



Today

- What is sociolinguistics?
- Language variation
- Dialects

Readings: 10.1-10.2, 10.4



Sociolinguistics

- The study of the relationship between language and society, of language variation, and of attitudes about language
- Variation may occur at all levels of the grammar

Language variation

- No two speakers of a language speak exactly the same way
 - Between group variation = *intergroup variation*
- No individual speaker speaks the same way all the time
 - Within-speaker variation = *intraspeaker variation*



Dialect

- A variety of a language spoken by a group of people that is characterized by systematic features (e.g., phonological, lexical, grammatical) that distinguish it from other varieties of that same language
 - **Idiolect**: the speech variety of an individual speaker

Language =
a continuum
of dialects

Language



Dialect =
a continuum
of idiolects





Misconceptions about 'dialect'

- ❑ Dialect ≠ 'substandard'
- ❑ Dialect ≠ 'incorrect'
- ❑ Dialect ≠ 'slang'

FACT: Everyone speaks a dialect

Language vs. dialect?

- Linguistic criterion
 - Mutual intelligibility
 - YES? = dialects
 - NO? = languages

e.g., British vs. American vs. Irish vs. Australian
(= dialects of English)

Paris, France

Rome, Italy

L1...D1L1...D2L1...D3L1...D4L1...DivL2...DiiL2...DiiL2...DiL2...L2

Piedmontese, (Italy)



Language or Dialect?

Paris, France _____ Rome, Italy
L1...D1L1...D2L1...D3L1...D4L1...DiVL2...DiiiL2...DiiL2...DiL2...L2
Piedmontese, (Italy)

Q: Why do dialects exist?

A: Because of isolation or long term separation of groups

Isolation can be across time, geography or social barriers. Two types of “dialects”:

(1) **sociolects** or “social dialects”: linguistic differentiation based upon membership in a longstanding socially-isolated or separate group

(2) **regional dialects**: linguistic differentiation based upon membership in a longstanding geographically-isolated or separate group



Problems (cont'd)

- Asymmetries in intelligibility, e.g.,
 - Danish speakers understand Swedish, but not vice versa
 - Brazilian Portuguese speakers understand Spanish, but not vice versa

Problems (cont'd)

- Nonlinguistic criteria (political, historical, geographic etc.) may play a role
 - Mandarin, Cantonese are mutually *unintelligible*, but are referred to as 'dialects' of Chinese
 - Serbian and Croatian *are* mutually intelligible, but are referred to as separate languages
 - Czech vs. Slovak
 - Norwegian vs. Swedish



Ways dialects vary

- ❑ Phonological ('accent')
- ❑ Morphological
- ❑ Syntactic/grammatical
- ❑ Semantic/lexical



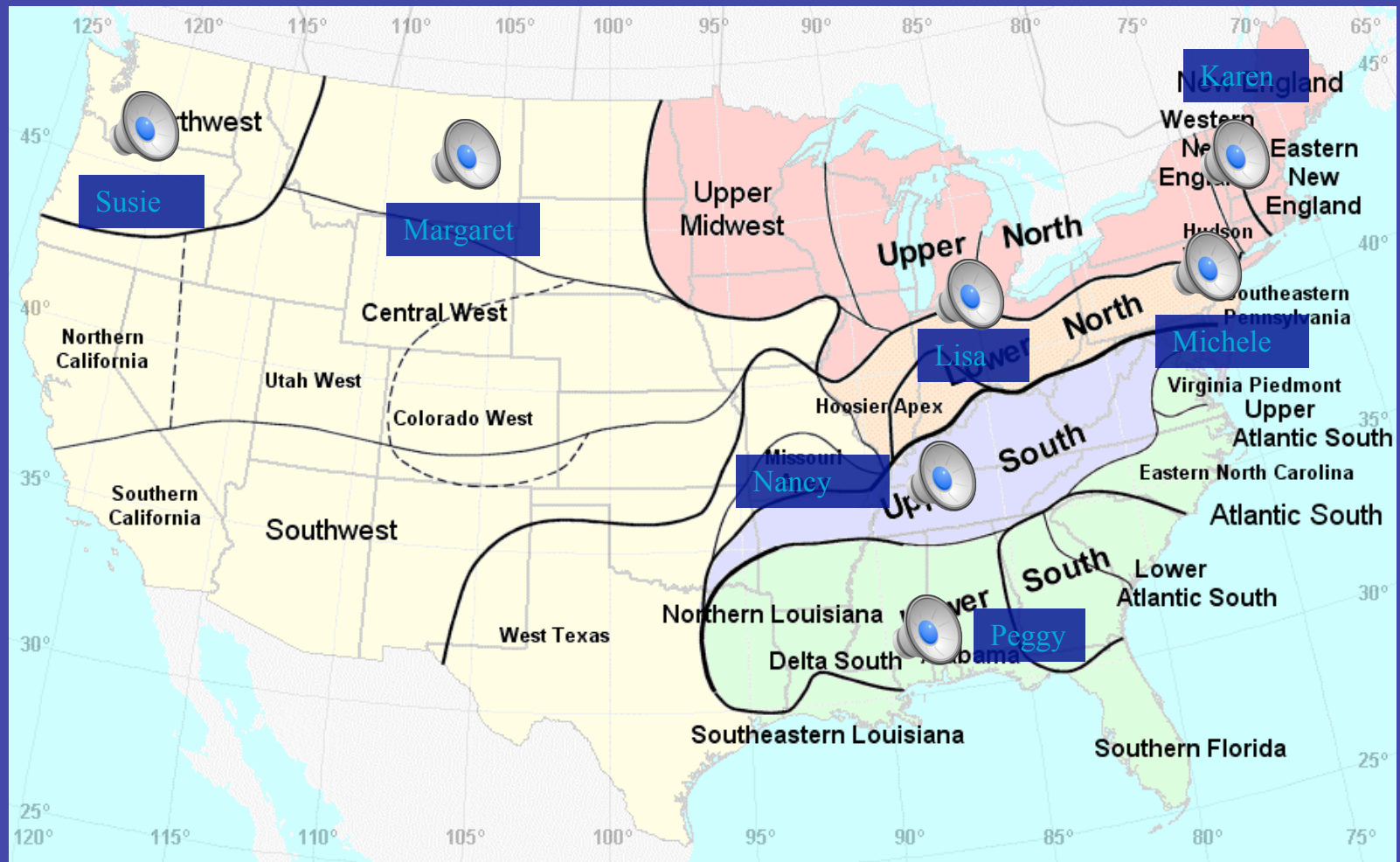
Regional dialects

- Dialects that are defined in terms of geographic boundaries

Where are they from?

<u>Karen</u>  u	<u>Lisa</u>  ʊ	<u>Margaret</u>  ɪ	<u>Michele</u>  o
<u>Nancy</u>  ə	<u>Peggy</u>  ɑ	<u>Susie</u>  i	

Map of US Dialects

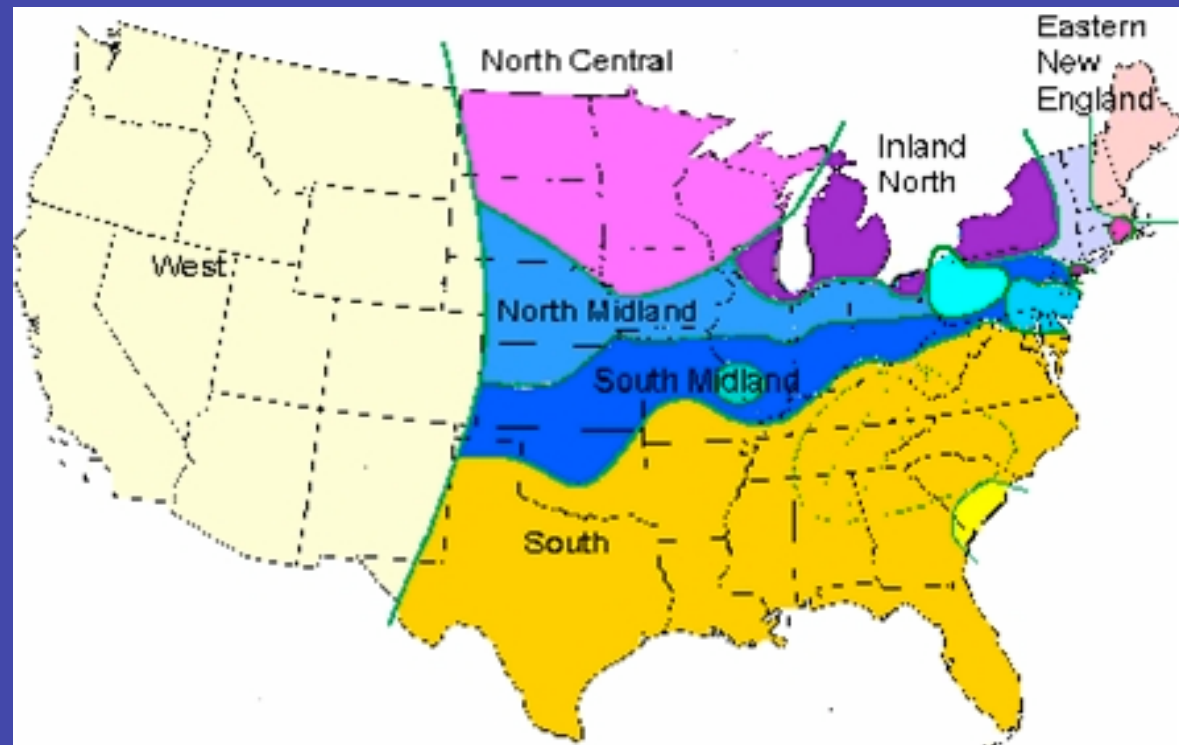


Regional U.S. dialects

- Northern
- Midland
- Southern
- Western

Some sociolects:

- Yiddish
- Pennsylvania Dutch
- Chicano English
- Vietnamese English



isogloss: a linguistic feature marking out the areal limits of a dialect area; or the boundary itself. (several form an “isogloss bundle”)

http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_maps/namerica.php

<http://www.ku.edu/~idea/northamerica/usa/usa.htm>