Glossary

*SAE  A reference to the idea of a homogenous, standard spoken language in which the * emphasizes the fact that this is in fact an abstraction that is never realized.

AAVE  See African American Vernacular English.

Accent  A set of phonological features, loosely bundled, that provide clues about the speaker’s geographic origin, social and ethnic allegiances, standing, education, and other characteristics that are socially distinctive in a given language community.

Accent hallucination  An individual may decide that a speaker has a particular foreign accent on the basis of physical features, when in fact the person in question is a native speaker of English. This phenomenon has been documented in numerous studies (Fought 2006; Kang and Rubin 2009). See also reverse linguistic stereotyping.

Accommodation theory  In face-to-face conversation between speakers of different language varieties, subconscious or conscious choices are made about whose communication system to use and how much to accommodate each other.

Affirm  To approve, agree or uphold, used primarily when a superior court reviews the rulings of a lesser court and finds no wrongdoing.

African American Great Migration  Between 1910 and 1940, roughly 1.5 million African Americans left the South to escape poverty and racism (the first great migration). After the interruption of WWII, another 1.5 million African Americans moved north, a trend that continued until about 1970. In Motion: http://www.inmotionaame.org/home.cfm.


Americans with Disabilities Act  A federal statute that forbids discrimination against a person with a disability. “A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities.” 42 USCA §§ 12101-12213.

Anglo  American English speakers of European but not Latino descent; Caucasian.

Anthropological linguistics  Study of the relationship and interdependency of language, culture, human biology and cognition.

Appropriacy arguments  Authorities often label stigmatized language varieties as inappropriate for communication outside the home. Appropriacy arguments rationalize the process whereby languages of peripheralized or stigmatized groups are simultaneously acknowledged and rejected.
Asian American  Americans of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Asian Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Bangladeshi, Burmese, Indonesian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Amerasian, or Eurasian ancestry, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Assimilation  The incorporation of one culture into another, more dominant culture and substitutes the dominant culture’s social, economic, and political institutions for its own.

Bill of Rights  First ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution designed to protect the liberties and rights of individuals from the government’s abuse of its power. See also tyranny of the majority.

Bloc  An alliance of governments, groups, or parties with a common purpose and ideology; the dominant bloc is a reference to those institutions where political and economic power is concentrated.

Brown v. Board of Education  The Supreme Court declared the separation of races in the classroom to be unconstitutional and ordered the desegregation of schools. It established the principle of equal educational opportunity for all students. This decision also re-affirmed equal protection under the law mandated by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and overruled the decision in Plessey v. Ferguson (1896) that permitted the “separate but equal” doctrine.

Census, U.S.  A count of all citizens, non-citizen legal residents, non-citizen long-term visitors, and illegal immigrants in the United States. Mandated by the Constitution.

Chicano/a  U.S. citizens or residents of Mexican ancestry. “A Chicano lives in the space between the hyphen in Mexican-American” (Bruce-Novoa 1990).

Civil action  A lawsuit based on a private wrong. All legal proceedings that are not criminal actions are civil actions.

Civil rights  Rights afforded to individuals as citizens of the United States. Most of these rights are guaranteed in the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Civil Rights Acts  There have been ten major US Civil Rights Acts, nine of which were passed between 1957 and 1991. See Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Civil Rights Act of 1964  The purpose of the 1964 Civil Rights Act was to eliminate pervasive discrimination against racial minorities. Title VII provides protection against discrimination in employment. Since 1964 the laws have been widely interpreted to cover discrimination based on national origin, sex, age, religion and other protected categories.

Civil Rights movement  African Americans led the movement against racism and segregation and for the laws that would ensure full civil and human rights. The most recent civil rights movement began in the mid-1950s and was in the public eye for much of the 1960s.

Code switching  Bi- or multilingual speakers who alternate use of languages (“codes”) available to them within one conversation (and even within the same sentence) are practicing code switching.

Cognitive linguistics  The study of thought, learning, and mental organization of language.
Communicative act  As advanced by Clark (1986), the cognitive model is based on a principle of mutual responsibility, in which participants in a conversation collaborate in the establishment of new information. This involves complicated processes of repair, expansion, and replacement in iterative fashion until both parties are satisfied.

Communicative burden  See Communicative act.

Competence, communicative  Communicative competence has to do with performance, and a speaker’s mastery of all linguistic subsystems as well as all sociocultural nuance.

Competence, linguistic  In linguistic theory as developed by Chomsky, linguistic competence is a reference to an ideal speaker/listener in a homogeneous speech community whose command of the grammar of that language is not affected by factors such as memory limitations or distractions. In this approach, competence is an idealized capacity distinct from the production of actual utterances.

Consonant cluster reduction (simplification)  When two or more consonants occur at the end of a word, the cluster may be reduced by dropping one or more of the sounds. The words student and desk, for example, will become studen and des. In Chicago, when a stop is preceded by a nasal, the stop is usually deleted hunter > hunner. There is some reason to believe that this is a vernacular universal.

Convergence  Historical process in which languages in contact become more similar in structure.

Copula  ‘Copula’ is a term for the verb “to be” when it joins subject to predicate, as in Maria is a physicist (Maria = physicist) or The movie was terrible (movie = terrible).

Copula deletion  Copula deletion is common in many world languages. In AAVE, deletion of the copula is primarily a matter of context and sentence stress. However, AAVE forbids copula deletion where other U.S. Englishes would forbid contraction. For the sentence She’s not home, but George is would produce *She’s not home but George’s. The second contraction doesn’t work in other varieties of English, thus in AAVE, cannot be deleted.

Creole  When a pidgin becomes so well established that children acquire it as a first language, the grammatical structure fills out and the result is a creole, a full-fledged human language. Examples are Hawai‘ian Creole and Gullah. See also Pidgin.

Critical period  A hypothesis which supposes that the human mind’s intrinsic ability to acquire language without conscious effort is something that atrophies around the age of puberty. Thus the critical period for language acquisition is from birth to about age 14.

Deficit theory  Basil Bernstein’s (now debunked) theory that working-class children are linguistically deprived or handicapped by a language deficit in that they learn only a restricted code; in contrast, middle-class children were theorized to have a more elaborated code, and were free of such deficits when entering the school system.

Dialect  A variety of a language that is associated with a specific geographic area (an Appalachian accent) or with a social group (Chicano/a English). The difference between the concept of “dialect” and that of “language” is political rather than linguistic in nature.

Discourse/discourse analysis  The study of communicative acts rather than grammatical units; meaning in a text, paragraph, conversation, etc., rather than in a single sentence.
Discourse markers A word or phrase that is independent of syntax and seems, on the surface, to have no meaning. *That's like the last thing she wanted to hear from you.*

Disparate impact Practices in employment and hiring that have an adverse impact on minorities, women, or other protected groups, regardless of whether such practices were motivated by discriminatory intent. Illegal disparate impact is established when an employer’s allegedly neutral policy, not justified by business necessity, harms a protected group.

Disparate treatment Intentional discrimination on the basis of a protected characteristic. Federal law prohibits disparate treatment because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, and age, as well as disability in qualified individuals who are disabled.

Dominant bloc See bloc.

Ebonics The linguistic and paralinguistic features which represent the communicative competence of the West African, Caribbean, and United States slave descendant of African origin . . . the study of the language of black people in all its cultural uniqueness (Baugh 2000; Rickford 1999).

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Created by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the EEOC is the federal agency with the responsibility for enforcing the anti-bias employment provisions of the 1964 act but also the Equal Pay Act, the Age Discrimination Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

ESL English as a Second Language.

Ethnicity A group of people who share heritage, culture, languages, and other distinguishing socio-cultural characteristics (Kurds in the Middle East; Romani in Europe and the U.S.).

Ethnocentrism An individual’s belief that his or her own sociocultural practice is universal, natural, normal, and superior to other cultures.

Ethnologue A catalogue of more than 6,700 languages spoken in 228 countries, online and available in hard copy.

Glottal stop A stop or plosive that is voiceless. In American English glottal stops are prominent: as a replacement for /t/ sounds between vowels in fast speech (as in the word *little*), and in the phrase “uh-oh.”

Grammar “The sounds and sound patterns, the basic units of meaning, such as words, and the rules to combine them to form new sentences constitute the grammar of a language. The grammar, then, is what we know; it represents our linguistic competence. To understand the nature of language we must understand the nature of this internalized, unconscious set of rules, which is part of every grammar of every language” (Fromkin et al. 2009).

Great Migration See African American Great Migration.

Head Start Pre-school programs designed to give poor children early educational opportunities; despite success in many areas, early policies advanced Bernstein’s theory of elaborated and restricted codes which supposed that children living in poverty in the inner city had insufficient human language for communication.
Hegemony  The socio-political, economic, cultural power by which a dominant group
asserts itself and maintains power, with or without awareness and consent of the less
powerful. Hegemony can be directed toward liberation or oppression of society.

Hispanic  See Latino/a.

Homogeneity and heterogeneity  A homogenous community is one with a high level
of social, cultural, political and institutional conformity; a heterogeneous community
includes a wide range of persons of different cultures, belief systems, or other socio-
cultural markers. California is a racially heterogeneous state, with large numbers of
people of African, Asian, Latino or Anglo ancestry. Idaho is highly homogeneous.

Homophily  The tendency of human beings to associate with those who are like them.

Hypercorrection  The use of a technically incorrect term for fear of using a stigmatized
one. Example: “Maria gave it to John and I.”

Ideology  The promotion of the needs and interests of a dominant group or class at the
expense of marginalized groups, by means of disinformation and misrepresentation of
those non-dominant groups.

Intonation  A distinctive pattern of tones over a stretch of speech longer than a word.

IPA  International Phonetic Alphabet.

Isogloss  The hypothetical physical boundary of a given linguistic feature, such as a
vowel shift, lexical pairs (pail v. bucket) or syntactic feature.

L2  Second language; English acquired as a second language. L2 accent would refer, for
example, to a native speaker of Urdu or Italian whose English is distinguished by
breakthrough of phonological or other features from the native language.

Language acquisition  We speak of children acquiring rather than learning language,
because the human mind is hard-wired for language. At some point around puberty
this ability to acquire language without conscious effort atrophies. The critical age is
that period from birth to (approximately) puberty when the mind’s language faculty or
instinct is functioning. This is a universal of human language.

Language ideology  “The ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic
varieties and the differences among them, and map those understandings onto people,
events, and activities that are significant to them” (Irvine and Gal 2000: 35). See also
standard language ideology.

Language maven/language shaman  A self-appointed and usually prescriptivist
authority on English usage. “In language there are no licensed practitioners, but the
woods are full of midwives, herbalists, colonic irrigationists, bonesetters, and general-
purpose witch doctors, some abysmally ignorant, others with a rich fund of practical
knowledge – whom we shall lump together and call shamans....sometimes their advice
is sound. Sometimes it is worthless, but still it is sought because no one knows where
else to turn” (Bolinger 1980: 1).

Language subordination  Institutionalized measures that aim to discredit or demean
one language variety over another, and by extension, the speakers of that language.

Language universals  The languages of the world have a great deal in common (though
it might not seem so at first glance). For example, all languages distinguish between
verbs and nouns (though adjectives are not universal); all languages distinguish between vowels and consonants. These are very basic examples, but they are significant for a theory of innateness of language to the human brain.

Latino/a  Americans with origins in Latin America or in Spain; those who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino. Latino/as can be of any race.

Lau v. Nichols  Supreme Court case where the Court ruled that, “There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.”

Lexicon  The complete set of words and word segments in a language, or the subset of those words available to any given individual.

Limited English Proficient (LEP)  Refers to students who are not fluent in English. As the Supreme Court and Congress have made clear, federal antidiscrimination law requires that schools must provide LEP students with the skills necessary to compete academically with their peers who are fluent in English.

Linguicism  “Ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language (on the basis of their mother tongues)” (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988: 13).

Linguistics  The scientific study of the function, structure, and history of language and communication.

Majoritarian stories  “Cultural narratives that naturalize the perspectives of people in privileged social locations: whites, men, the middle and upper classes, and heterosexuals” (Solórzano and Yosso 2002).

Marking or marked  A sociolinguistic variant which has symbolic meaning, for example, consonant cluster reduction as a marker of Native American English.

Marxism  “The political and economic philosophy of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in which the concept of class struggle plays a central role in understanding society’s allegedly inevitable development from bourgeois oppression under capitalism to a socialist and ultimately classless society” (American Heritage Dictionary).

Merger  In language change over time when two distinct sounds move together and the distinction is lost. In American English, the vowel sounds in merry, Mary and marry have merged for most parts of the country, as have the vowels for Don and Dawn.

Mestizo  A person living on the North American continent who is a descendent of both European and indigenous American peoples. The concept has been the cornerstone for the development of a Mexican national identity.

Modal (auxiliary) verbs  Verbs that express the mood (in the linguistic sense that distinguishes statements, commands, suppositions, questions, and so on) of other verbs. Joe smiles v. Joe can smile, Joe might smile, Joe will smile. (Pocket Fowler’s Modern English Usage).

Monophthongization  In a number of varieties of Southern States English and African-American English, the diphthong becomes monophthongized. For example, words such as right (SAE), time (SAE), and like (SAE) are pronounced with a low vowel monophthong, as in raht nahs tahm (right nice time).
Morpheme  Smalllest unit of speech that bears meaning (in apples, the final /s/ is a bound
morpheme indicating plurality).

Morphology  The study of the smallest meaningful elements of a language, and how
they are put together to form words. Cows has two morphemes: (cow) and (s). As a plural
marker, (s) is meaningful.

Nation-state  “A form of political organization under which a relatively homogeneous
people inhabits a sovereign state; especially: a state containing one as opposed to several
nationalities” (Merriam-Webster online dictionary).

NCTE  National Council of Teachers of English.

Non-Standard Language  An ideologically laden term that refers to any language
variety that is overtly stigmatized. Its use indicates that the user is speaking from the
perspective of the standard language ideology. Despite the judgmental and negative
implications of the term, it is still widely used, even by linguists. But not by this linguist.

Northern Cities Sound Shift  A series of vowel chain shifts taking place over a long
period of time in the area generally referred to as the Inland North.

Performance theory  The study of performance as an inherently human activity, with
origins in pre-historic behavior; relevant to the evolution of human cognitive functions.
Takes into account the roles of language and other semiotic behavior in human life.
Performance in present in virtually all institutions of public expressive behavior.

Phoneme  A minimal unit of meaningful sound within a given language’s system of
recognized sound distinctions. Each phoneme in a language acquires its identity by
contrast with other phonemes; phonemic distinctions are therefore language specific.
In English, the phonemes /z/ and /s/ distinguish “zinc” from “sink” while /b/ and /p/
distinguish “cab” from “cap.”

Phonetics  The study of the characteristics of human sounds, especially those used in
speech.

Phonology  The study of sound patterns of a language.

Pidgin  A simplified communication strategy that develops in situations where three or
more language communities interact on a consistent, regular but not permanent basis.
Pidgins often developed in trade situations, in busy harbor towns. A pidgin does not
have any native speakers. See also creole.

Pitch  The frequency with which the vocal cords (or folds) vibrate to produce voice: the
more rapidly, the higher the pitch.

Postvocalic  A sound occurring after a vowel. In the word riot, there is a postvocalic /t/.

Pragmatics  The general study of how context affects the user’s interpretation of
language.

Prescriptive  Seeking to impose a set of socially constructed, ever evolving rules that
are founded primarily in aesthetics and fashion. Often with a strong interest in
punctuation.

Prescriptivist grammar  A theoretically stable, homogenous set of rules for language
that must be enforced for the good of the individual and society in general. Applies to
both written and spoken language.
In a court case, the defendant may try to propose legal excuse for a policy or action which otherwise would be illegal. In discrimination cases, for instance, it may be shown that the apparently innocent motive behind an action may be a deception constructed to conceal a discriminatory intention. “The pretext analysis established by the Supreme Court in McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green was specifically designed to uncover and weed out covert forms of intentional discrimination” (Yuracko 2006: 371).

**Prima facie case** The minimum threshold amount of evidence or proof sufficient for the accuser or plaintiff to win the case if there were no defenses or additional evidence presented by the accused/respondent.

**Profiling, linguistic** When an individual draws conclusions about race, ethnicity, gender, or any other number of social characteristics based on language features alone, the process is called linguistic profiling. Example: Listening to someone being interviewed on the radio, you may come to the conclusion that the individual is African American, female, elderly or Anglo, male, from Boston. The most extreme type of such profiling happens in situations where an individual is refused basic rights on the basis of perceived accent alone, as in the case of someone who is refused an interview because of a Chicano accent.

**Profiling, racial** Targeting of an individual by law enforcement based on racial or ethnic rather than observed actions or evidence.

**Prosody/prosodic features** Patterns of stress and intonation in a given language.

**Protected Class** Anti-discrimination laws only regard unequal or unfair treatment as unlawful discrimination when the victim is a member of a defined group known as a protected class. The first civil rights laws protected only race and color. As the principle of discrimination evolved over the years more laws were passed and more groups were added. Federal protected classes now include race, color, national origin, religion, sex (or gender), age (over 40), and disability. State law (HEPA) further protects ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, as well as arrest and court record (in most cases) U.S. Legal Definitions: http://definitions.uslegal.com/p/protected-class/.

**Racialization/racialism** When individuals and groups are viewed first and primarily through a racial lens, through a culturally invented racial framework that assigns characteristics and motivations without foundation.

**Racism** “The use of race to establish and justify a social hierarchy and system of power that privileges, preferences or advances certain individuals or groups of people usually at the expense of others. Racism is perpetuated through both interpersonal and institutional practices.” Source: www.understandingrace.org.

**Reasonable accommodation** Reasonable accommodations are those measures taken by employers or schools that make it possible for those with disabilities to participate. May include modifications or adjustments such as building wheelchair ramps, modifying work schedules, or supplying readers or interpreters for the deaf.

**Relative clause** A clause introduced by a relative pronoun (which, that, who, whom, whose) or a relative adverb (where, when, why).

**Reverse linguistic stereotyping** Assumptions or preconceptions about a social group (race, ethnicity, etc.) trigger distorted evaluation of the speech of anyone belonging to that group (Kang and Rubin 2009). See also accent hallucination.

**Rhetoric** The study and practice of effective communication.
Rhotic A reference to a language or variety of English that retains (r) after vowels.

Semantics The study of meanings of individual words and or larger units such as phrases and sentences.

Sociolinguistics The study of the interaction between structured variation intrinsic to spoken language and social and cultural context and norms.

Sociolinguistic variable “The sociolinguistic variable is a set of alternative ways of saying the same thing, although the alternatives, or variants, have social significance. More specifically, a sociolinguistic variable is a linguistic element that co-varies not only with other linguistic elements, but also with a number of extralinguistic independent variables like social class, age, sex, ethnic group or contextual style. Labovian methodology seeks to isolate variables at the levels of core features and to derive rules for their distribution, making correlations with social variables.” (Steve Hoenisch, criticism.com; citations excluded).

Slang “Words, phrases, and uses that are regarded as very informal and are often restricted to special contexts or are peculiar to a specified profession, class, etc.” (The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar).

Speech act In linguistics, an utterance defined in terms of a speaker’s intentions and the effects it has on a listener.

Speech community Any group of people whose language or language variety can be taken as an object of study. A language community can be as large as a country (Liechtenstein), a neighborhood, as in Southie (working-class Boston), Bay Ridge (working-class ethnic Italian Brooklyn), an isolated community (Smith Island, Maryland), or an ad-hoc group such as a book group, AA meeting, third grade classroom, family reunion.

Standard A basis for comparison; a reference point against which other things can be evaluated; a default choice, as in the idea that “male” is the default reference in all legal materials. Unless otherwise stated, the person being discussed is assumed to be male.

Standard American English, *SAE A hypothetical construct, an idea in the mind of a perfectly homogenous and unchanging language. In this book, the * emphasizes the fact that this is in fact an abstraction.

Standard Language ideology A bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class.

Standardization The attempt to remove all naturally occurring variation from spoken language, or to impose a set of guidelines on the written form of a given language.

Summary judgment A party moving (applying) for summary judgment is attempting to eliminate its risk of losing at trial by demonstrating to the judge that there is insufficient evidence to take the case to trial in the first place. In effect, summary judgment is one way to dismiss a civil court case before it gets started.

Syntax (1) The study of the rules that govern the way words combine to form phrases, clauses, and sentences (and one of the major components of grammar). (2) The arrangement of words in a sentence.
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http://pewhispanic.org
http://goo.gl/TM1mt

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<th>Prosody on the Web</th>
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<td>World History Connected</td>
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