

Studies in Cascadian English...in the classroom

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For several years now, undergraduate students in the upper-level sociolinguistics course at one of our area's large universities have conducted group projects examining variable features in the Pacific Northwest. This course activity, inspired by projects like Labov's Philadelphia Neighborhood Corpus (cf. Labov et al. 2013; which developed massive research materials from student projects at the University of Pennsylvania), couples pedagogical activities in the classroom (hands on skill development in sociolinguistic methodology and theory) with empirical investigations of the region's relatively under-studied dialect(s). Since 2012, students in the course have conducted approximately 200 interviews and examined several sociolinguistic variables, including the variable encoding of past habituality (e.g. Tagliamonte & Lawrence 2000), variable (ing) (e.g. Hazen 2008), and, most recently, variation in adjective intensification (e.g. Tagliamonte 2008). One of these class projects has already led to more in depth follow up research (anonymous1 et al. 2014) and an undergraduate honors thesis project (anonymous2 2014). These interviews have also been fruitful for investigating features not examined in the classroom, such as regional vowel patterns (anonymous3 forthcoming). Many of the interviews collected can be shared with other scholars for research purposes, and we hope these can become a resource for other researchers interested in language in the Pacific Northwest.

In this talk, we outline the course project and what we have learned about Cascadian English from the student projects. We provide perspectives from both instructors and a former student. We also hope to raise a discussion, with Pacific Northwest colleagues, about possible collaborations and future directions for these student-led data collection and research projects.