

Worksheet for “American Tongues” (1986)
SHE-III: American English
Kabak, SS 2006; University of Konstanz

Name: _____

Note: Please bring a copy to class on 10/05.

- 1) What are some of the characteristics of the “Dutchified” woman’s accent (here consider also the accent of the man who talks about his grandkids in Virginia)? Which other (foreign) accents does the “Dutchified” accent remind you of?
- 2) How does the video define a dialect? What is the difference between a “jargon” and a “dialect”?
- 3) When was the first settlement on the Tangier Island established?
- 4) What are some linguistic features of the variety spoken in Tangier Island?
- 5) Which physical conditions do you think enabled people from Appalachia or Tangier Island to preserve their dialects and keep them as distinct from the rest? What kind of social conditions might have gone along with these physical conditions?
- 6) Why is it difficult to hear differences between accents as you go from East to West?
- 7) In which way does the Connecticut River serve as a dialect boundary, according to Roger Shoy?
- 8) According to Cratis Williams, how do Appalachian people interact among themselves? How is this kind of interaction reflected on the language use?
- 9) A man from Ohio says that people from the Midwest (including himself) speak just plain American, no dialect, no accent... Do you agree with this? Do you yourself speak a dialect?
- 10) What do Americans usually associate people from Columbus, Ohio with? Why?
- 11) Foreign languages have left their mark in different parts of the USA. For example, German influenced _____, African languages influenced _____; French and English are intermingled by _____ in _____.
- 12) Words and expressions used by speakers in different regions of the USA:
milkshake: _____ (Rhode Island)
rubberband: _____ (Pittsburgh)
“work is finished”: _____ (Hawaii)
spicy rice stew: _____ (Louisiana)
crooked, skewed: _____ (Mississippi)
little kid : _____ (Pennsylvania)
carry : _____ (New York City)

- 13) Why does the woman describe “the voice of directory assistance” as “the voice from nowhere”?
- 14) Which features make you a Southerner according to the woman from Georgia?
- 15) How would you transcribe the word “ice” in the way the Tennessee man pronounces it? How is it different from the way the same word is pronounced in Standard American English?
- 16) Molly Ivins says “in the Northern mind a southern accent = _____”. What does she think has largely reinforced this prejudice against the southern accent?
- 17) What is wrong with the way the Georgians talk according to Robert Klein, the stand-up comedian?
- 18) How does the Brooklyn woman feel about hear accent when she travels to different parts of the US for business? What are some of the most salient features of the Brooklyn accent?
- 19) According to Walt Wolfram, there are stigmatized varieties in every community all around the USA. Likewise, the Mississippi Women emphasize that there are many social varieties in the South associated with _____, _____, _____, and _____.
- 20) Who do the Boston Brahmins sound like? Why?
- 21) What sort of a vernacular does the North End Boston teenager use according to his siblings? How does the teenager employ his vernacular dialect to his advantage? Can you think of a vernacular in Germany similar to that of the Boston teenager?
- 22) Are there other cases where local dialects are used to an advantage?
- 23) Summarize in 3-4 sentences what you have learned from this documentary.