

Homework No. 8

(due at beginning of class Wednesday, June 2)

1. Do exercise No 4 on p. 387 of the Language Files. Note that the words below the columns **Middle English** and **Modern English** are given in their phonetic transcription so that you can see which sounds changed. (60 points)

2. The following questions refer to the film “American Tongues” we will see in class (on Friday, May 28). Choose **two** (= 40 points) from the following six items and write down any thoughts and observations you come up with to answer the questions of these two items.
 - (a) The use of words such as cabinet ‘milk shake’, schlep ‘carry’, gumband ‘rubber band’, antigoggin ‘crooked’, snickelfritz ‘rowdy child’, and so forth illustrate the vocabulary level of language differences. Are there words in the video that you did not know before viewing it? Which ones?
 - (b) There are a variety of attitudes toward dialects that are illustrated in the presentation. Many of the participants reveal traditional mainstream attitudes which view local dialects negatively. However, there are also some attitudes about dialects that are positive and reinforce the local usage.
Are there any dialects that are prestigious in the presentation? Why?
What dialects are socially stigmatized? Why?
 - (c) There are certain stereotypes about dialects that have been perpetuated in the media, including TV and the movies. To a large extent, dialect also contributes to the establishment of a caricature. Dialect prejudice can be very strong.
What are some scenes in the film that show prejudice against the speech of a particular region, class, or social group?
How do people feel about themselves when they are constantly told that their dialect is inferior? How does the saleswoman from Brooklyn feel about her Brooklyn speech when she travels to different parts of the United States?
 - (d) Not all attitudes about local dialects are negative. In fact, these dialects may serve some very important positive function within a community. Their use can promote a feeling of group solidarity, trustworthiness, and friendliness, all positive attributes.
What are some of the positive reasons for using a local dialect?
In the segment filmed in Kentucky, one man says “I’m just a plain old hill-billy”. Why do you think he says this?

- (e) Speaking a standard dialect has advantages in certain settings, but it can also present a dilemma for a person in terms of local community norms. Not everyone needs to speak a standard dialect for all social occasions.

What are some advantages to speaking a standard dialect? Why does the saleswoman from Brooklyn want to learn a dialect that is not associated with Brooklyn?

- (f) Most people adjust their language based on the situation, including their familiarity with people they are talking to and the formality of the situation.

What advantages may come from being able to shift dialects?

3. Bonus question: Chose two additional items for question 2 above and deal with them in the same manner (40 points extra).
4. Bonus question (only recommended if you make the unfortunate choice not to see the film): Do exercises No. 1, 2, and 3 on p. 386/7 of the Language Files (20 extra points each, i.e., a total of 60).