



# Today

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- ‘Standard’ vs. ‘nonstandard’
- Attitudes towards language
- Effects of social class on dialect



# Standard vs. Non-standard

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- **Standard** dialect
  - typically used by political leaders, upper classes, in the media
  - taught in schools
  - considered the dominant or ‘prestige’ dialect
- **Non-standard** dialect
  - any dialect not perceived as ‘standard’



# Standard vs. Non-standard

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- Some standard dialects of English
  - Standard American English (SAE)
    - characterized by grammatical (morphological & syntactic) features
  - Received Pronunciation (RP) (in UK)
    - characterized by phonological features



# Standard vs. Non-standard

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- Some **non-standard** dialects
  - African-American English (AAE)
    - Multiple negatives:  
*He don' know nothin'.*
  - Appalachian English
    - Double modals:  
*I might could do that.*  
*He useta couldn't swim.*
    - a-prefix: *go a-fishin', come a-runnin'*



# Overt vs. Covert prestige

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- **Overt prestige:**
  - Attached to a particular dialect by the community at large that defines how people should speak to gain status in that community
- **Covert prestige:**
  - Exists among nonstandard speakers and defines how people should speak to be considered members of that particular group



# Social class and dialect

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## **William Labov**

- New York City 'r'-lessness
- Studied variation in [r] pronunciation as it relates to socioeconomic class



# Dept Store study - Method

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- Interviewed salespeople at Saks 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., (upper), Macy's (middle), S. Klein (lower class)
  - “Excuse me, where are the \_\_\_\_\_?”
  - “Fourth floor.” (casual speech)
  - “Excuse me?”
  - “*Fourth floor.*” (careful speech with emphasis)



# Dept Store study - Results

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	Klein	Macy's	Saks
Casual	8%	44%	63%
Careful	18%	61%	64%

Percentage  
of [r]'s  
produced





# Dept Store study - Conclusions

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- Pronunciation of [r] increased...
  - ...w/ level of socio-economic class
  - ...w/ attention level paid to speech
- Variation most prominent among lower classes
  - Why?

**Overt prestige**



# Hypercorrection

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- The act of producing nonstandard forms by way of false analogy, often to imitate the standard dialect
  - **Phonological:** r-insertion  
'Cuba(r)', 'idea(r)'
  - **Grammatical:**  
'Lets keep this between you and I.'  
'I don't know whom he is.'



# Martha's Vineyard study

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## William Labov


- Martha's Vineyard, MA
  - diphthong centralization: [əɪ], [əʊ] in *why*, *wow*
  - (compare w/ standard: [aɪ], [aʊ])



# Martha's Vineyard study - Results

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- Native islanders centralized, tourists didn't
  - regional effect
- Students planning to go to college and return to island centralized more than students not planning to return
- Portuguese immigrant community showed high degree of centralization



# Martha's Vineyard study - Conclusions

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- How closely speakers identified w/ island was positively correlated w/ degree of centralization
  - seeking **covert prestige**
- Dialect is an important factor in group identity



# Summary

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- Standard vs. non-standard dialects
- Overt vs. covert prestige
- Dept. store study – influence of standard dialect, overt prestige
- Martha's Vineyard study – influence of non-standard dialect, covert prestige