



Today

- Speech styles
 - Markers of style
- Slang
- Jargon
- Taboo, euphemism



Speech styles

- **Speech style:** a linguistic variant appropriate to a particular social context
 - Topic
 - Setting
 - Participants
- Speech styles usually reflect levels of formality

Casual

Careful



Informal

Formal



Speech styles

- Different languages have different ways of marking styles
 - 2nd person formal vs. informal pronouns
 - German: *Sie* vs. *du*
 - Spanish: *usted* vs. *tu*
 - Honorific titles to show respect vs. familiarity
 - Japanese: *-sama* vs. *-san* vs. *-chan* vs. *-kun*

Japanese man — fatally stabbed with umbrella

REUTERS

TOKYO — A Japanese man was so enraged by an acquaintance's failure to address him with an honorific that he stabbed the man to death with an umbrella, police said yesterday.

It was the second killing with an umbrella in Japan in less than a month.

Ryuji Sakamoto, 32, was arrested yesterday and confessed to kill-

ing Takayuki Niimi, also 32, during a Friday night quarrel in the city of Sakuragi, police said.

“It appears that Sakamoto harbored resentment of Niimi . . . because Niimi did not use an honorific when speaking to him,” a police spokesman said.

Sakamoto punched Niimi in the face and then, when he fell over, stabbed him in the head with the umbrella, police said.

Honorific terms of address are used in Japan even among friends, most commonly by adding “san” to a person's name. Failure to do so is seen as extremely rude.

In May, a man was stabbed to death with an umbrella, apparently in an argument over who had the right of way on a narrow road.



Speech styles

- Speech style variations are reflected in all levels of language, e.g.,
 - Phonological
 - Lexical
 - Syntactic
- **Style shift:** automatically adjust from one speech style to another



Phonological markers of style

- Casual, informal style marked by increased speech rate
 - unstressed vowels deleted, replaced with schwa, e.g.,
casual [pt^heɪrə] vs. careful [p^hət^heɪroʊ]
 - deletion of word final consonants, unstressed syllables (*jus', don',*)
 - use of contractions (*wanna, gonna, coulda*)



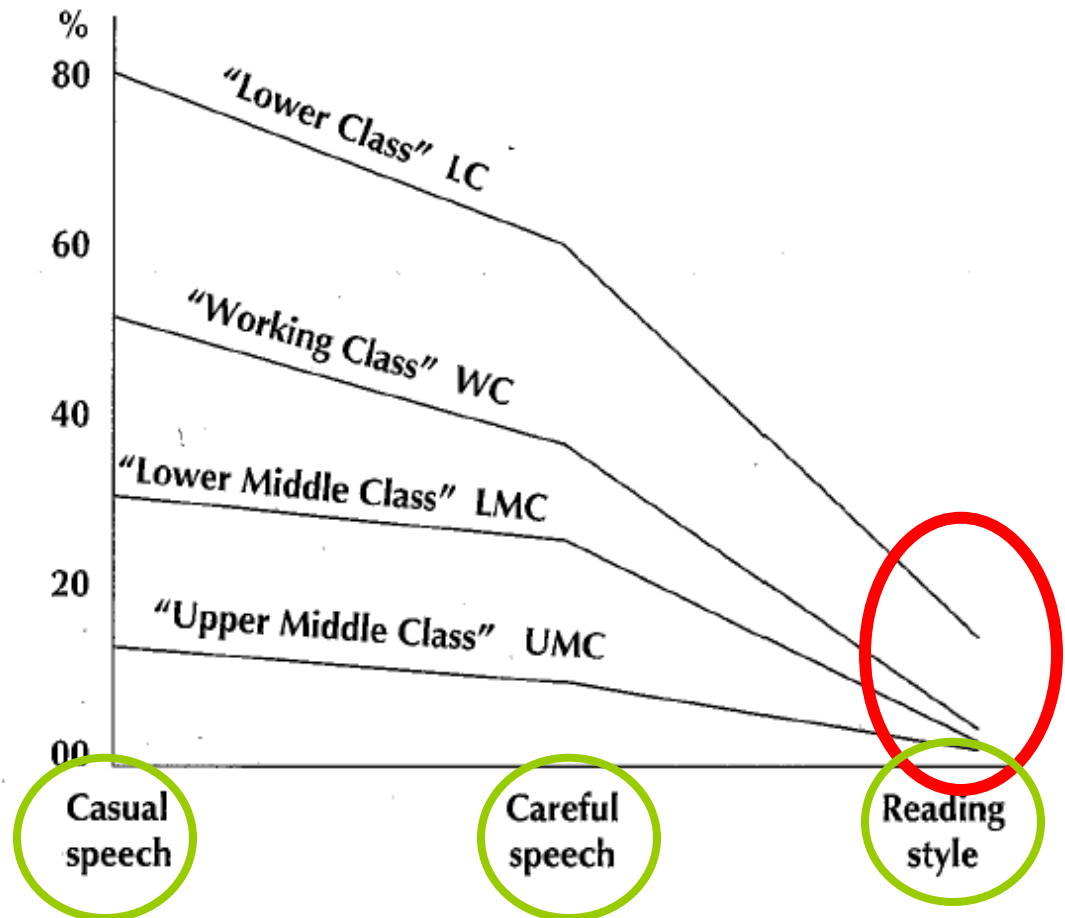
Phonological markers of style

- **William Labov:** looked at pronunciation of [-ɪŋ] vs. [-ɪn] (‹-ing› vs. ‹-in'›) in 3 different speech situations
 - casual speech vs. interview vs. reading

—————→
pronunciation of [-ing] increased as formality/
attention paid to speech increased

Early study of [ɪn] for <ing> in New York caucasians

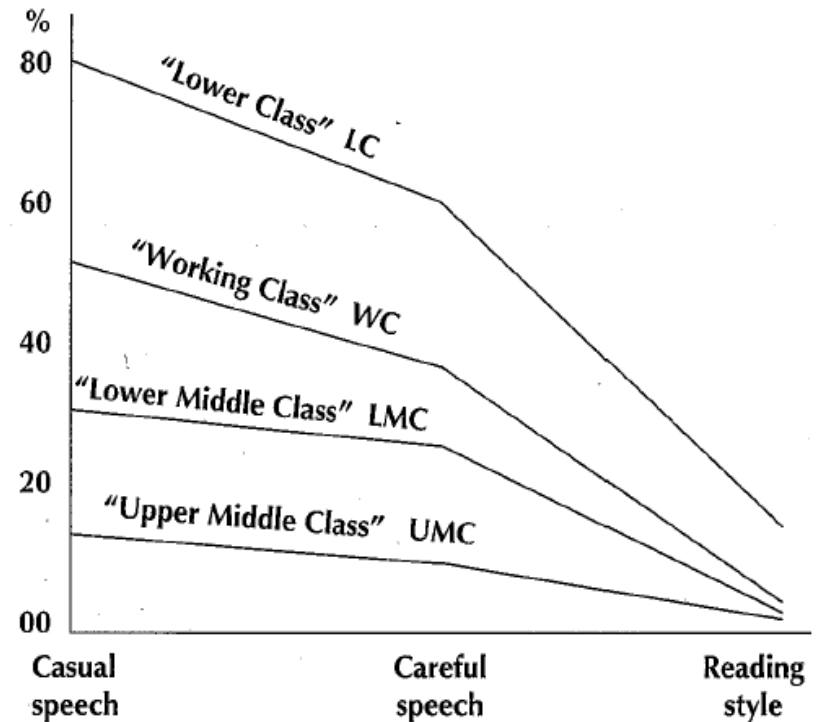
- 3 speech styles (registers)
- 4 social classes
- use of [ɪn] as a marker of social class **sociolect**
- depends somewhat on **register**
- what if a LC met with a LMC?
 - **hypercorrect** to prestige sociolect forms



Source: William Labov, *The Study of Nonstandard English* (Champaign: NCTE, 1970, p. 24)

Early study of [ɪn] for <ing> in New York caucasians

- **choice** of speech patterns?
- *when are LC, WC children exposed to [ɪn]?*
- some situations of **diglossia**
 - **spkrs have more than one dialect/sociolect/language**
 - **child learns ambient language(s), dialect(s), sociolect(s), etc.**



Source: William Labov, *The Study of Nonstandard English* (Champaign: NCTE, 1970, p. 24)



Lexical markers of style

- **Jargon:** specialized (or ‘technical’) vocabulary of a particular profession or group (e.g., hobby, sport, etc.)
 - Computer jargon
gigahertz, RAM, CDRW-DVD ROM, USB
 - Medical jargon
-itis, -ectomy, hypo-, hyper-, hemo-, etc.



Lexical markers of style

- **Slang:** words and expressions used in very informal settings (*common slang*), often to indicate membership in a particular social group (*in-group slang*)
 - usually has short lifespan
 - swell, neat-o, groovy
 - daddy-o
 - It stinks!
 - can become standardized
 - phone, fridge, fan, blimp, hot dog



Lexical markers of style

groovy 'good' mid-1960s

far out 'good' mid-late 1970s

radical 'good' mid-1980s

also **wicked, awesome**

sweet 'good' 1990s

da bomb 'very good, the best' early 2000s

also **phat, sick, tight**



Lexical markers of style

□ Words for 'drunk'

intoxicated

shit-faced

plastered

blitzed

wasted

pissed

under-the-influence



Lexical markers of style

- **Taboo** words: words that are socially inappropriate or have a strong social prohibition or stigma (e.g., words relating to sex, defecation, profanity, etc.)
- **Euphemism**: word(s) used in place of a taboo term



Syntactic markers of style

- Casual speech characterized by
 - increased use of non-standard constructions (e.g., double negatives, double modals)
 - shorter, more concise sentences



Legalese:

Lessor shall not be liable for loss of or damage to any property left, stored or transported by Hirer or any other person in or upon Vehicle either before or after the return thereof to Lessor. Hirer hereby agrees to hold Lessor harmless from, and indemnify Lessor against all claims based on or arising out of such loss or damage unless caused by the negligence of Lessor.

Plain English:

We are only responsible for loss or damage to property in the vehicle if it results from our negligence.



Summary of factors that affect dialect

- ✓ Geography
- ✓ Speech situation
- ✓ Occupation
- ✓ Age
- Gender
- Social status/class
- Ethnicity