This homework with a total of 60 points is worth 6% of your final grade.

This exercise is designed for you to practice conducting sociolinguistic interviews. Your task is to find someone who speaks a different dialect of English than you do. (Presumably someone from a different region of the US.) Ask about the social background of that person such as where that person is from, his/her ethnicity and gender as well. (You should tell them that this is homework of an anthropology class and that he/she will remain anonymous.) Interview (and tape-record if possible) that person, and then listen to the tapes to analyze how his/her speech is different from yours. Listen to the consonants, vowels and even syllables and intonations. You should try to provide the linguistic differences in terms of sounds (phonetics), vocabulary, and even syntax if there is any.

Here are some tips for the exercise:

− First of all, get permission to tape record that person. Tell them that you are doing an interview for an anthropology class, and that you will talk more explicitly about the purpose of the exercise later in the interview. Tell the interviewee that he/she will not be identified, and that the content of the conversation will not be revealed to others on his/her request. Make the interviewee comfortable.

− Think of some topics that you would like to talk about before the interview. You can talk about any topic that is not directly related to language. For example, you can ask for their opinion about the war, about same-sex marriage, about fashion, about what they do as pastime and their favorite sports. Any topic that you are both comfortable talking about will do. Remember, you do not want the interviewee to know what you are actually looking at in the interview. That is, you don't want them to be conscious of the language they use, or their accents. Spend the first 15 minutes or longer on this part.

− Bring a notebook with you to write down any dialectal differences that you notice during the interview. Pretend that you are taking notes of the contents. Feel free to interact with the interviewee. Smile and nod while you take notes. (You will notice how difficult it is to both take notes and show your interest in the on-going conversation.)

− After talking about anything for so long that you think you have gathered enough data, ask the interviewee where they are from and tell them the goal of this exercise.

− Then ask the following questions directly: (Give them some time to think while answering.)
  ■ What do you know about dialects? Could you tell me what a dialect is? Do you notice people speaking different dialects from yours? Do you think you are speaking a dialect of English? (This is NOT meant to teach them what a dialect is but to get an idea of what people think/know about dialects in general.)
  ■ Do you notice any pronunciation of yours that is different from people from other parts of the US? What are the differences?
  ■ Do you ever notice the accents of people from other parts of the US that are different from yours? What are the differences?
Do you notice any difference in using words in certain regions of the US? For example, you use a word for certain things, but when you get to a different part of the country, they use another word.

Anything else you want to add?

For your write-up and analysis:

- Describe the setting of the interview, including when and where you did it.
- Describe your interviewee—gender, ethnicity, social background (from your own understanding), and where that person is from.
- Describe your method. Did you tape-record the interviewee? What topic(s) did you talk about? What questions did you ask the interviewee? How long was the interview?
- Present your data found during the first half of the interview:
  - What sound characteristics did you find? Give examples.
  - Any vocabulary or syntactic differences?
  - Relate that to the social or regional background of the interviewee.
- Present your interviewee's idea about dialects, and the examples that he/she gives for dialectal differences in English.
- Compare your findings with your own dialect. Where are you from? Do you notice any characteristics of your own dialect?
- Discuss your findings and general reflections on this experience.