

Language and Ethnicity

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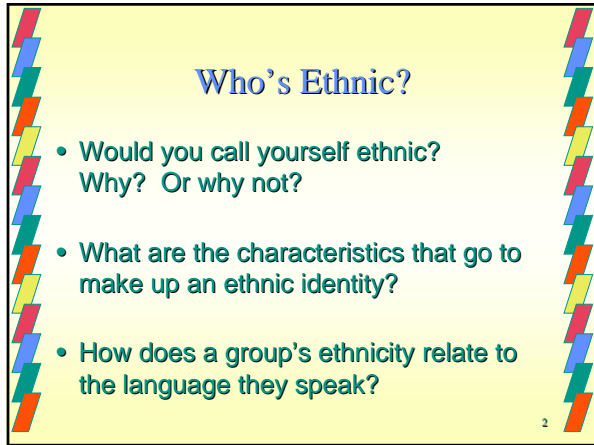
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Who's Ethnic?

- Would you call yourself ethnic? Why? Or why not?
- What are the characteristics that go to make up an ethnic identity?
- How does a group's ethnicity relate to the language they speak?

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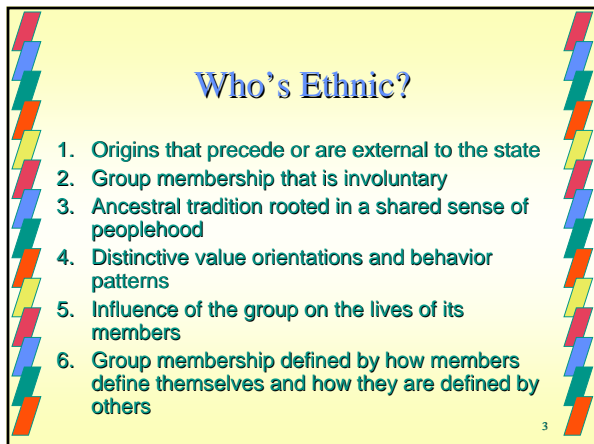
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Who's Ethnic?

1. Origins that precede or are external to the state
2. Group membership that is involuntary
3. Ancestral tradition rooted in a shared sense of peoplehood
4. Distinctive value orientations and behavior patterns
5. Influence of the group on the lives of its members
6. Group membership defined by how members define themselves and how they are defined by others

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**What is ethnicity?**

- Ethnicity is a social construction that indicates identification with a particular group which is often descended from common ancestors. Members of the group share common cultural traits (such as language, religion, and dress) and are an identifiable minority within the larger nation-state.

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**Languages in the United States**

- [The MLA Language Map](#)

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**Ethnic Varieties of English**

• Italian English	• Chicano English
• Jewish English	• American Indian English
• Irish English	• Vietnamese English
• German English	• African American English
• Puerto Rican English	

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**Ethnic Varieties of English**

- Pennsylvania Dutch
  - The so-called Pennsylvania Dutch have nothing to do with Holland, the Netherlands, or the Dutch language. They originally came from German-speaking areas of Europe and speak (or used to speak) a dialect of German they refer to as Deitsch. Few people speak Deitsch today, but the language has had an influence on the variety of English spoken by Amish, Mennonites, and other groups in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and elsewhere.

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**Ethnic Varieties of English**

- African American English
  - AAE originated in the speech of African slaves brought to New World. Also known as African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Black English, and Ebonics.
  - Two theories of the origin of AAE exist:
    - The pidginization-creolization theory
    - The language contact theory
  - The two theories are not mutually exclusive.

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**Ethnic Varieties of English**

- Spanish, Spanglish, and Chicano English
  - Spanish is spoken by some Hispanics in the U.S. Often speakers of Spanish are bilingual and code switch between Spanish and English. This mixing has been called Spanglish. Chicano English is a dialect spoken by some Americans of Mexican descent.

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**Characteristics of an Ethnic Variety**

- Lexical differences from standard English
- Phonological differences (vowels, intonation)
- Isolated grammatical features
- Conversational style

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**Where do these characteristics come from?**

- Transfer from the first language
- Processes of second language learning

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**Transfer from the first language**

- Pennsylvania Dutch
  - We grow too soon old and too late smart.
  - He's going to have the cookies all.
  - I don't know what for a car you had.
  - I'm kind of sneaky when it comes to meat like that.
  - old [owlt], smart [šmart]
  - Rising intonation at the end of *wh*-questions

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Processes of Second Language Learning

- Absence of inflections  
– Yesterday he play at the school.
- Absence of articles  
– He take friend go to disco.
- Absence of copula  
– Disco in bad neighborhood.

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Spread of Dialect Features

- Some lexical and grammatical features of ethnic varieties of English are no longer identified with people of that ethnic group.
- They have spread into mainstream varieties of English.

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Spread of Dialect Features

- What variety of English do you associate with these expressions?
  - I need this like a hole in the head.
  - chutzpah = impudence or guts
  - schlep = to haul or to take

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**Spread of Dialect Features**

I need this like a hole in the head.  
chutzpah = impudence or guts  
schlep = to haul or to take

All these expressions originated in Yiddish, a Jewish language based on German. A language mainly derived from medieval German dialect, Yiddish includes many elements from Hebrew, Aramaic, and other languages, especially Slavonic.

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**Spread of Dialect Features**

What variety of English do you associate with these expressions?

- Bogus – fake or deceitful: false, dishonest, or fraudulently imitating something
- Cat – *He's a real cool cat.*
- Hip – aware of and influenced by the latest fashions in clothes, music, or ideas
- Dig – to understand something fully or with sympathy

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**Spread of Dialect Features**

bogus comes from Hausa *boko* (deceit or fraud)  
cat comes from Wolof *-kat* (suffix for a person)  
hip comes from Wolof *hepi* (to open one's eyes)  
dig comes from Wolof *deg* (to understand, appreciate)

- Hausa is a language widely spoken in Nigeria, Niger, and other parts of eastern West Africa.
- Wolof is a language spoken in Senegal and The Gambia, belonging to the Niger-Congo language family.

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**Features of African American English**

- Devoicing of voiced stops in stressed syllables  
– [bit] for “bid”
- Absence of –s in 3<sup>rd</sup> person present verbs  
– She walk, she raise
- Absence of plural –s on general class of nouns  
– Four girl, some dog
- **Been** to indicate present relevance of remote past action  
– You been paid your dues a long time ago.  
– I been known him a long time.

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**Features of African American English**

- Absence of possessive 's  
– Jack car
- Reduction of final consonant clusters  
– Lif' up
- Absence of copula  
– She nice. He in the kitchen.
- Use of habitual *be*  
– Sometimes my ears be itching. She don't usually be here.

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**Habitual *be***

**Mary:** How'd you like pastor's sermon today?  
**Katrina:** Oh Momma! He be preachin' 'bout curing world hunger every week! Sometimes, his sermons be gettin' me so hungry!  
**Mary:** Oh, now stop it! You're gettin' on my nerves today. I'm gonna fix dinner as soon as I can. I tell you, child—it's a good thing I be prayin' for you!  
**Katrina:** Sorry, momma. I know you always be telling me to think before I speak. It's just—when it come to food, I be forgettin' myself. The pastor *is* a nice man, and you're the best momma ever!

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**Habitual *be*.**  
**Which sentence is correct AAE?**

1. We be leavin' right this minute.	1. They always late to my show.
2. Sometimes my ears be itchin'.	2. She in high school when she was fifteen.
3. I always be tellin' you I ain't hungry, but you never listen.	3. Ask Joshua what he think about it.
4. They be singin' so loud right now I can't hear myself think!	4. They plays ball all day.

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**Code switch from AAE to SE**

**Katrina:** Hey Mama! How you been?  
**Mary:** Katrina, why you wasn't at the church potluck yesterday?  
**Katrina:** Oh Mama! You know I always be cookin' for those church events. I'm tired of it! Old man Otis keep tellin' me my cookin' ain't up to par.  
**Mary:** You be complainin' bout Otis all the time. If he botherin' you so much about your cookin', go get the dog on him.

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**Code switch from SE to AAE**

**Katrina:** Do you want me to set Birchwood on old Otis? That dog would kill the man before he could open his mouth to scream. But anyway, why are you nagging me about the church potluck anyway?  
**Mary:** Well, you know what the girls say about these church events. You can find yourself a good-looking man!  
**Katrina:** Oh, Mom! If I cook as bad as old Otis says, I'm not going to find anybody!

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**Code switch from SE to AAE**

1. Do you want me to set Birchwood on old Otis?	1. You want me to set Birchwood on old man Otis?
2. That dog would kill the man before he could open his mouth to scream!	2. That dog be done killed the man before he could open his mouth to yell!
3. But anyway, why are you nagging me about the church potluck anyway?	3. But anyway, why you botherin' me about this church potluck anyway?

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**Code switch from SE to AAE**

4. Well, you know what the girls say about these church events.	4. Well, you know what the girls be sayin' bout these church events.
5. You can find yourself a good-looking man.	5. You can catch yourself a fine lookin' man.
6. Oh, Mom! If I cook as bad as old Otis says, I'm not going to find anybody!	6. Oh, Mama! If I cook as bad as old man Otis be sayin', I ain't gonna find nobody!

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**Code-switching**

- Students in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles try a new twist on the popular TV game show, Jeopardy!

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### Hip Hop



Athletic Mic League

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### Hip Hop Nation Language

- Hip Hop Nation Language, the language of Hip Hop Culture in the United States, is a universoul-sonic force being adopted and adapted by youth around the planet, in countries as distant and diverse as Mexico, Cuba, France, Bulgaria, Ghana, Pakistan, Japan, Australia and many more. The Hip Hop Cultural Movement, called Black noise in 1994, is a decade later termed global noise.

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### Hip Hop Nation Language

- The Hip Hop Nation has, as predicted as far back as 1991, become the Global Hip Hop Hood — but its profound global influence should not obscure the African-American origins of and continuing contributions to this highly fluid and creative artistic, musical, literary and linguistic form.

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### Hip Hop Vocabulary

a. <u>Ain a thang / It ain a thang</u>	1. A house; one's home.
b. <u>All that</u>	2. Excellent, pleasing. A person or thing that is excellent and desirable
c. <u>All the way live</u>	3. Expression used to convey the idea that whatever "it" is, it's not a problem or obstacle, it can be dealt with.
d. <u>Bout it</u>	4. Label for a person who is bold, daring, calculating, in control, supercool. By extension, reference to a person who speaks the plain, unvarnished, cold, hard <sup>31</sup> truth.
e. <u>Crib</u>	
f. <u>Dis</u>	
g. <u>Hood</u>	
h. <u>Ice</u>	
i. <u>Issue</u>	
j. <u>Leave somebody hangin</u>	
k. <u>Phat</u>	
l. <u>Sick</u>	
m. <u>Trip/Trippin</u>	
n. <u>Up on it</u>	

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### Hip Hop Vocabulary

Crib A house; one's home.

Phat Excellent, pleasing. A person or thing that is excellent and desirable.

Ain a thang / It ain a thang Expression used to convey the idea that whatever "it" is, it's not a problem or obstacle, it can be dealt with.

Ice Label for a person who is bold, daring, calculating, in control, supercool. By extension, reference to a person who speaks the plain, unvarnished, cold, hard truth.

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### Spanglish and Chicano English



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**BÉSAME MUCHO**

kiss me, kiss me my chola  
como si fuera esta noche the last migra raid  
kiss me, kiss moi mi chuca  
que tengo miedo perderte somewhere in L.A.

watcha' que maybe mañana yo estaré en la pinta  
longing for your ass (digo eyes)  
y que quizá me deporten de nuevo a Tijuana  
por ser ilegal

– Guillermo Gómez-Peña

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**Chicano English**

- Chicano English is influenced by Spanish.
- Many speakers of Chicano English are not bilingual.
- Some Chicano English speakers also incorporate features from “Valley Girl” English and from AAE.

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**Spanglish**

- A conversation with Ilan Stavans about his new book [Spanglish: The Making of a New American Language](#)

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Consequences

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Linguistic Profiling

- Listen to these three callers. If you were a landlord, who would you rent an apartment to?

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English Only?

- Victor Villasenor has written several acclaimed books about his family's history. His latest is a personal memoir called Burro Genius. On *To the Best of our Knowledge*, Villasenor tells Jim Fleming he grew up on a ranch where he learned about his Mexican and Indian heritage, and contrasts this with the harsh treatment he received in the English-only American school system of his childhood.

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Learning Activities

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Activity 1

- Many people refer to AAE as slang. Slang may be defined as word or phrase that changes rapidly, is used by an in-group, and is often used in the place of a common word to refer to a taboo subject such as sex, drugs, or intoxication. With these characteristics in mind, come up with a list of slang words for a particular subject. What is the relationship between AAE and slang?

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Activity 2

- Some people believe that other languages are a threat to the linguistic unity of the United States because the English language is our common civic language. Why do you think people fear other languages encroaching on the position of English as the dominant language in the U.S.? Is there another area of the world that faces a similar language issue arising from the increase in a population that does not speak the mainstream language?

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