatives most of the time in casual speech will use fewer of them in formal situations. Thus, in distinguishing between middle- and working-class Black English, we would not want to say simply that the former lacks multiple negatives and the latter has them; rather, we would have to talk about the frequency of occurrence of multiple negatives. Moreover, no one feature, such as multiple negation, serves to distinguish one variety from another. A great many varieties of English in fact use multiple negation. It is not a particular feature, but a whole network of features from every aspect of linguistic structure—phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and pragmatic—that make up what is recognized as one variety or another.

That a form is usually not completely present or absent but is used relatively more or less in certain circumstances may at first seem surprising. We have all imitated other varieties of English by selecting certain features that we think are typical. For example, we might characterize a nonstandard speaker by substituting **ain't** for **isn't** in all cases. However, were we to listen closely to such a speaker, we would discover that **ain't** is used only some of the time. The tendency to stereotype certain language varieties may be partly the result of wanting to draw attention to the variety. But it may often be partly determined by ignorance of the factors that control use or nonuse of features like **ain't**. Among literate speakers, the tendency to stereotype is also partly a direct consequence of projecting the relative uniformity of written language onto all varieties of the language other than those with which they are fully familiar.

Stereotyping not only misrepresents what speakers do with their language, but also picks somewhat arbitrary targets. For example, **ain't** and double negatives arouse very bad reactions in standard speakers and even in some nonstandard speakers who recognize that these are socially unacceptable. They are called "stigmatized" forms. On the other hand, other nonstandard forms, such as [ɪn] for [ɪŋ] for the present progressive morpheme, arouse little negative reaction. They are merely the object of condescension, not opprobrium.

Early studies of variation according to type of speaker focused on regional distinctions, sometimes intermixed with social distinctions. Such varieties were called dialects. There has been considerable confusion in the

use of this term. Everyone speaks one or more dialects of a language insofar as they use certain regional and social varieties. Yet many people think only other people use dialects. This comes in part from confusion of the term "a dialect," which simply means "a variety," and includes the standard variety, with "dialect," which refers only to nonstandard varieties. People who "speak dialect" are understood to speak with distinct regionalisms, perhaps even with noneducated features. They are often considered quaint, boorish, or in some other way inferior. Another term sometimes confused with "a dialect" is "accent," which refers solely to pronunciation. Although "accent" describes the phonological characteristics of any dialect, in everyday talk, to say someone "speaks with an accent" means they speak with a sound system distinctly different from one's own.

When linguists began to study and establish clear differences between regional and social varieties of English, as well as to study such factors as sex-related differences in language, they found that the term "dialect" used for the first two but not the last obscured the similarity between the different varieties. Many linguists have therefore rejected the term "dialect" and use either "variety" or "lect," with specification of whether the variety is regional, social, ethnic, or sex-related. We prefer the term "variety," but will sometimes use "dialect" too.

REGIONAL VARIETIES

Although there has been an interest in regionalisms from time immemorial, as reflected in jokes about pronunciation, or efforts to imitate regional dialects, little systematic work was done on them until the beginning of this century. Since then, extensive work has been carried out in various countries on regional dialects, and by various methods. The most common methods have been the postal questionnaire and individual interview. Most work has been done on phonetics, inflections, and lexicon, very little indeed on syntax or varieties of discourse.

In all cases of regional studies, maps are made charting the regional distribution of the forms in question. For example, the various phonetic pronunciations of **calf** including [kæf], [kæ·f], [ka·f] (the dot indicates length) would be plotted on one map, the various pronunciations of **path**, **pass**, **aunt**, **farmer**, etc., on others, the various past forms of the verb (e.g., [sɔ·], [sin], [sid] for the past tense of **see**) on others, and the terms used for the wood or metal receptacles in which one carries water (e.g., **bucket**, **pail**, etc.) on yet others. Such maps are studied for patterns of continuity and discreteness. Boundaries are set by mapping the furthest points to which a form has penetrated, and a line is drawn connecting these boundaries. The line is strictly speaking called an "isophone" if it connects phonetic boundaries, an "isogloss" if it connects lexical or grammatical ones. However, "isogloss" is commonly used for both

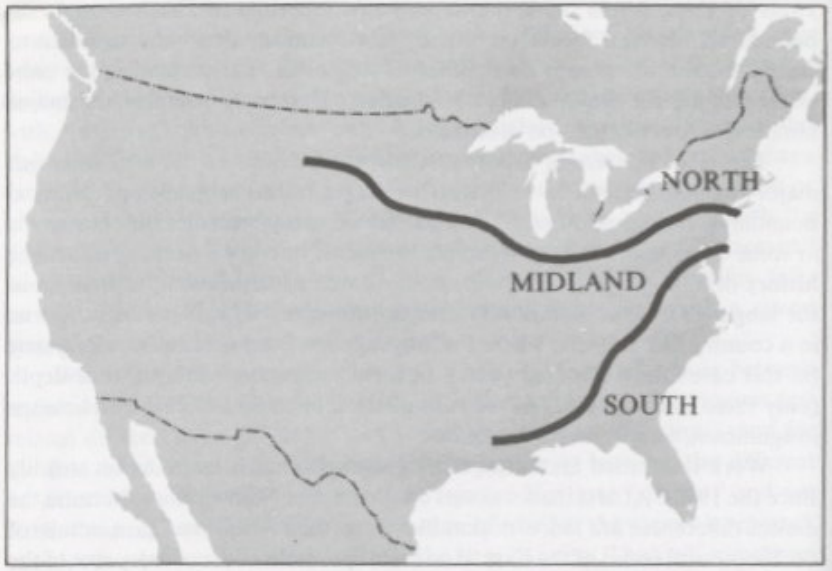
kinds of lines. Maps marked this way are superimposed and, though the boundaries between forms are usually not identical, they tend to fall into clearly discernible groups or bundles of isoglosses. Large bundles are considered to be the major dialect boundaries. Here only some of the major bundles in America will be illustrated.

The most interesting aspect of dialect differences is the way in which major boundaries tend to reflect earlier stages in the language and political boundaries or migration patterns that may be many centuries old. History is in some sense laid out in geographical space. If one knew nothing about the history of a language or its speakers, one could nevertheless infer changes in the language from contemporary dialect differences. This is particularly true in a country like England where the language has been spoken for a long time (in this case fifteen hundred years), but even when there is little time-depth (only three hundred years in the case of the United States), it is by no means insignificant, as will be shown below.

Work on United States linguistic geography has been going on steadily since the 1930s. At first the focus was on the Eastern States, mainly because the dialect differences are more noticeable there than elsewhere as a result of the longer settlement of the East. However, the whole of the country east of the Mississippi is now covered, either by unedited field work, by partially or fully edited materials, or by published materials.[3] The same is true of some of the country west of the Mississippi, including California and Nevada.

In most countries dialect surveys are based primarily on the criterion of indigenousness—interviewees' families have resided in the area for several generations, and have had largely the same kind of occupations. In the United States, this criterion has to take second place because in certain regions, such as the West, few speakers come from places where their families have resided for several generations; even if they have, there has usually been radical change in occupation over the generations. However, interviewees are normally at least second-generation residents of the area. Usually three age groups are interviewed: people around 70, 60, and 50; and three educational groups: those with little formal education, those with better education (usually through high school), and those with college education (labeled groups I, II, and III, respectively).

Careful plotting of data has shown that the major regional areas are divided as in the map of the dialect areas. The boundaries best established are marked by a heavy continuous line. They represent distinct linguistic differences between the North, Midland, and South of the Eastern United States. The Midland area, starting with the Delaware Valley, fans out in the central United States, and like other less well-defined boundaries, reflects settlement patterns. The earliest immigrants came from England in the seventeenth century and settled all along the Atlantic coast, establishing essentially independent colonies with distinct linguistic and cultural differences. Ties with England were strong, and the seaports were centers not only of trade but of linguistic influence. About 1820 large numbers of Ulster Scots and Palatine



DIALECT AREAS OF THE UNITED STATES
EASTERN DIALECT BOUNDARIES[4]

Germans arrived in the Delaware Bay and spread out to Philadelphia and Ohio. This settlement is reflected by the linguistic boundaries of the Midland area.

A few examples of the distinctions between dialects of the rural North, Midland, and South must suffice here.[5] Of course the areas each have many subareas, each with its own characteristics. The data here are illustrative rather than definitive. However, they clearly demonstrate two facts already mentioned: Dialects are characterized by bundles of characteristics, not single features, and there are degrees of difference between dialects—the Midland and South have more in common with each other than with the North. The characteristics listed here are used by the social groups I, II, and III unless otherwise specified.

Northern Characteristics

Phonology: [r] kept after vowels except in Eastern New England, e.g., in **hoarse**, **four**, **cart**, **father**.

[o] versus [ɔ] in **hoarse** versus **horse**, **mourning** versus **morning**. This distinction is receding in Inland Northern dialects. Also found in Southern dialects.

[s] in **greasy**.

Morphology and Syntax:

dove [dov], past of **dive**.

hadn't ought "oughtn't." (I, II)

clim [klɪm], past of **climb**. (I, II) Also Southern.

Lexicon: **pail**. (Midland and Southern "bucket.")

spider "frying pan." (I, II) Receding in Inland Northern. Also Southern.

Midland Characteristics

Phonology: [r] kept after vowels. Also Inland Northern.

[ɔ] in **on**. Also Southern.

[z] in **greasy**. Also Southern.

Morphology and Syntax:

clum [klɔm], past of **climb**. (I) Spreading in Inland Northern.

you-all, plural of **you**. Also Southern.

I'll wait on you "for you." (I, II) Also South Carolina.

Lexicon: **skillet** "frying pan." Spreading.

snake feeder "dragon fly." (I, II)

a little piece "a short distance." Also South Carolina.

Southern Characteristics

Phonology: [r] sometimes lost after vowels.

[o] and [ɔ] contrasting in **hoarse-horse**, **mourning-morning**. Also Northern.

[æw] diphthong in **mountain**, **loud**. Also Midland.

[ɔ] in **on**. Also Midland.

[z] in **greasy**. Also Midland.