

TITLE: Appalachian Linguistic Potpourri 1: Syntax Across the Region

This panel will explore various aspects of Appalachian language varieties. Given that language is one of the principal components of culture, these papers engage with the impact that culture and identity have on variation across the region and across the different aspects of language. These language topics have received much recent academic attention, as demonstrated by Clark and Heyward (2013) and the forthcoming *Appalachian Englishes* volume edited by Hazen. At the same time, these topics also have much popular attention in various media sources including Twitter, YouTube, and other social media platforms as well as blogs, articles, and other journalistic sources. The papers in this panel discuss the varieties of Appalachian English from the perspective of syntax (word order). The first paper explores how Appalachian speakers can prepose a negative auxiliary (e.g., *didn't everybody eat*) with the meaning that no one performed an action. The second paper investigates how certain Appalachian speakers variably produce *have* in modal or infinitival clause (e.g., *could heard/could have heard*), reflecting a cross-linguistic and historic variability. The final paper evaluates whether and how certain syntactic usages could be used to distinguish and identify Appalachian English speakers. The goal is to show the breadth and depth of the diversity among Appalachian language varieties via the different perspectives, methodologies, and analyses of the panelists.

Language Variation in Appalachia: A Special Case of Sentence Meaning

Frances Blanchette, Erin Flannery, and Carrie Jackson

“Yeah, but didn’t many die like they is now seem like.”

(from Tortora et al. 2017)

This paper provides experimental evidence for a unique sentence meaning property observed in Appalachian and other Englishes. In the quote above, a speaker laments that while previously not many people died, now it seems like many do. This construction has been dubbed Negative Auxiliary Inversion (NAI), because the negated auxiliary verb (*didn’t*) appears before the subject (*many*).

We focus on NAI sentences whose subject contains the word *every*, because these illustrate a unique meaning property of this construction. Consider the following:

1. (1a) The food was terrible at that restaurant, so everybody didn’t eat. We all ate dinner when we got home.
2. (1b) All the dishes had meat at that restaurant, so everybody didn’t eat. The vegetarians ate dinner when they got home.

The underlined sentence in (1a/b) can mean either (a) that no one ate, or (b) that not everyone ate (though some may have). Foreman (1999) notes that in West Texas, this ambiguity disappears in NAI, and only the (b) reading exists:

(2) Didn’t everybody eat. (The vegetarians ate at home.)

Our experiment compared Appalachian and non-Appalachian speakers’ performance on a task in which they chose between (a) and (b) readings of NAI sentences with *every*. Appalachian speakers reliably chose the (b) reading, while non-Appalachian speakers did not. Though both groups displayed individual variation, the overall results suggest that knowledge of this meaning property of NAI is an inherent part of speaking Appalachian. (250 words)

References

- Foreman, J. 1999. Syntax of negative inversion in non-standard English. In *Proceedings of WCCFL 17*, eds. K. Shahin, S. Blake, and E.S. Kim. Stanford, CA: CSLI.
- Tortora, C., B. Santorini, F. Blanchette, & C.E.A. Diertani. 2017. *The Audio-Aligned and Parsed Corpus of Appalachian English* (AAPCAppe). <http://csivc.csi.cuny.edu/aapcappe/>

The haves and have nots of *have* and no *have*: how Appalachian language fits into the cross-linguistic picture

Christina Tortora, Beatrice Santorini, and Greg Johnson

In this talk we discuss variation in a little-studied phenomenon found with some Appalachian speakers in Eastern Kentucky, which was first described by Montgomery & Hall (2004), namely, the variable appearance of infinitival *have* after a **modal** or **infinitival to**:

modal

- (1) a. You **could** ___ heard a pin drop.
b. You **could** have heard a pin drop.

infinitival to

- (2) a. They should've refused **to** ___ went in.
b. He accomplished a whole lot **to** have had a...

Without a systematic study of this variable appearance of *have* (which when pronounced, sounds like “of” or “a”), one might conjecture that its absence is simply a random function of fast speech. Our purpose is to explore data from the *Audio-Aligned and Parsed Corpus of Appalachian English* (Tortora et al. 2017), from which the data in (1) and (2) were taken, to show that the variation is not a function of fast speech, it is not random, and it is not the result of the researcher’s failure to hear something in the speech signal. Rather, the variation is systematically governed by clearly identifiable grammatical factors, both semantic and syntactic. Furthermore, through the examination of written corpora, we provide evidence that the phenomenon of variable *have* was in existence in earlier forms of English (Fryd 2017; Jespersen 1912; Moore Smith 1910; Hall 1882). Additionally, we show that this variable phenomenon in Appalachian English is found in the Scandinavian languages (Eide 2018), confirming that it reflects a deeper grammatical phenomenon.

Clauses and Conjunctions: Do They Reveal a Speaker of Appalachian English?

Michael Montgomery

Literature on Appalachian English is replete with language features proposed to be diagnostic of speakers in the region. Some (Williams and Wolfram decades ago) have taken broader views, either that a combination of features or that greater relative frequency of occurrence distinguishes speakers. Such latter views often better capture the gradient realities of variation locally, socially, or stylistically. One linguist (Reed) is investigating whether intonation (pitch and rhythm) is distinguishable. To date, rarely has anyone proposed that clausal syntax (i.e. word order) is key. This paper argues such an idea utilizing three patterns: two “tense-less” clause types and clauses that begin with variant-time reference *whenever*. “Tense-less” clauses occur in complex sentences where the second verb is not marked for tense but implied, based on the main verb. Sentences 1-3, from the *Corpus of Early Smoky Mountain English*, are illustrative.

- 1) That’s how come me to get back from the hospital. (Cades Cove TN, 1939).
“that’s how come I got back from the hospital,”
- 2) That woman is doing too much work, *and* her □ in a family way. (Sylva NC, 1939)
"That woman is doing too much work, and she is in a family way"
- 3) What did they do with you whenever you killed that man two or three year ago? (Smokemont NC) (*whenever* refers to a single event)

Research shows that these patterns continue to flourish in Appalachia. This paper examines whether familiarity with them can distinguish speakers of Appalachian English from non-speakers.