Language Variation in Appalachia: A Special Case of Sentence Meaning
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NON-STANDARDIZED VARIETIES

Prescriptive norms about language:
- Overlook linguistic diversity and regional differences in how people speak
- Overlook important differences in meaning that can be expressed by non-standardized forms
- Lead to inaccurate characterizations of individuals who use non-standardized forms in their own speech
This paper provides experimental evidence for a unique sentence meaning property observed with the Negative Auxiliary Inversion (NAI) structure in Appalachian and other Englishes.

This research employs the unique meaning properties of NAI structures to measure comprehension of NAI in Native and Non-Native Appalachian Speakers.

By demonstrating subtle meaning properties of NAI structures, this research highlights inherent characteristics of speaking Appalachian, and the systematicity of this stigmatized variety.
TALK OVERVIEW

- Defining Terms: Negative Auxiliary Inversion and Scope
- Research Question and Design
- Results and Analysis
- Significance
A grammatical structure in which a negated auxiliary verb (e.g., didn’t) appears before the subject (Foreman, 1999; Labov, 1968; Wolfram & Christian, 1976; Montgomery, 2004)

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Not everyone; some did but others did not

(Wide Scope Negation Reading)
Everybody didn’t like the talk on Language Variation in Appalachia.

- Not everyone; some did but others did not
  (Wide Scope Negation Reading)

- Everybody did not; every single person did not
  (Wide Scope Every Reading)
Didn’t everybody liked the talk on Language Variation in Appalachia. (Foreman, 1999)

Not everyone; some did but others did not
(Wide Scope Negation Reading)

Everybody did not; every single person did not
(Wide Scope Every Reading)
RESEARCH QUESTION & DESIGN

- What do Native Appalachian speakers know about NAI that other speakers don’t?
- Do Native Appalachian speakers know that NAI with every subjects take the wide scope negation reading?
PARTICIPANTS

- 22 Native Appalachian Speakers
- 24 Non-Native Appalachian Speakers
I was planning a class activity about Hogwarts yesterday. I was really surprised when my coworker told me it was a bad idea because didn’t every kid read Harry Potter in class last year.
RESULTS

- Clear difference between Native and Non-Native accuracy
- These results are further exaggerated when we examine individual performance
RESULTS
SIGNIFICANCE

- Confirms previous intuitions about NAI construction (Foreman, 1999)
  - Appalachian speakers more consistently choose wide scope negation interpretation at the group level; although some level of individual variation exists
  - Non-Appalachian speakers show less consistency in their responses, both at the individual and at the group level
- Emphasizes the systematicity and regularity of Appalachian English
- Simultaneously highlights the linguistic diversity that exists within Appalachia
REFERENCES


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