

Ling 113 Homework due Monday Oct. 24

Part One: WSE ch. 6, exercise one

Part Two: Examination of database from Survey of Massachusetts Speech Part 2, report of results for questions regarding teachers, discussion and interpretation of those results, and formulation and answering of additional original questions. Please hand in a typed response.

The idea is to look at the responses that people gave concerning the question whether it was appropriate for teachers of various types to have an R-dropping pronunciation, an R-full pronunciation or either. The three types of teachers at issue were a UMass professor, a Western Mass grade school teacher and an Eastern Mass grade school teacher. There are three parts to this task.

- (1) You will need to download the Excel database from the class website and look at the instruction sheet for using the database that is also on the website. Most important is to learn how to sort the data, and to present it in pivot tables, if you decide that is useful. The first task is to describe in words the actual data or facts. What are the patterns of responses to the three questions about teachers. Recall that the questions were of the form "Which pronunciation would think appropriate for use by {a grade school teacher in Eastern Massachusetts, a grade school teacher in Western Massachusetts, a UMass professor}", and the choices were R-dropping, R-full and Either one. First of all, how many said R-dropping, how many said R-full, etc. for each question. (Here you can just sort for the answers, and inspect the database itself. Then look at the relation between all three responses given by the same person. For example, you could ask whether people who say that "r-dropping" would be appropriate for an Eastern Mass grade school teacher also say it would be appropriate for a Western Mass teacher, or for a UMass professor? There are many ways of looking for patterns here. Another example: you might want to know if any of the people who said that only R-full was appropriate for a UMass professor would go so far as to think that R-dropping would be ok for an EMass grade school teacher. With these sorts of examples in mind try at least three ways of looking at relations between the responses about teachers. Part of the task here is to learn to ask questions, and to ask questions for a reason.
- (2) This is of course all related ultimately to the question of what to make of these patterns of responses. How do we interpret them? Are there any general ideas about the way people view the use of the r-dropping dialect that we can formulate on the basis of the data that we are seeing here? Remember that this survey you conducted is actually presenting for the first time somewhat systematic information on these questions. Try to arrive at some hypotheses, or conclusions.
- (3) I want you to play around with the database, and ask additional questions not related to the teacher questions. Please formulate two additional original questions about the results in the database, give reasons for why these are interesting questions to ask in the context of the subject matter of the course, and report on the data you have found in the database that allows you to answer these questions.

Good luck, and have fun!!

P.S. You are welcome to work together with others on using the database, but please formulate your own questions and answers.