



WHY FOLK LINGUISTS SHOULD HATE LANGUAGE AWARENESS

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WHAT IS FOLK LINGUISTICS & WHY DO WE HATE YOU?

Folk Linguistics studies what nonlinguists say and believe about language.

Language Awareness makes “little linguists” out of the folk.

Therefore, we hate you. You’re trying to put us out of business.

“Folk linguistics studies what nonlinguists say and believe about language.”

Two foundational concepts:

- 1) All nonlinguists ARE “folk.” Folk are not quaint, uneducated, rural, brightly-costumed, home-made instrument strumming respondents who care for animals.
- 2) “...say and believe about” can be accessed and interpreted in many ways.

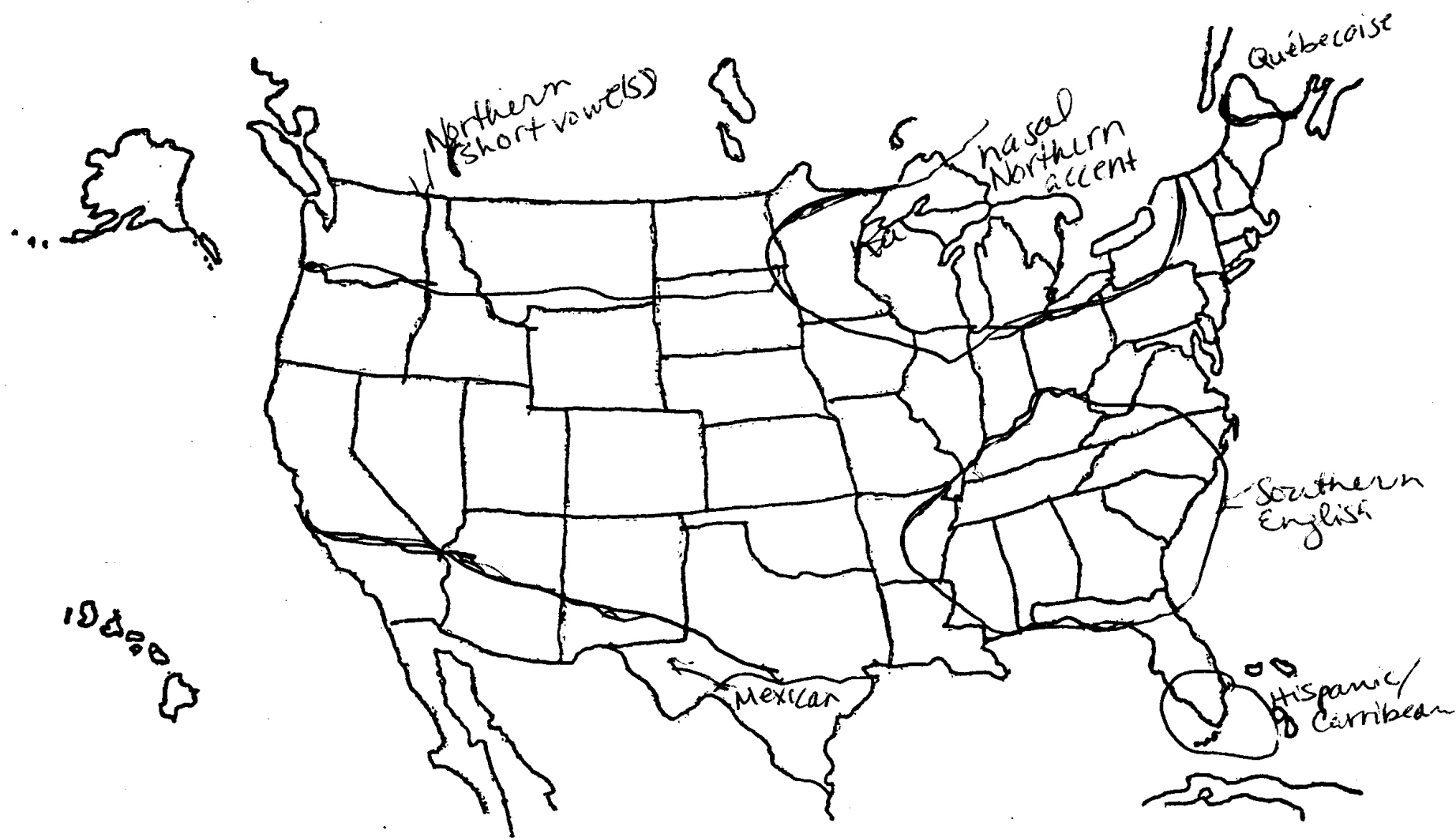
WHY DO FOLK LINGUISTICS?

- 1) GENERAL AND THEORETICAL LINGUISTICS
- 2) THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE
(Language attitudes)
- 3) LANGUAGE VARIATION AND CHANGE (“Labovian”
sociolinguistics)
- 4) ANTHROPOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS: THE
ETHNOGRAPHY OF LANGUAGE/SPEAKING
(“Hymesian” sociolinguistics)

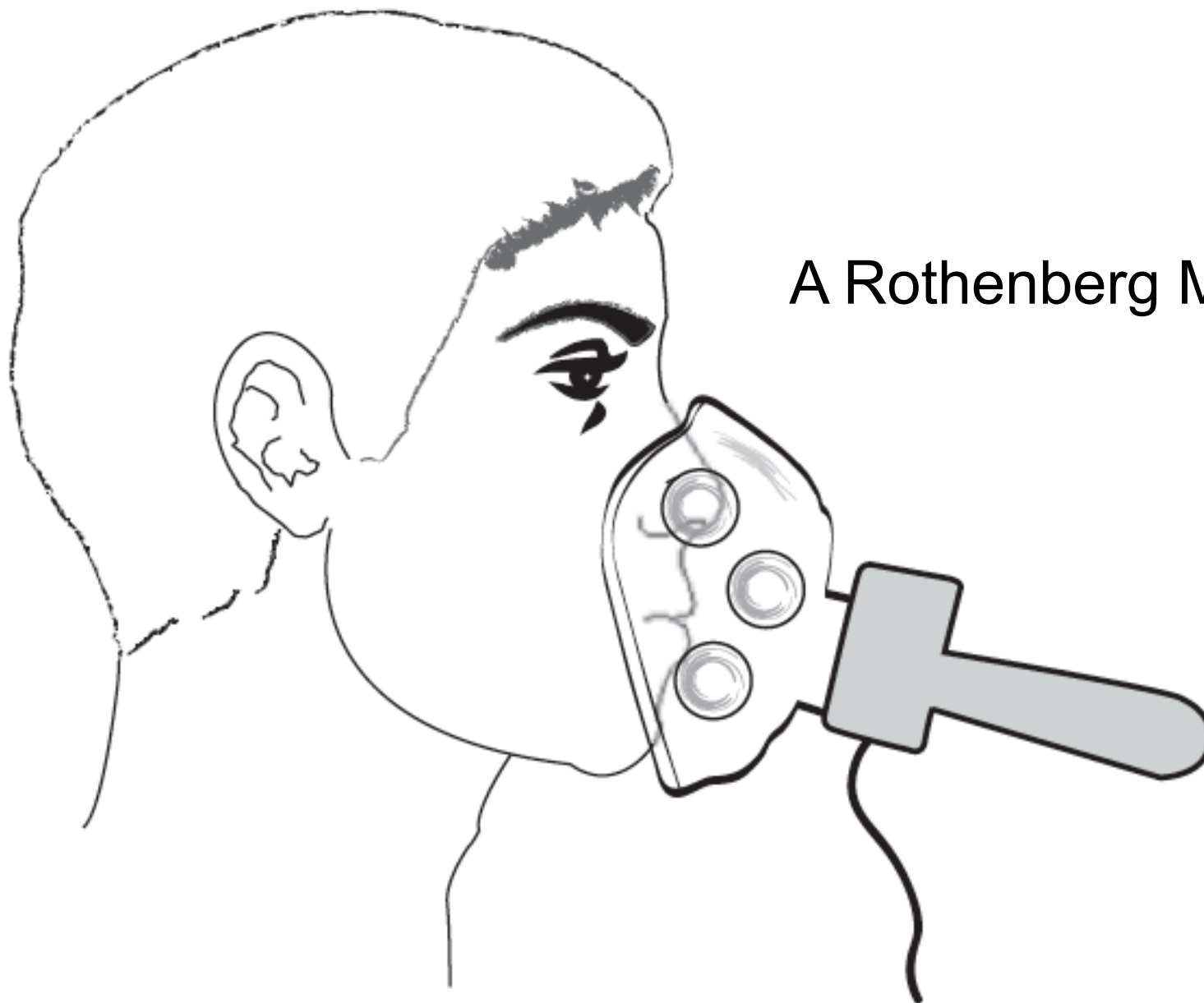
1) GENERAL AND THEORETICAL LINGUISTICS

... we should be interested not only in (*a*) what goes on (language), but also in (*b*) how people react to what goes on (they are persuaded, they are put off, etc.) and in (*c*) what people say goes on (talk concerning language). It will not do to dismiss these secondary and tertiary modes of conduct merely as sources of error.

Hoenigswald 1966:20



Hand-drawn map of US Dialects; South Florida EA female college student; 21 (1987).



A Rothenberg Mask

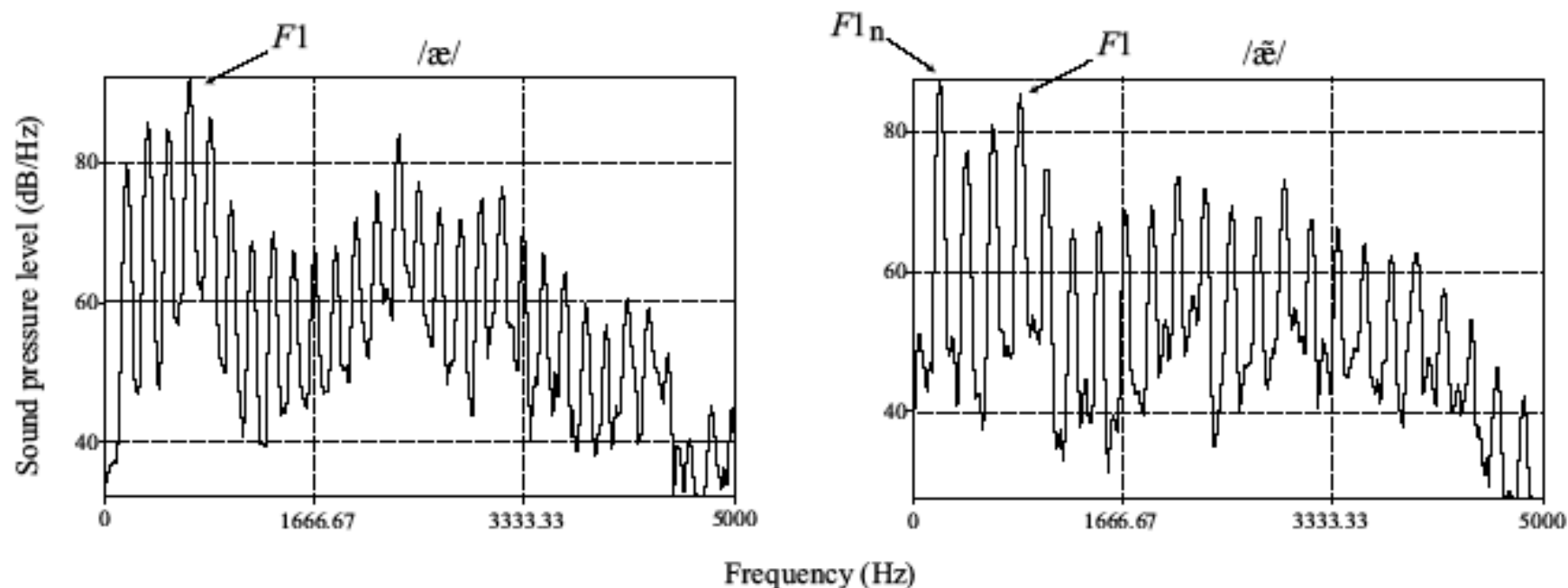
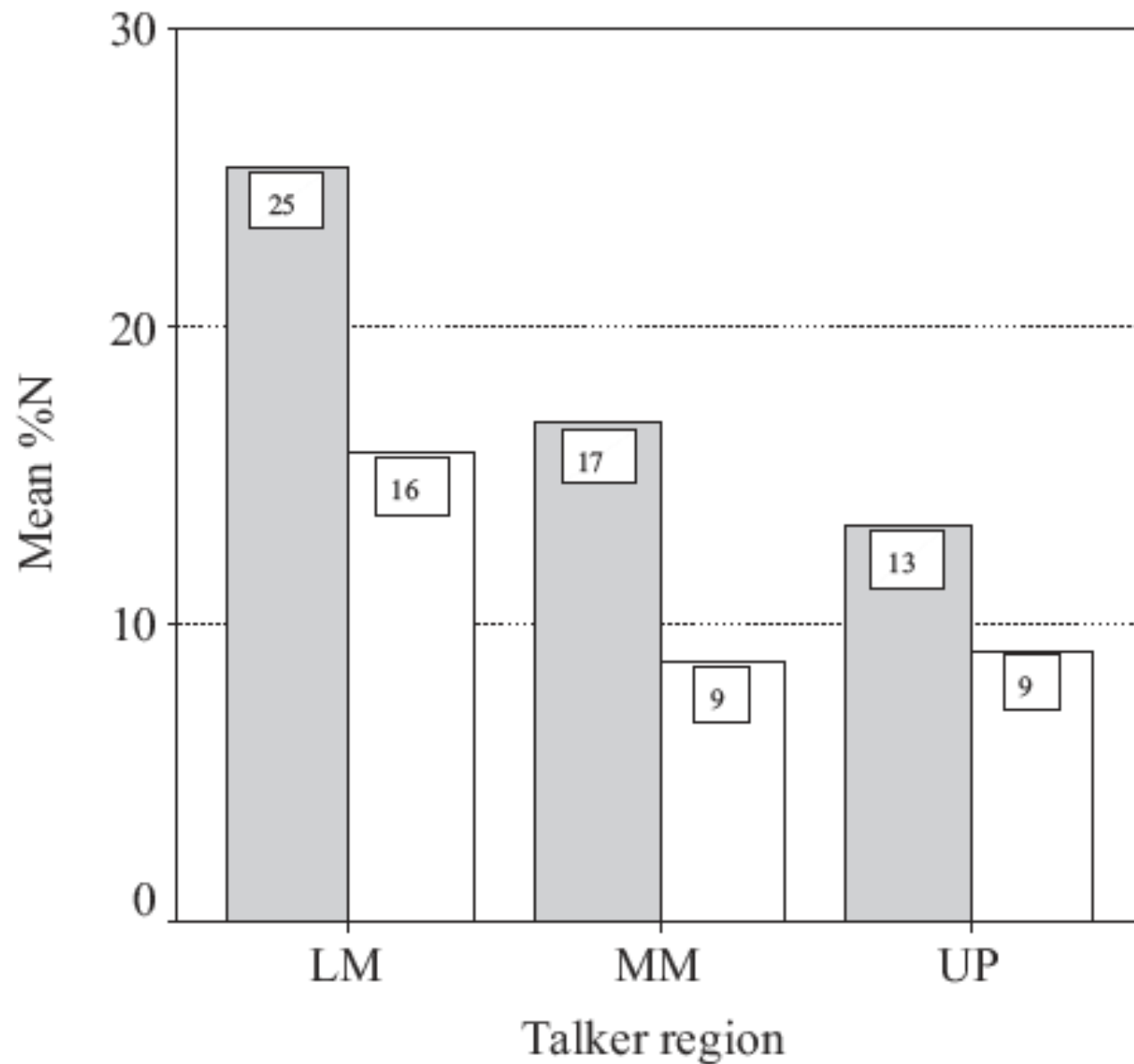


Figure 29 Examples of non-nasalized vowel spectra (left) and nasalized spectra (right.) of the vowel /æ/ in "back" Plichta 2004

Note the presence (right) of a nasal formant in an NCS speaker's pronunciation of 'back.'

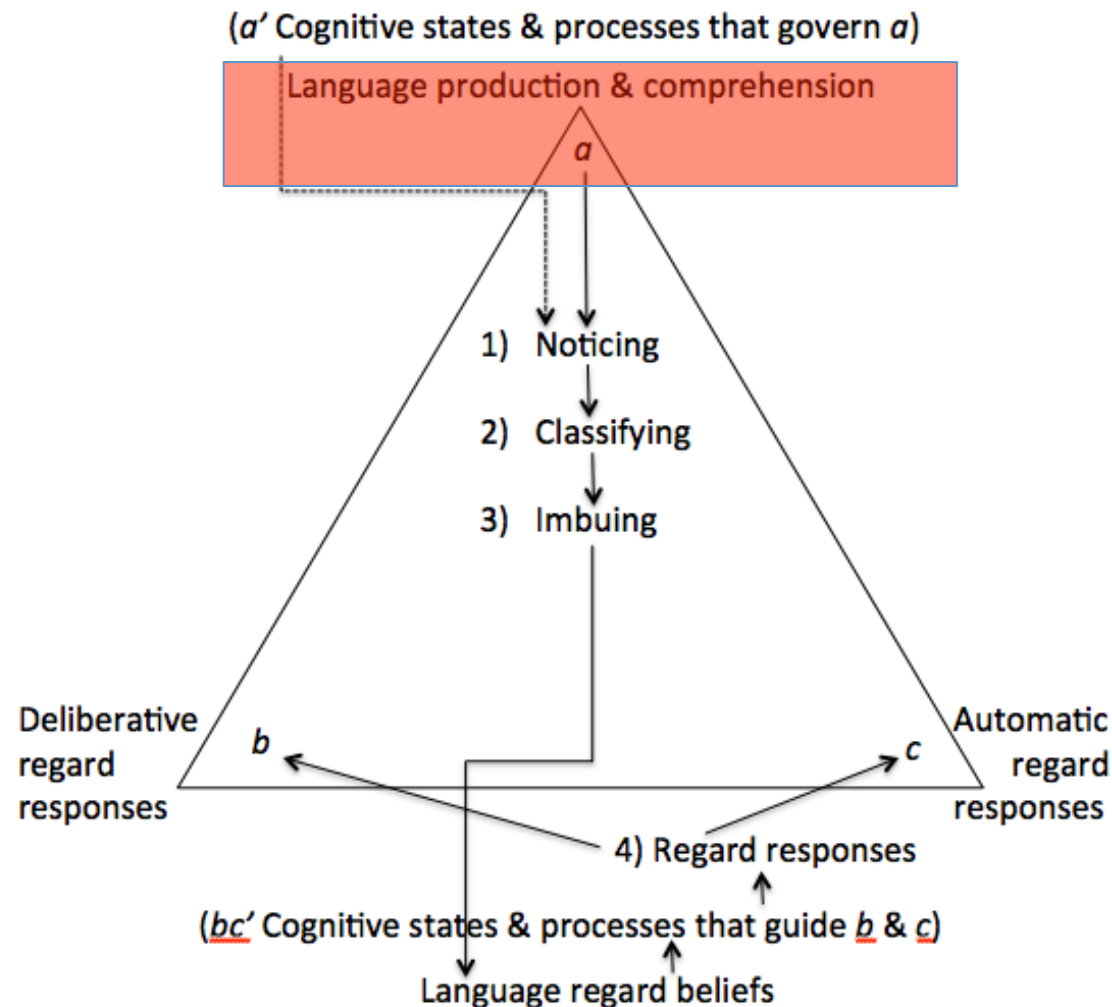
Typical NCS
users produce
nasal vowels,
***even in
nonnasal
environments***
(Plichta 2004)



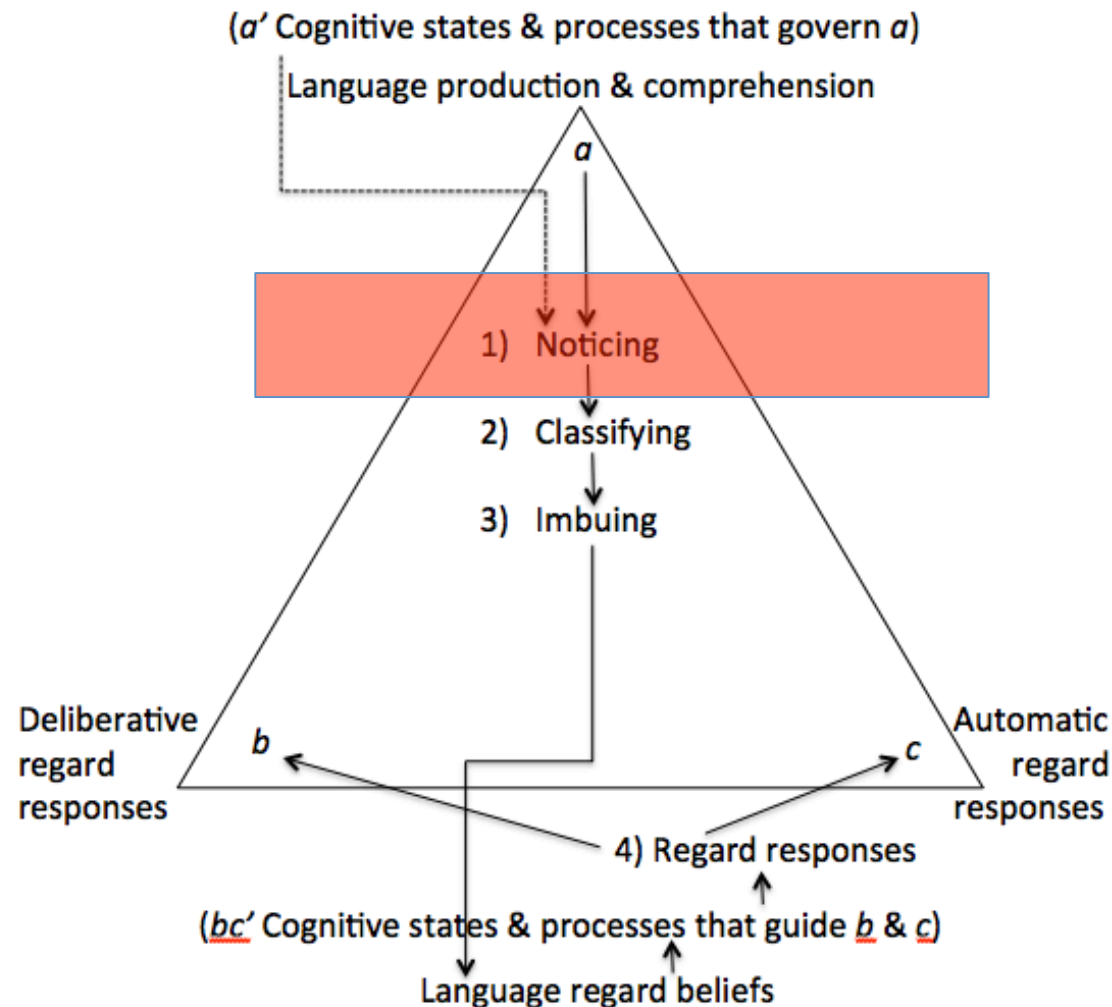
2) THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE (LANGUAGE ATTITUDES)

Attitudes = Beliefs + Evaluation (Kruglanski & Stroebe 2005:327)

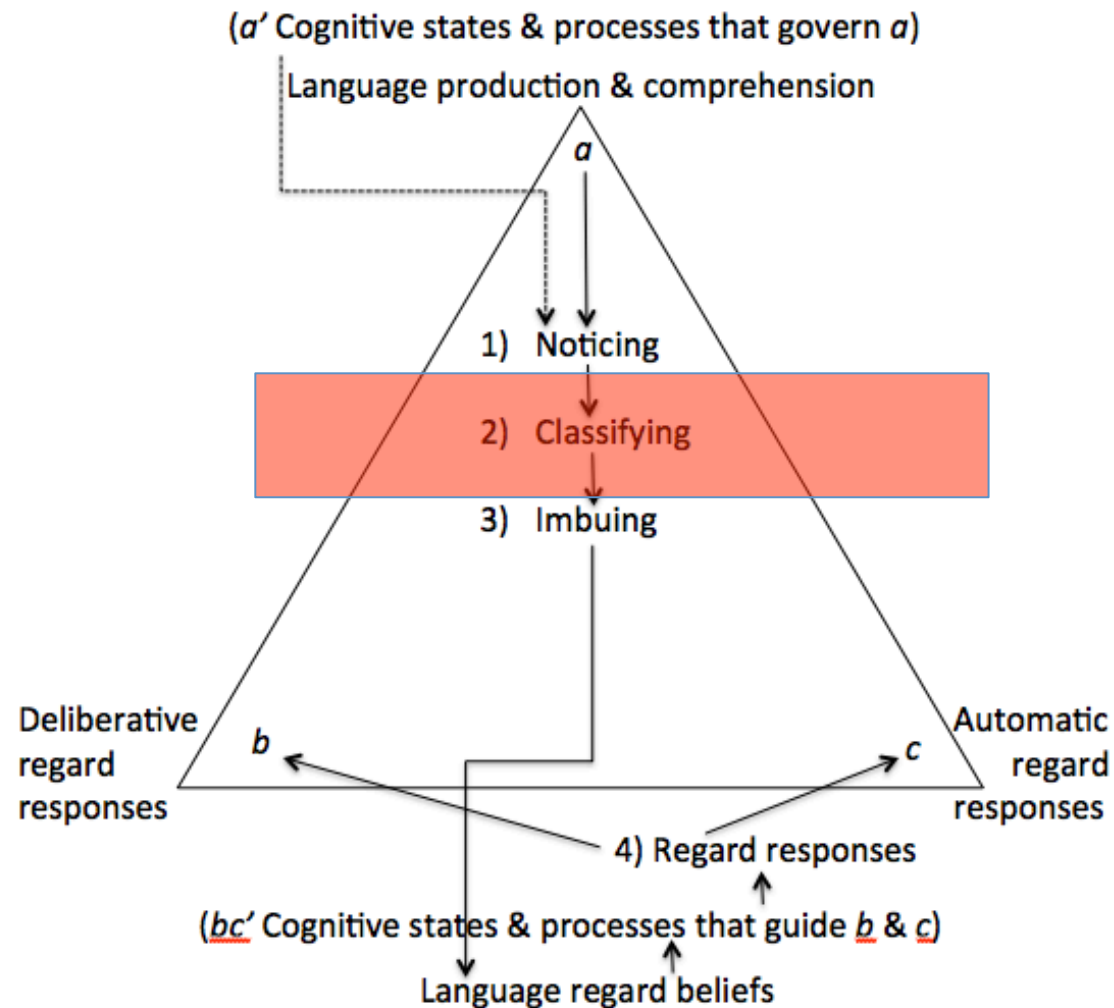
Beliefs = “estimates of the likelihood that the knowledge one has acquired about a referent is correct” (Wyer & Albarracín 2005:273)



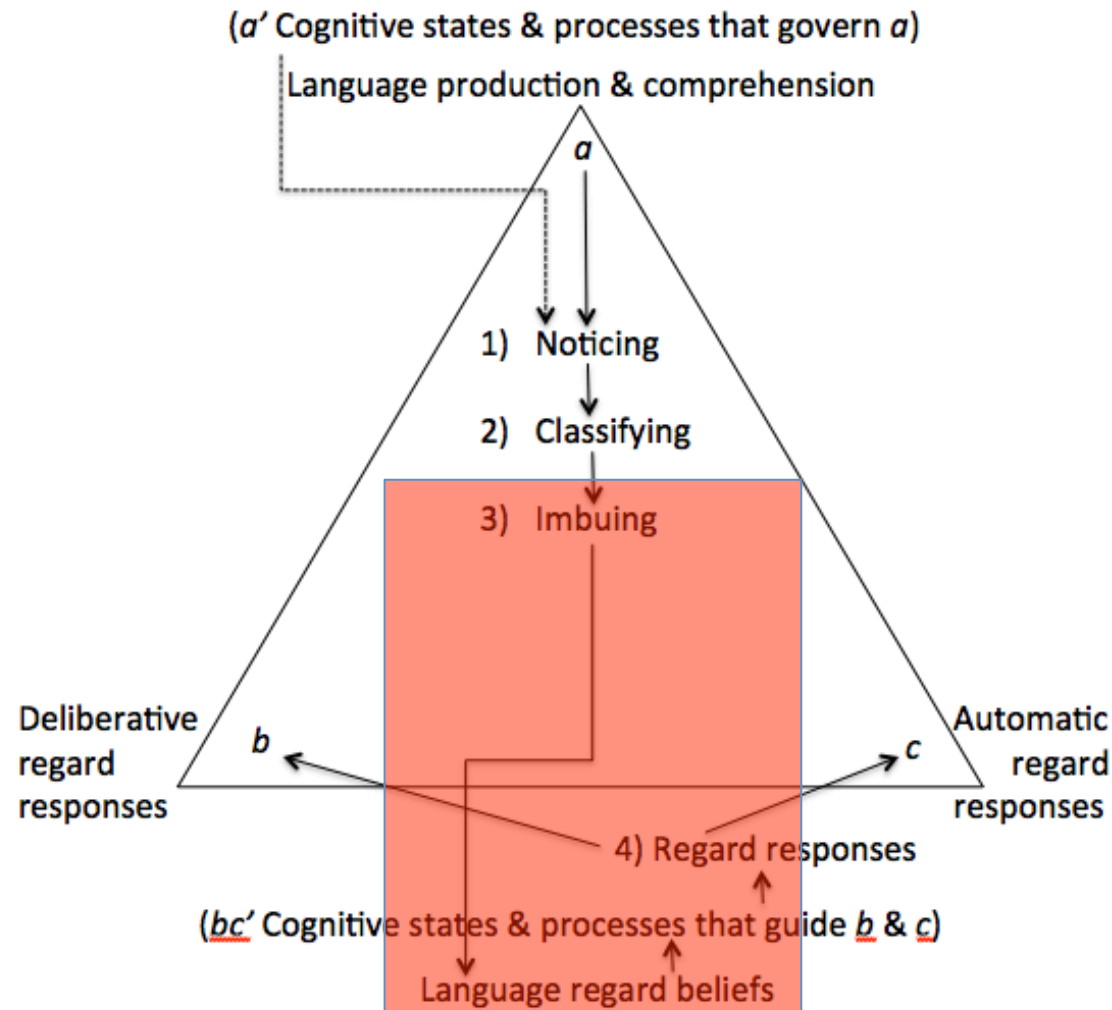
A speaker of American English produces an [a:] in the word “high” (i.e., monophthongizes the vowel), an instance of production at “*a*.”



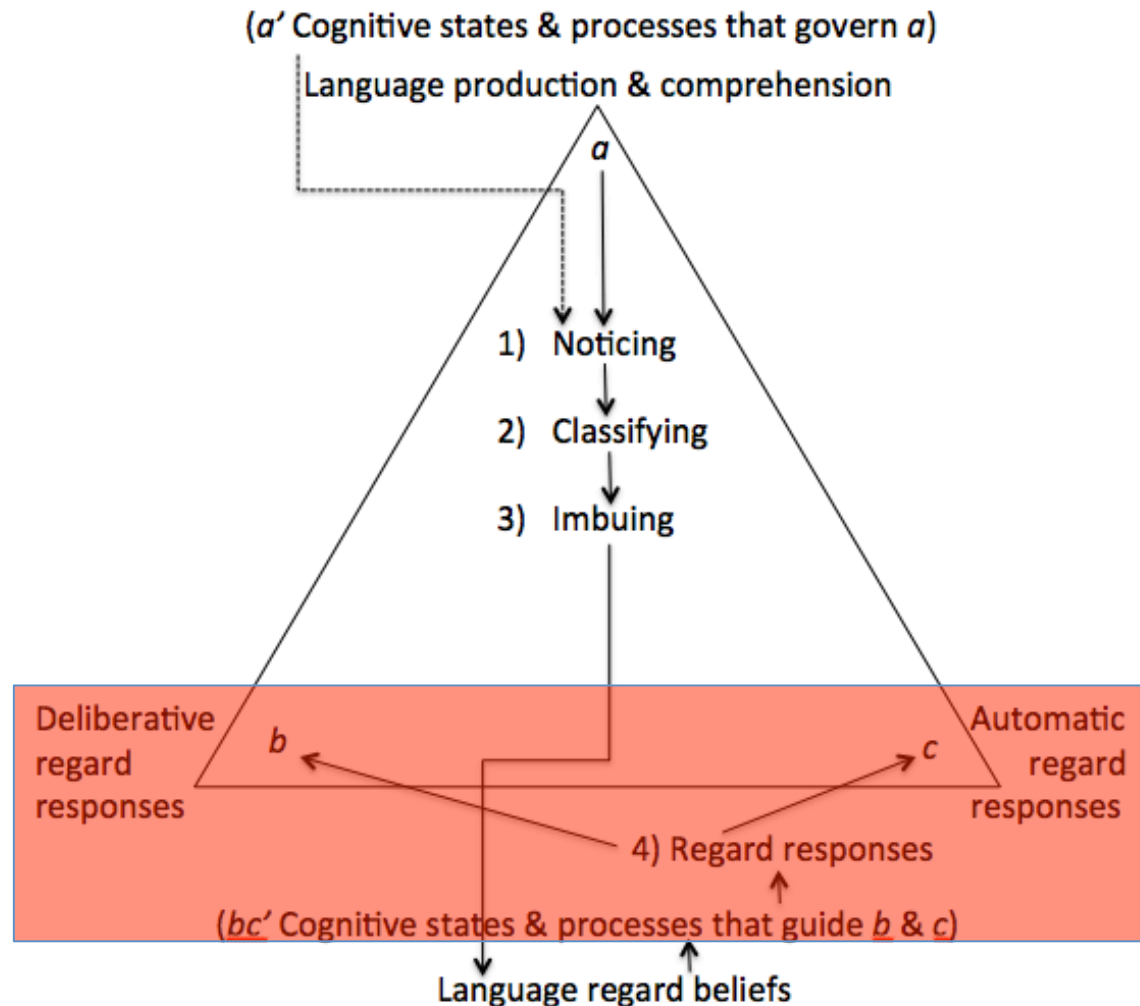
Step 1: A hearer *notices* *a* (perhaps because their own pronunciation is diphthongal [a_I]).



Step 2: The hearer *classifies* this “a” as “American Southern.”

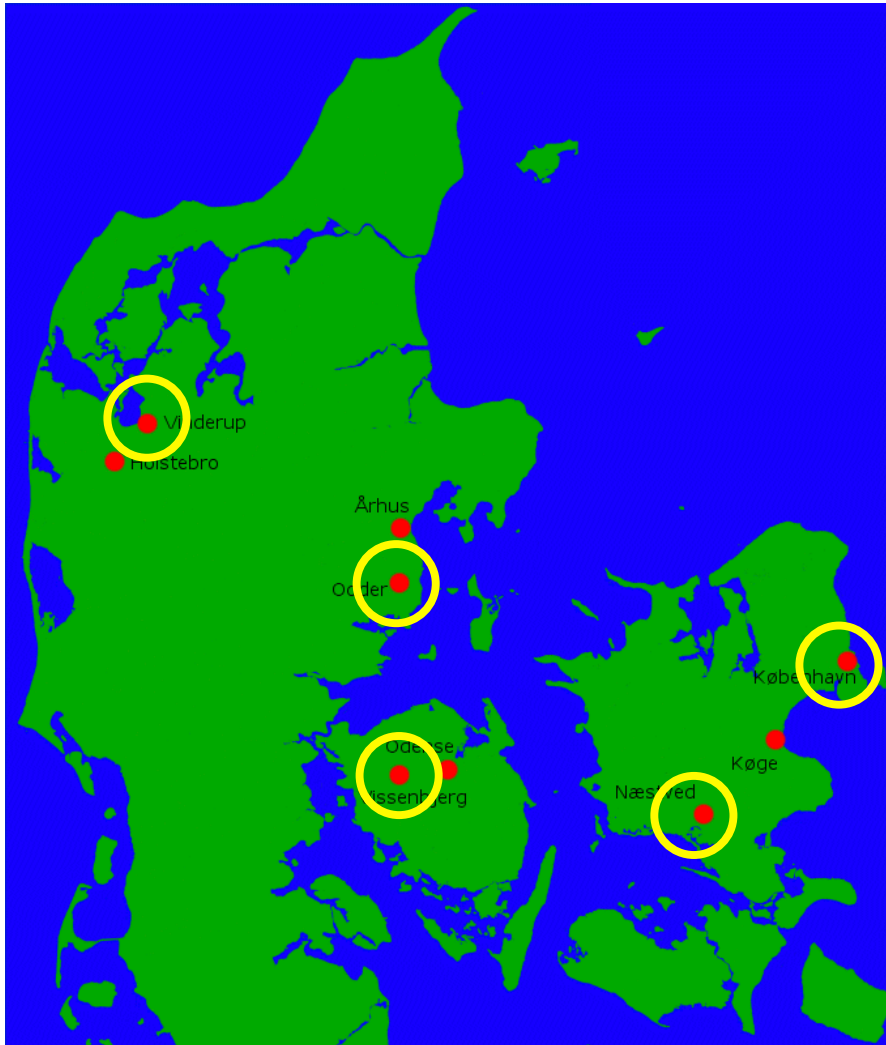


Step 3: The hearer retrieves caricatures of “American Southerners” from their cultural belief system and imbues fact “*a*” with them.



Step 4: Through *bc'*, a hearer has a regard response (at *b* or *c*).

The LANCHART communities



•Zealand:

Copenhagen

Køge

Næstved

•Funen:

Vissenbjerg (Odense)

•Jutland:

Odder (Århus)

Vinderup (Holstebro)

Conscious language regard:

Our own is best

Jutland and Funen

[Local name] > Rigsdansk > Københavnsk

Næstved

[Local name] > Københavnsk > Rigsdansk

Copenhagen

Københavnsk > Rigsdansk

Nonconscious regard

	Intelligent	Conscientious	Trustworthy	Goal-directed	Self-assured	Fascinating	Cool	Nice
Intelligent – Stupid	C	C	M	M	M	M	M	M
Conscientious – Happy-go-lucky	C	/	M	/	M	M	M	M
Trustworthy – Untrustworthy	M	/	C	/	M	M	M	M
Goal-directed – Dull	M	/	C	/	M	M	M	M
Self-assured – Insecure	M	***	C	/	L	L	L	L
Fascinating – Boring	M	***	L	***	L	L	L	L
Cool – Uncool	M	***	L	**	L	L	L	L
Nice – Repulsive	M	*	C	/	L	L	L	L

Wilcoxon Signed Pair Test Friedman Test

Preferred \longleftrightarrow Dispreferred

3) LANGUAGE VARIATION AND CHANGE (“LABOVIAN” SOCIOLINGUISTICS)

The theory of language change must establish empirically the subjective correlates of the several layers and variables in a heterogeneous structure. Such subjective correlates of evaluations cannot be deduced from the place of the variables within linguistic structure. Furthermore, the level of social awareness is a major property of linguistic change which must be determined directly.

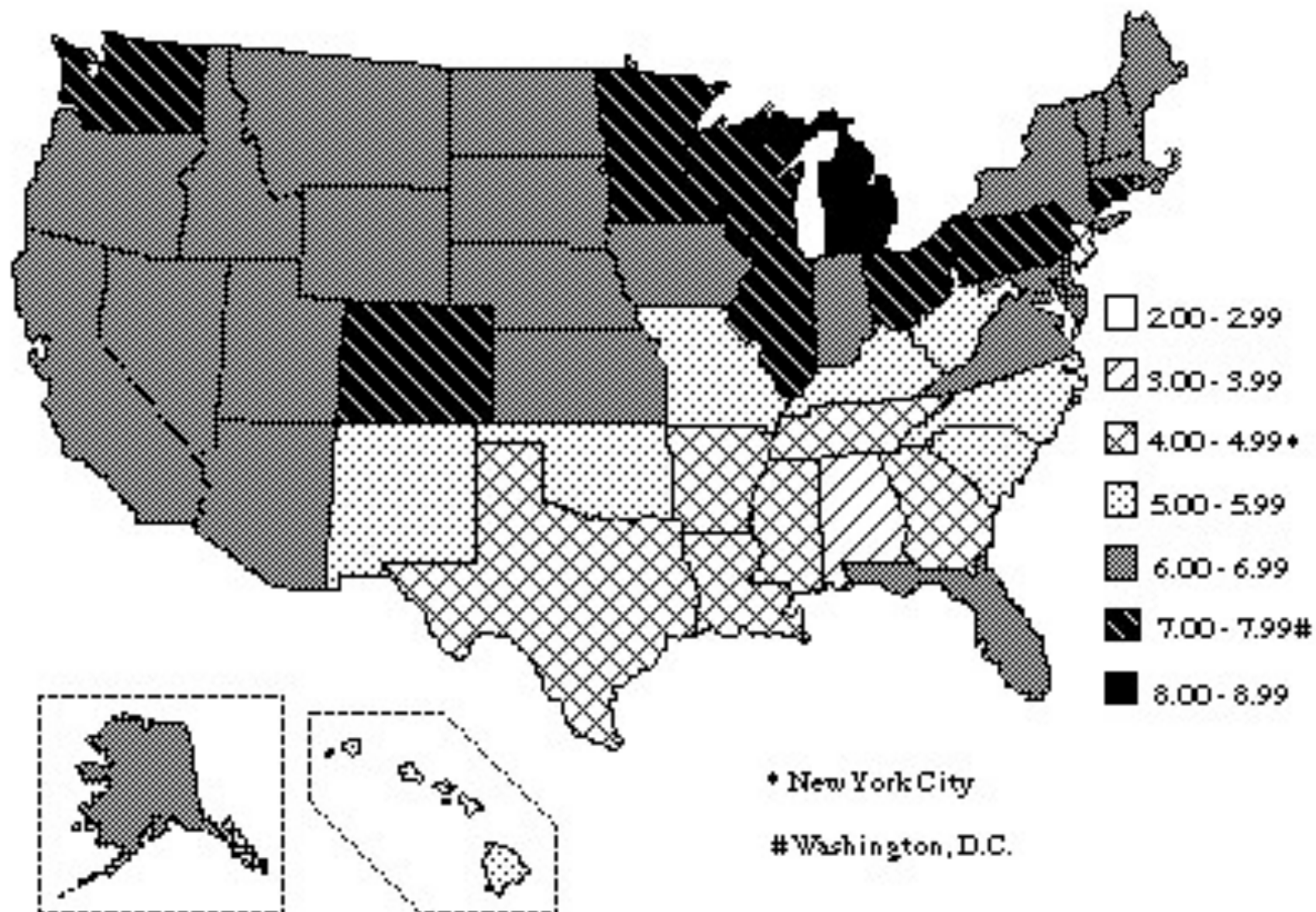
Weinreich et al. 1968:186



G: ...if you have such a thing as called standard English other than textbook English, it would probably be the language that you're hearing right now. As you listen to the Midwestern.

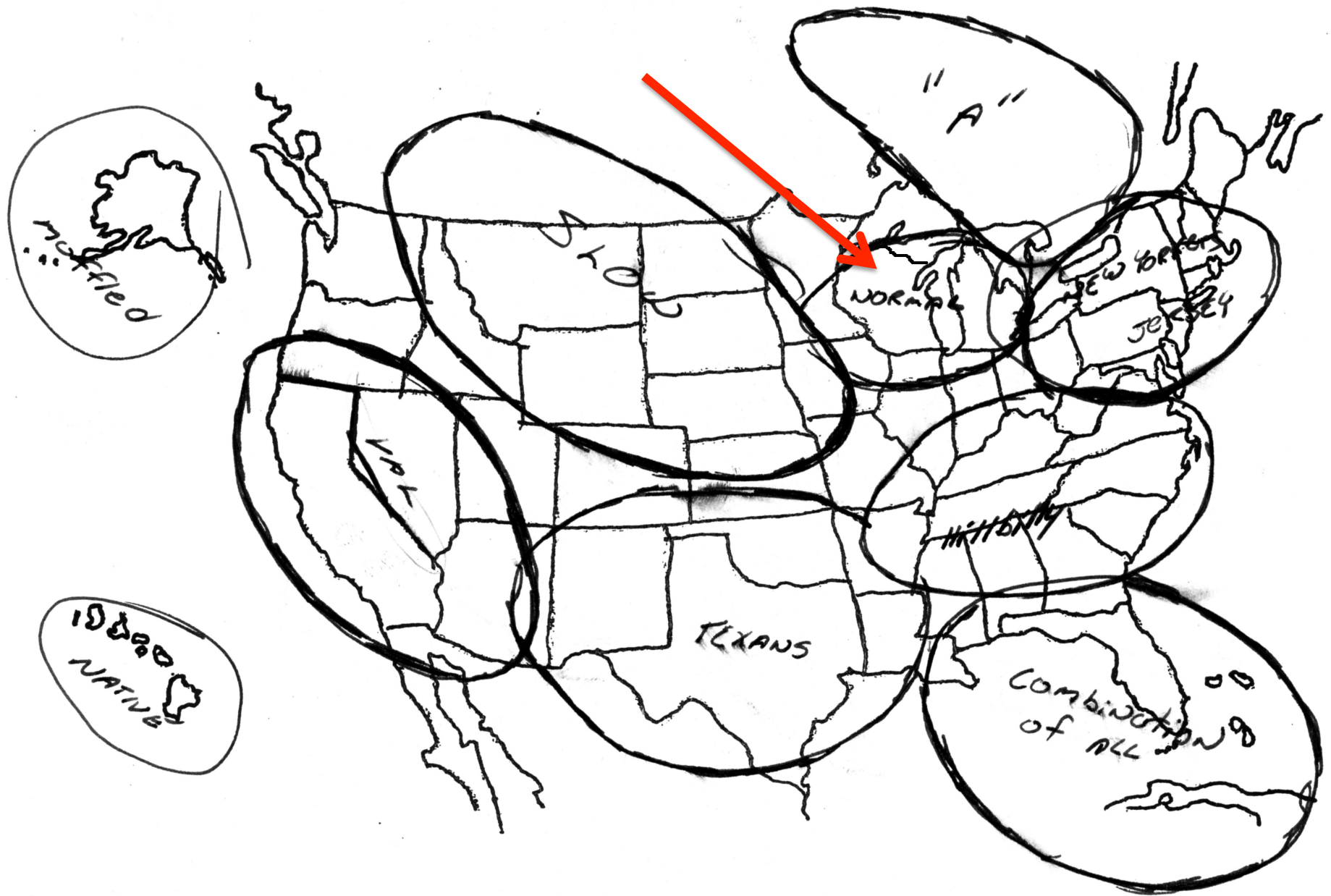
(Male, 43, EA, middle class, elementary and junior high school teacher; urban southeastern MI)



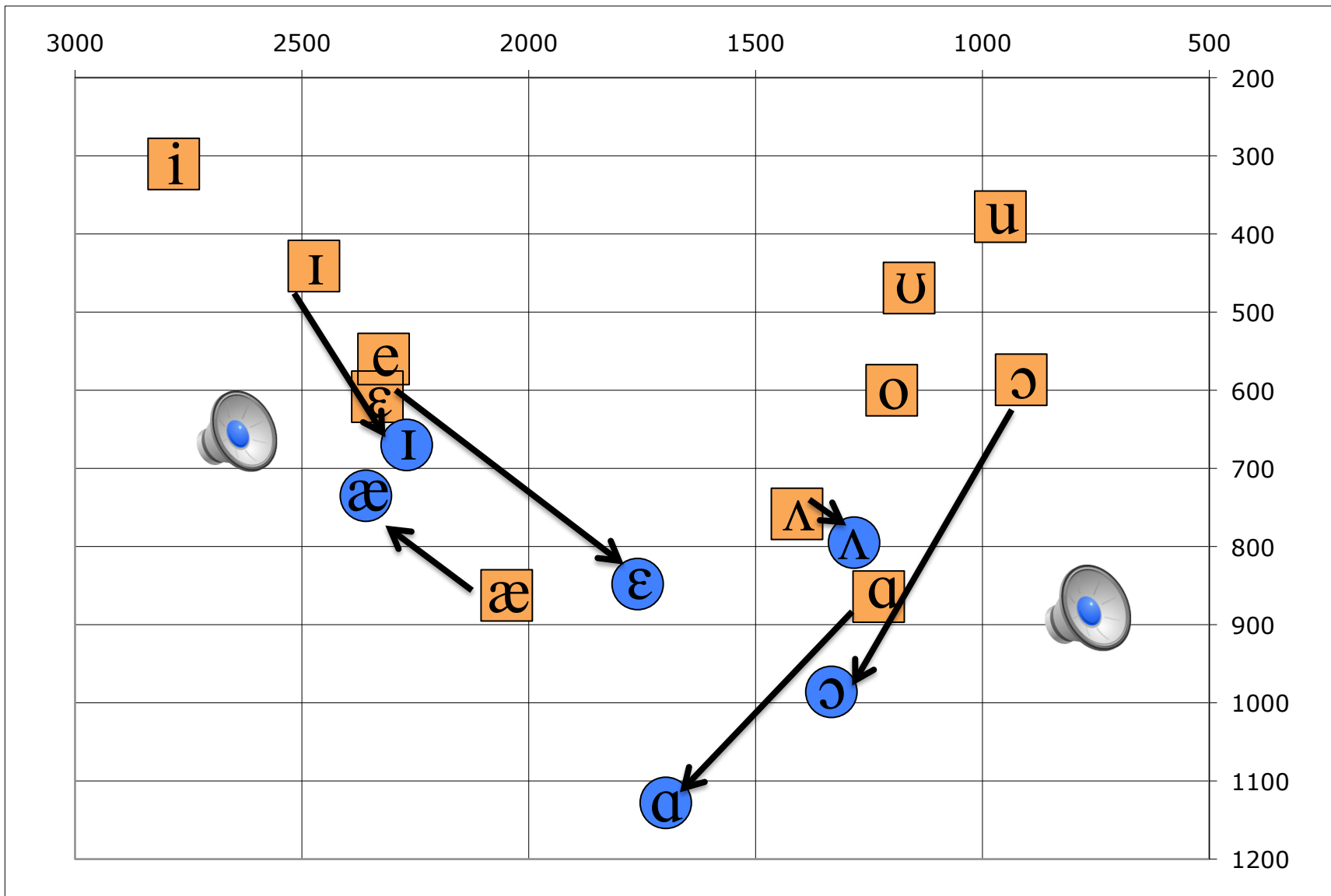


“Correctness”

Preston 1996:312

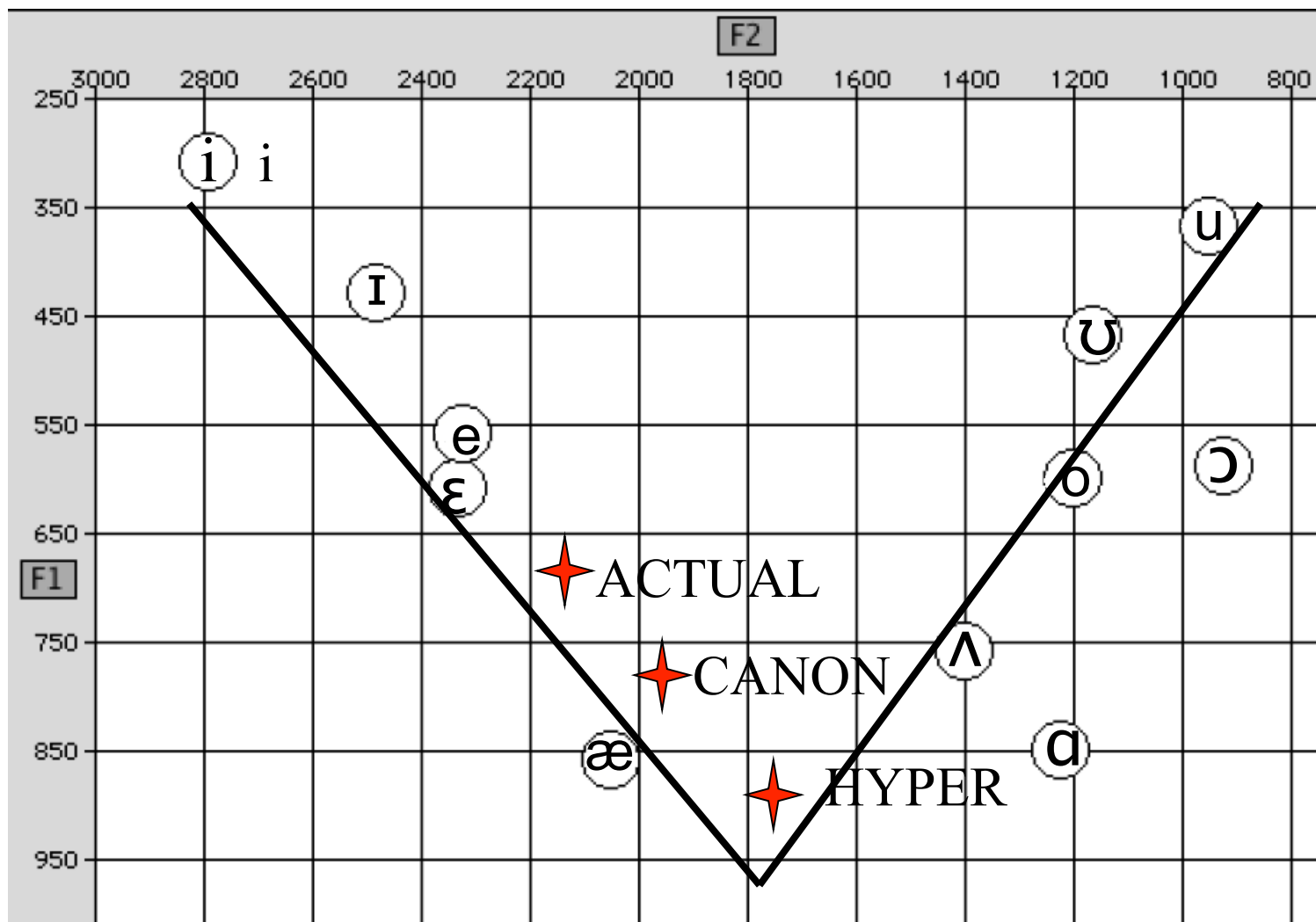


A hand-drawn map



Detroit area adult female tokens (blue)
 Peterson & Barney female tokens (orange)

Preston
 2005:137

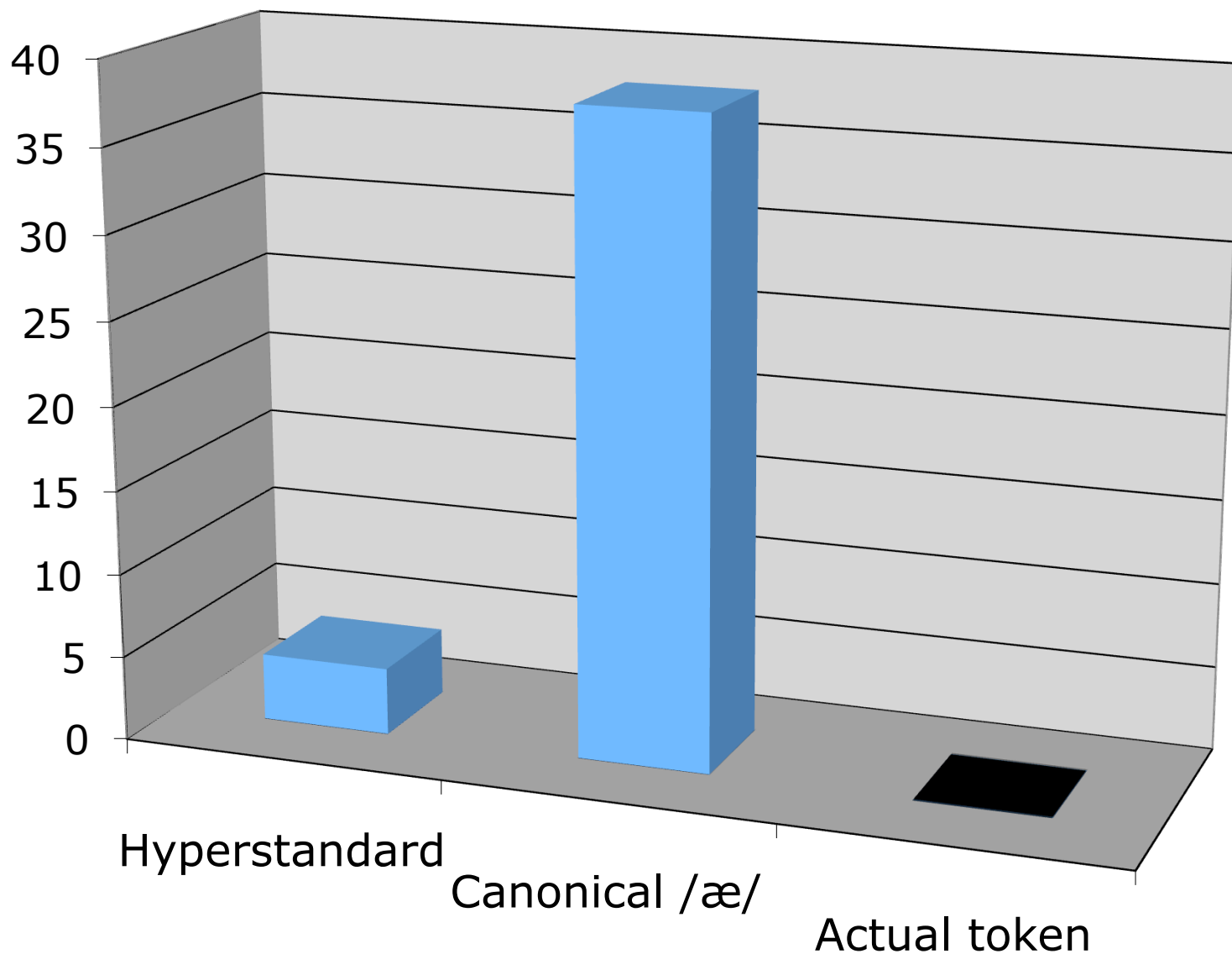


Resynthesized vowel tokens of "last"

Niedzielski 1997

Respondent matching results for the vowel in “last”

token	1	2	3	
	hyper standard	canonical /æ/	actual token	Total
	10%	90%	0%	
n=	4	38	0	42



4) ANTHROPOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS (THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF LANGUAGE AND SPEAKING)

If the community's own theory of linguistic repertoire and speech is considered (as it must be in any serious ethnographic account), matters become all the more complex and interesting.

Hymes 1972:39

Ideologies = “the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships”

Irvine 1989

((In a discussion of Christmas customs, H (the fieldworker, not a native speaker of English) has asked if there is any difference between *gift* and *present*; D has said earlier that there is not, but he returns to the question.))

D: Oftentimes a gift is something like you you go to a Tupperware party and they're going to give you a gift, it's- I think it's more=

[
H: Uh huh.

D: =impersonal, - than a present.

[
G: No, there's no difference.

[
D: No? There's real- yeah there's really no difference. That's true. Maybe the way we use it is though.

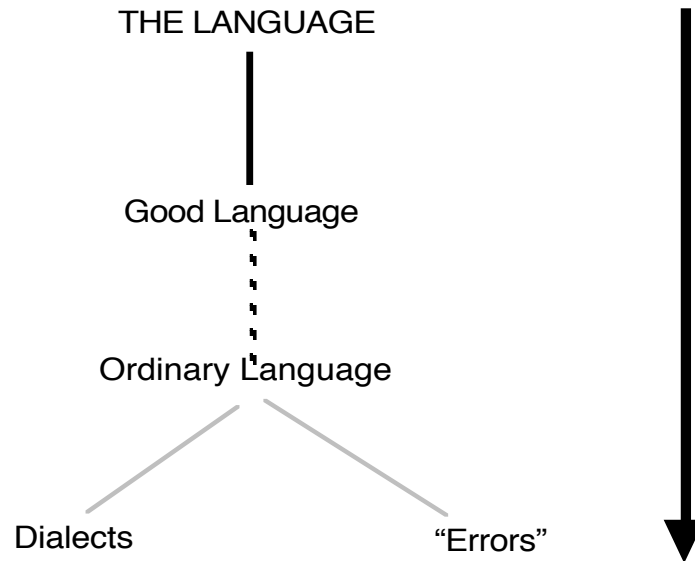
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G: There is no difference.

U: Maybe we could look it up and see what 'gift' means.

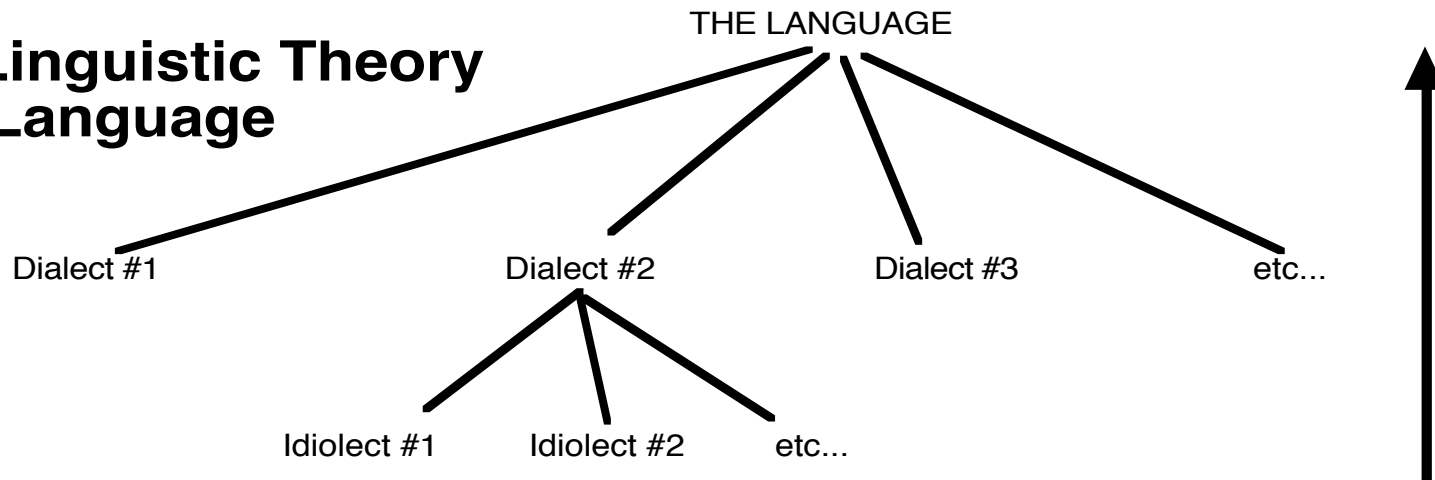
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D: I mean technically there's no difference.

((They look up *gift* and *present* in the dictionary.))

A Folk Theory of Language



A Linguistic Theory of Language



5) APPLIED LINGUISTICS

In the general area of applied linguistics, folk linguistics surely plays a most important role. When professionals want to have influence, they are, we believe, ill-advised to ignore popular belief; ... [P]opular belief about language is both ubiquitous and strong.

Niedzielski and Preston 2003:xvii

Most sociolinguists are do-gooders. Although a strong sense of social commitment is not a sociopolitical requisite for examining language in its social context, it certainly seems to characterize the lives of many sociolinguistic researchers.

Wolfram 2000:19

Wolfram himself (the William C Friday Distinguished Prof. of Linguistics at North Carolina State University and Director of the institution's North Carolina Language and Life Project) is a typical do-gooder.

In one of his social studies curriculum efforts now approved for the State's public schools, he offers information about the grammatical structures of the state's minority varieties. Here's a sample of the sort of test he gives on Appalachian English "a-prefixing."

Which of the following could an Appalachian speaker say?

1. Fire was a-flaming everything.
2. A-hunting is fun.
3. They were a-deer-hunting twice last year.
4. The movie was a-shocking.
5. He just kept a-begging.
6. John kicked his dog for a-breaking his dish.
7. All of a sudden a bear came a-running.
8. He was a-asking a question.
9. He wanted to spend an hour a-talking.
10. He was a-retiring early.

1. Fire **was a-flaming** everything. (OK-progressive)
2. **A-hunting** is fun. (NO-gerund)
3. They were **a-deer-hunting** twice last year. (OK-compound)
4. The movie was **a-shocking**. (NO-adjective)
5. He just **kept a-begging**. (OK-after continuatives)
6. John kicked his dog **for a-breaking** his dish. (NO-preceding preposition)
7. All of a sudden a bear **came a-running**. (OK-preceding motion verb)
8. He was **a-asking a question**. (NO-following vowel)
9. He wanted to **spend an hour a-talking**. (OK-adverbial adjunct)
10. He was a-**re**tiring early. (NO-unstressed following syllable)

And here is a little test we give on African American English in Oklahoma, based on a made-up conversational setting:

Is Mr. Williams likely to say a. or b. after his first sentence?

Mr. Smith: Can I see Ms. Jones?

Mr. Williams (Ms. Jones' Secretary): I'm sorry; she busy.

a. But if you wait a bit I'm sure I can get you in.

b. It looks like you can't get in today.

Mr. Smith: Can I see Ms. Jones?

Mr. Williams (Ms. Jones' Secretary): I'm sorry; she be busy.

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WHAT IS LANGUAGE AWARENESS (really)?

From the ALA Website (“About”):

We define Language Awareness as **explicit knowledge about language**, and **conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use** (bold emphasis in the original; red mine, and below).

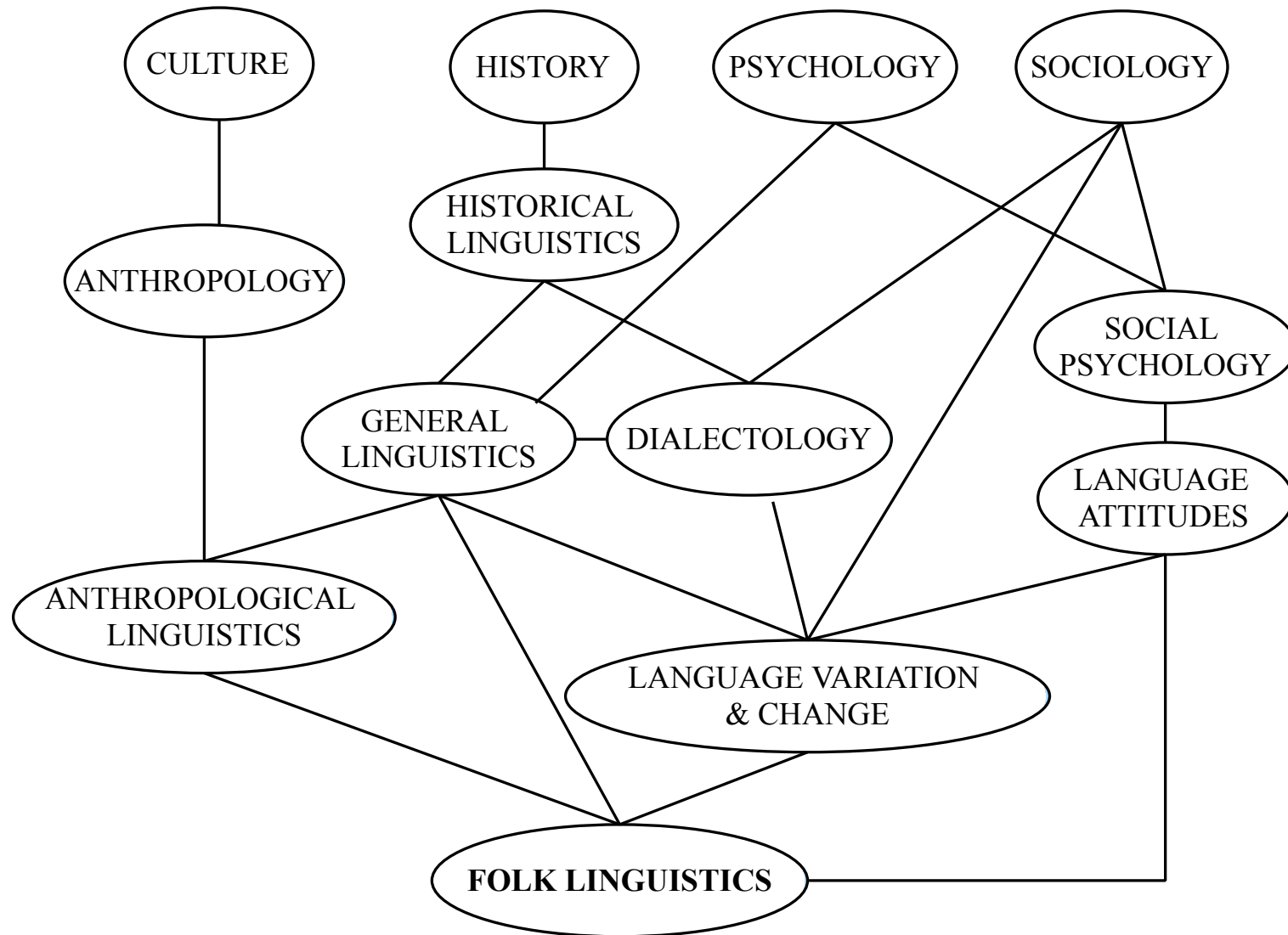
It covers a wide spectrum of fields. For example, Language Awareness issues include exploring the benefits that can be derived from developing a **good knowledge** about language, a conscious understanding of how languages work, of how people learn them and use them.

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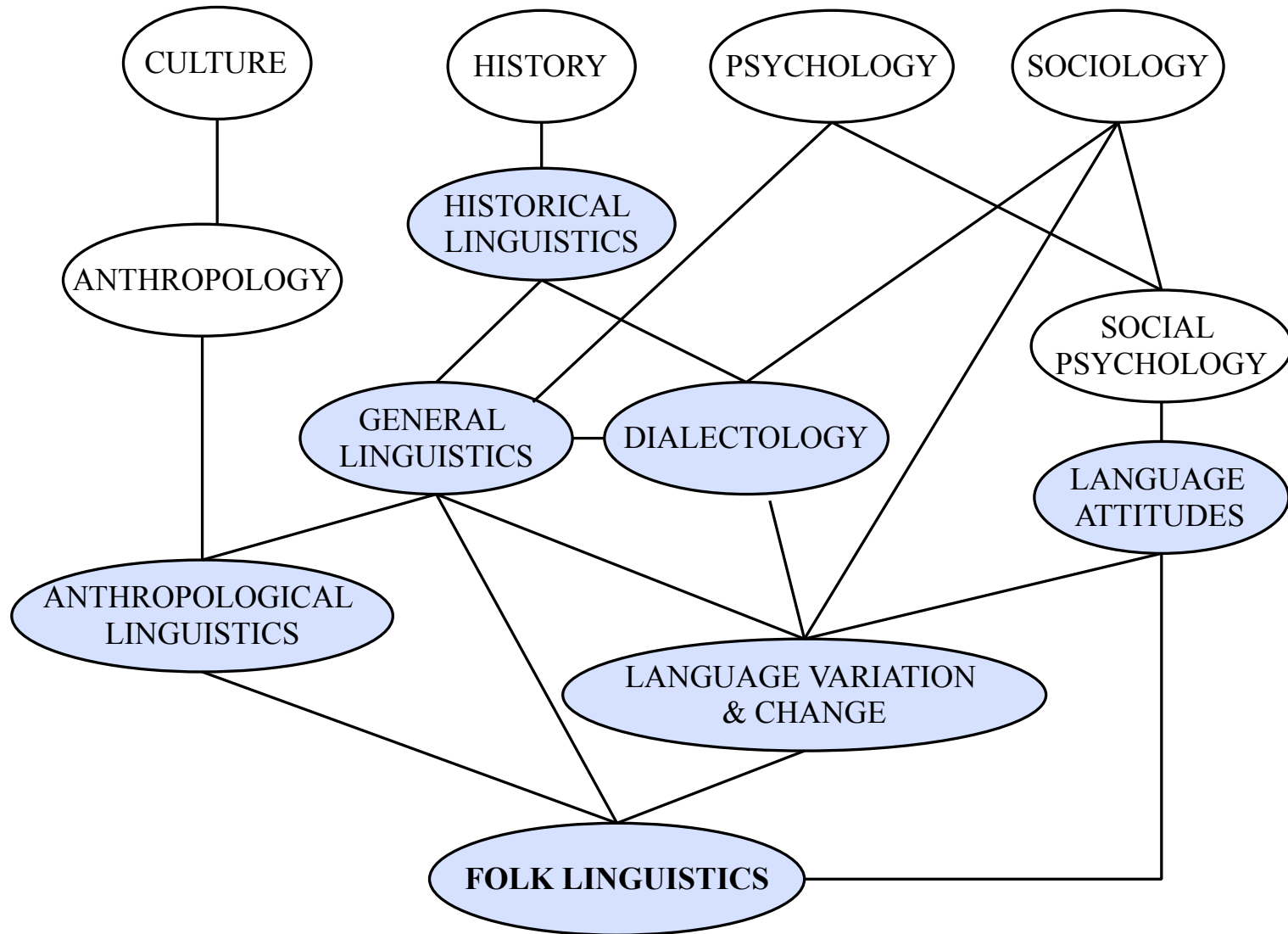
Language Awareness interests also include learning more about what sorts of ideas about language people normally operate with, and what effects these have on how they conduct their everyday affairs: e.g. their professional dealings.

IT'S NOT JUST US.....

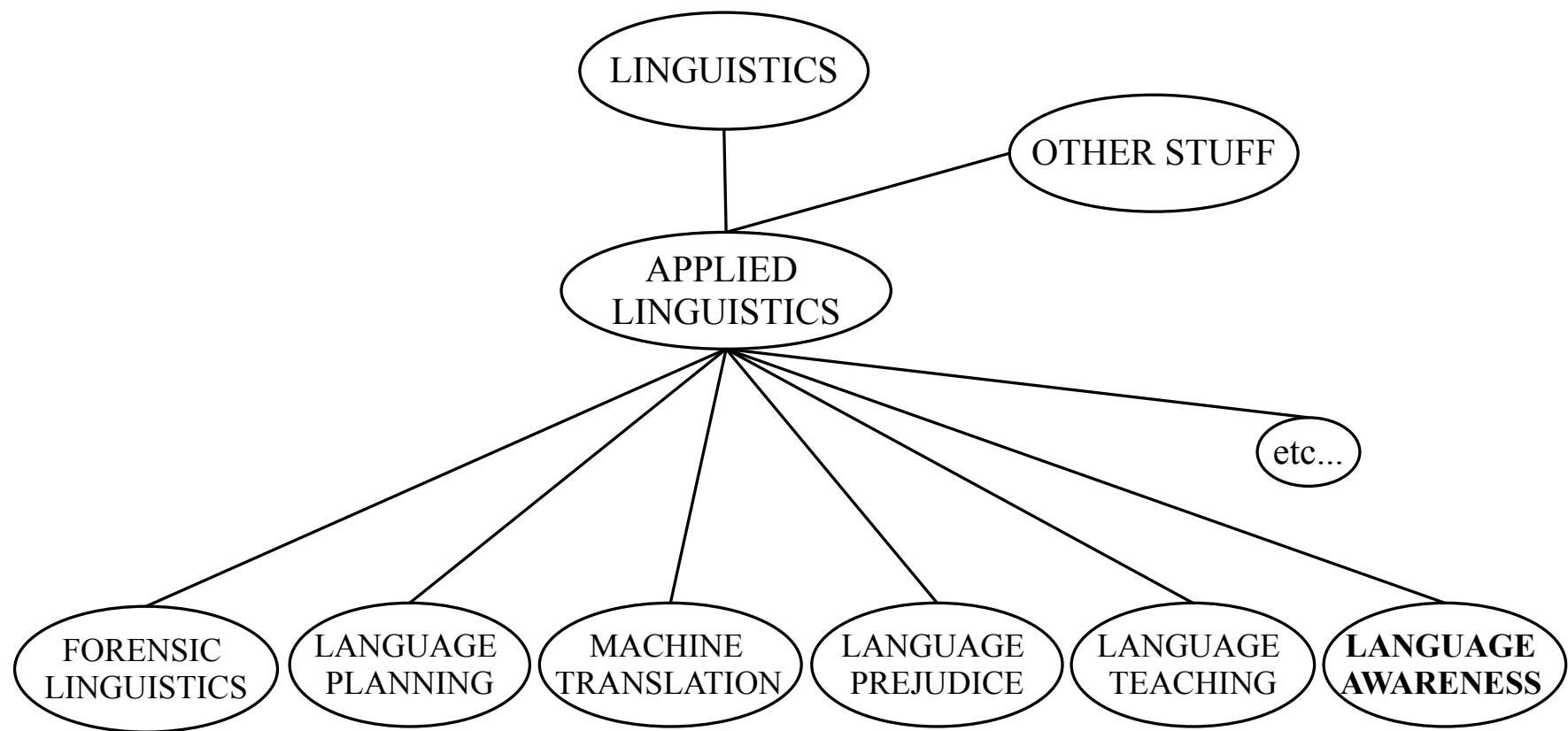
As stated in its strategic plan, the Linguistic Society of America “aspires to a world in which the essential nature of language and its central role in human life is well understood.”



THE PARENTAGE OF LINGUISTICS & FOLK LINGUISTICS



LINGUISTICS



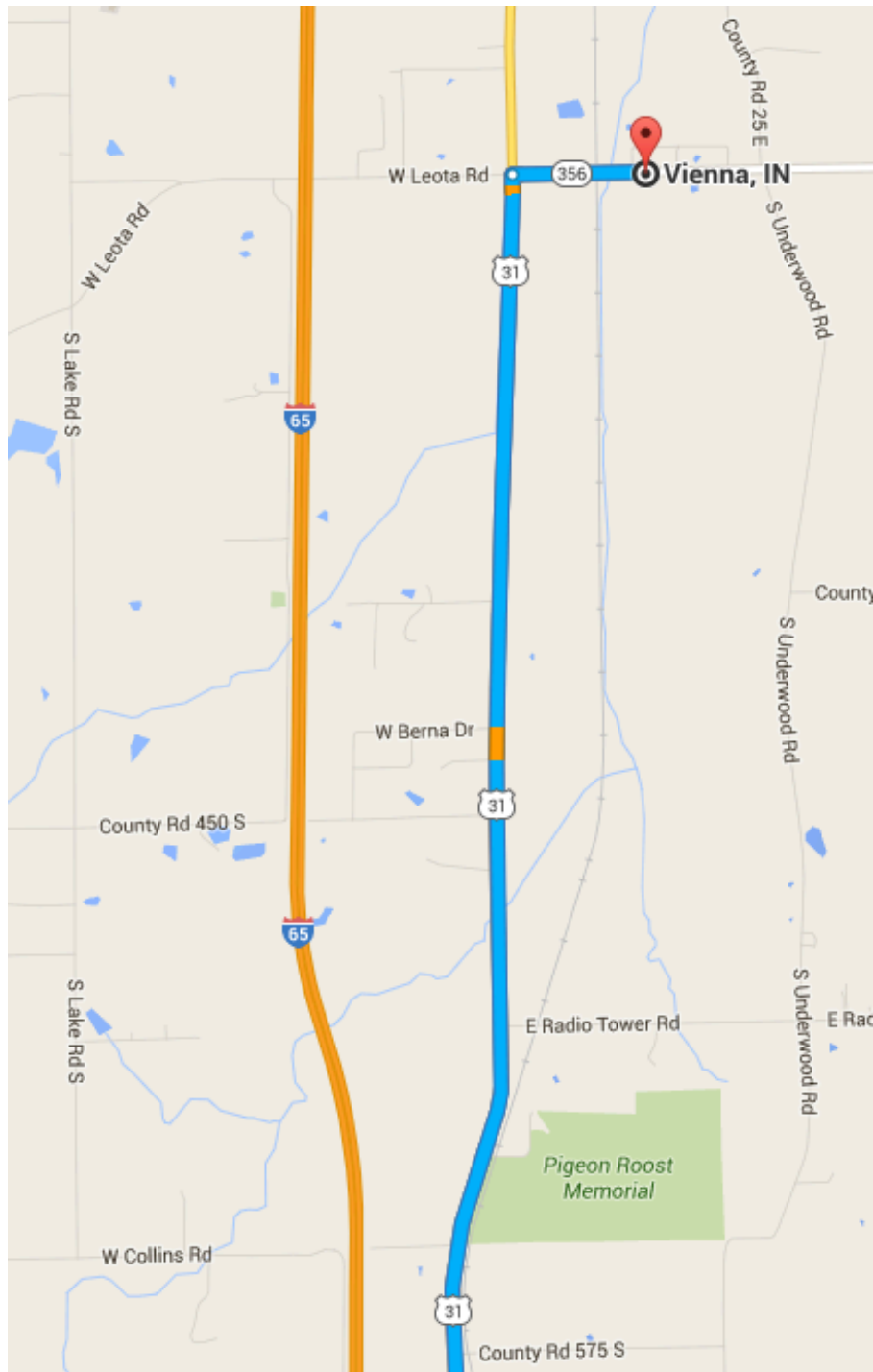
THE PARENTAGE OF LANGUAGE AWARENESS



FOLK
LINGUISTICS

LANGUAGE
AWARENESS

THANK YOU
KÖSZÖNÖM SZÉPEN
HVALA
VIELEN DANK



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