

ATTITUDES AND APPLICATIONS

1. Attitudes to language

Post-vocalic [r] in New York City and in England:

Arbitrariness – not relevant linguistically;

Attitude (positive or negative): social judgement.

Some of the factors influencing social judgements:

- politics -- see the Example #2, p. 410.
- positive feelings to speakers of a language or language variety;
- status of a language or a language variety: official vs. non-official ,
e.g., English vs. Wells
English vs. French in Québec
Québec French vs. Parisian French
- cultural vs. political/social importance, e.g., selecting a script for Somali.

1.1 Overt and covert prestige

Standard variety: *overt* prestige

Positive attitudes towards vernacular or non-standard varieties: *covert* prestige. Solidarity!!

Speakers are not always aware which variety they speak – they recognize the value of the standard and believe they speak that variety, criticizing others speaking the vernacular.

Study Labov's report (Example #4, p. 412). Comment on the contradiction between attitude and reality!

British Jamaican Creole or Patois (see Lecture #8): although it is less and less spoken, several features are incorporated into the local vernaculars.

What is the attitude towards this vernacular?

Study the Example #5, p. 414. Comment on the negative attitude of the teacher and the evident solidarity factor by the speakers of Patois!

Negative attitudes to the new variety of English:

Jafaican



A variety of English used by young people of several ethnic backgrounds -- the use of this variety is associated with poor, lower class people.

The negative attitude was tested in a study using “matched guise” technique (p. 415).

1.2 Attitudes to standard English and RP

Standard English has overt prestige; this status, however, has nothing to do with the linguistic characteristics of English – in fact, English used to be considered until the eighteenth century as inferior to languages such as Latin or Greek – the prestige of a language variety *changes* in varying social context!

RP also has overt prestige; speakers of RP are rated more positively than those not speaking this social accent; the attitude of even those speaking a vernacular variety is positive to RP!

1.3 Attitudes to vernacular forms of English

AAVE (see Lecture #8): controversial issue regarding the use of this variety instead of the SAE language.

Negative attitudes: comment on the reference to students in Japan (p. 417)!

Study the Example #8, p. 417. Ignorance by AAVE speakers? Is this example a critique of the AAVE?

Political issue: frequent re-labeling!

Comment on the list presented in the Example #9, p. 418.
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What is the attitude of African-American parents regarding the use of SAE?

What is the attitude expressed by an African-American political activist?

Study the Example #10, p. 418.

What about successful African Americans? Refer to the solidarity factor concerning the use of AAVE!

What about popular movies?

Social disadvantage of using AAVE – a basic argument in the 1990s (Ebonics debate!):

If you use AAVE you wont's get a job. p. 419.

Identify the fallacy regarding this statement!

2. Sociolinguistics and education

2.1 Vernacular dialects and educational disadvantage

Fact: in schools middle-class children tend to do better than working class children. Further, minority group children don't do as well as children belonging to the mainstream culture.

Language issues!

Study the famous court case, summarized in the Example #12, p. 424. Comment!
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Sociolinguists argue for the acceptance of non-standard language varieties in school ...“without condemning or stereotyping their users as uneducated and low status, rather than to train vernacular users to adopt a standard form”. Comment!!!

Tasks for educational linguistics – ongoing debate!

2.2 Linguistic deficit

Working-class children and minority group children have been judged as linguistically deprived – this judgement is based on tests that most scholars consider inadequate.



Most test materials were familiar to middle-class children!

Working-class children and minority group children “have no language” or, have the “restricted code” only -- this is a frequently stated opinion. Comment!

Labov (1972) argues for the values of AAVE:
Black children live in a culture of rich verbal values!
Many AAVE speaking children have highly developed communication skills – for example, research showed that story telling by these children frequently shows more advanced and mature verbal skills than white middle-class children.

“The formality and unfamiliarity of the testing context for these children accounted for the misleading inference that they were linguistically deprived”. (p. 427)

Study the Example #15 on p. 428. Comment!

3. Sociolinguistics and forensic linguistics

Forensic linguists study written and spoken language use in different contexts. Their work is especially important in legal settings – court cases, police interviews, etc.

Study the Example #16 on p. 429.

Phonetic analysis: accent identification!

Lexical analysis: important to detect plagiarism!

Syntactic analysis: purposely misleading sentence structures, biased grammatical strategies!

Study the Examples #19 and #20, pp.431, 432. Comment!