a cacophony of voices

a craic talk* by scott malley

*presented in rocky mountain american english
language in the united states

Native Language Speakers in the United States

- English: 230.00
- Spanish: 37.58
- Chinese: 2.88
- French: 2.05
- Tagalog: 1.59
- Vietnamese: 1.41
- Korean: 1.14

Population (millions)
sign language dialects
(excluding asl and lsq)

- dominated by plains sign talk, a language used by plains nations (blackfoot, arapahoe, etc) as trade language and for ceremonies and storytelling
- not derived from a spoken language
english dialects in the united states
more american dialects

• african american vernacular english
• cajun vernacular english
• latino vernacular englshes
  • chicano english
  • miami english
  • new york latino english
• pennsylvania dutch english
• yeshiva english
grammar

• ideas center on:
  • 1. there are rules to language use
  • 2. these rules should be followed
  • 3. some people are quite emphatic about rules 1 and 2

• prescriptive grammar – formal, standard rules of language usage

• descriptive grammar – rules of naturally occurring speech
prescriptive grammar

• where does grammar come from and who gets to decide?
  • the people who write the style guides and grammar books of course!

• splitting infinitives – derived from latin

• double negatives – robert lowth (1761) wanted english to sound like math

“He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde
In al his lyf unto no manner wight” - Chaucer
descriptive grammar

- aside from slips, native speakers produce speech that follows the inherent rules of their linguistic system

- something is grammatical if it fits within the form of naturally occurring speech
  - i ain’t got none.
  - where is the library at?
  - * store the peter to went.
civilian language authorities

- language maven – copy editors, dictionary usage panelists, style manual and handbook writers, English teachers, essayists, columnists, and pundits
- seen as language authorities primarily because they uphold the status quo
- lexicographers generally take a descriptive approach, however their results are often interpreted as prescriptive
official language authorities

- france – académie française
- italy – academia della crusca
- spain – academia española
- uk – british council

goal to “maintain the language in a fixed state of order and purity” – marc fumaroli (director académie française)
standard american english

• what is it? where did it come from?
• an official language academy does not exist in the united states
• many have tried:
  • john adams 1780
  • noah webster 1789
• a grammatical institute of the english language (1783)
  • aka the elementary spelling book
• american dictionary of the english language (1828)
precrestination

To thoroughly clean one's teeth before visiting the dentist for a teeth cleaning.

I ate a bag of Oreo's and then committed precrestination before going to my dentist appointment.

#pre-clean #teeth #cleaning #dentist #procrastination
droplifting

Droplifting is the opposite of shoplifting; it involves leaving a product or item in a shop, rather than taking one. It has been used by artists and musicians to promote their work for free, whilst some people use droplifting to make political or economic statements. (for example by altering shop's products and then returning them)

*Person #1: Why is there a can of Sainsburys soup for sale in Tesco?*

*Person #2: It must have been droplifted.*

*Person #3: What's droplifting?*

#droplifter #droplifted #shoplifting #shoplift #droplift #shoplifted
doggo

A big ol pupper.

What the fuck is doggo?
A big ol pupper.

#pupper
standardization?

• strong potential for unifying the masses

• those with social and political power possess the authority to create a standard form and automatically renew their own prestige

• communities may feel disconnected from authority structures because they do not represent their actual lives

• sets up social hierarchy privileging those who use a certain dialect and punishing certain stylistic choices as incorrect
language attitudes

• lambert 1967 – compared attitudes toward French speaking Canadians vs English speaking Canadians

• english speaking – better looking, more intelligent, kinder, more dependable and even taller
  • results were the same for French and English speaking observers

• regularities indicate cultural influence rather than personal taste

• preston 1989 – hand drawn maps
michigan respondent
south carolina respondent
‘correctness rating’

new york city
new jersey

michigan respondents
‘pleasantness rating’
• michiganders ranked their own state the highest, but converse was not true in the south (do not have map)

• pleasantness map demonstrates alternative value association ascribed to language
language discrimination


- Found that most people were able to accurately identify ethnicity based off first syllable of the word “hello”
audio clip - bim adewunmi
extra facts

• the pill bug or rolly polly is in fact not a bug but a crustacean

• martin van buren is the only us president who did not speak english as his first language