[SQUEAKING]

[RUSTLING]

[CLICKING]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: I was thinking about today's topic earlier. And I thought of a metaphor. I haven't tried this metaphor before. This is the first time I have tried this metaphor on people in class.

It's always dangerous thinking of metaphors for all kinds of reasons. One of them is that it's entirely possible that I'm about to beat this metaphor into the ground. I'm going to talk about it for a while. But-- so I apologize in advance if that happens.

It's also possible that I will tell you the metaphor, and you will wonder, what the heck is he talking about? It will be too metaphorical. But, hopefully, as the class goes along, it'll become clear what I'm talking about. Or maybe it'll be clear immediately. Who knows? OK. Here's the metaphor.

You have to try to imagine for this metaphor that the United States is the kind of country-- bless you-- in which board games are extremely popular. Everyone plays board games all the time. It's like the standard way for people to interact with each other.

So if you are on a long plane flight, you'll probably play a board game with the person sitting next to you. You go-- you move into your new dorm, and you start playing board games with your new roommate and the other people on your hall. That's just the normal way for people to interact with each other-- all board games all the time.

And try to imagine that there are various board games that are popular. But in the US, for some reason, the two big ones are chess and checkers. So those are the two board games that are the most popular. There are other games people play. But those are the two big ones.

And the following kind of weird thing has happened. There are families in which everybody plays chess, let's say. Families specialize. So if you're born in a chess family, then mom and dad play chess. And your older brothers and sisters play chess. And your uncles, and your aunts, and your ankles-- your ankles do not play chess. Your uncles, and your aunts, and your grandparents, they all play chess.

And maybe nobody ever actually sits you down and explains the rules of chess to you. But you see everybody playing chess, and you eventually get to where you're pretty good at it. In fact, by the time you're old enough to go to school, you're very good at playing chess if you grow up in a chess family.

And then there are the checkers families, which are the same except checkers. So everybody plays checkers. If you grew up in a checkers family, mom and dad play checkers. Older brothers and sisters play checkers. You watch them play checkers. You become a checkers expert by the time you're old enough to go to school.

So there are chess kids and there are checkers kids. And then when you go to school, the following kind of weird thing happens. The teachers act as though there is no such game as chess. So when they see kids playing checkers, they're like, oh, yeah. And they watch the kids playing checkers. Maybe they make tactical suggestions or whatever. Maybe the teachers play checkers with each other. Maybe they play checkers with the kids sometimes.

But when they see kids playing chess, they say things like, what are you doing? That's not the right way to play checkers. You just took that one piece and you moved it a zillion diagonal spaces. You can't do that. You're just violating all the rules of checkers. That's not how checkers works.

And what is the deal with these weird checkers pieces-- this one that looks like a horse, and this one that looks like a castle? Put all that stuff away. Get yourself a real checkers board. And play checkers like a normal person.

There are tests that kids get in school where they are asked questions like "Is it OK to take a piece and move it two steps forward and one step to the right?" And the kids are supposed to say, no, it's not OK to do that, because this is a checkers test, and in checkers you can't do that.

So if you're from a checkers family, this is an easy test for you because, in fact, you can't make that move in checkers. If you're from a chess family, then it's a little harder because, of course, that's how you move your knight. That's one way you can move your knight. And so maybe you made that move just this morning playing with your mom or your dad.

And so kids from chess families have a tendency to do badly on this these tests, which means that when it comes time to put the kids in the checkers classes-- there are checkers classes in schools. There are no chess classes, only checkers classes. The kids from checkers families tend to be the ones who get into Advanced Checkers, and later they go on to AP Checkers where they get--

AUDIENCE: [LAUGHTER]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: --where they get college credit for their college checkers classes. The kids from chess families-- it varies. Some of them learn quickly how to play checkers and suppress their knowledge of chess. But some of them have a hard time, and it's hard for them to switch that quickly.

Every so often, you will get a teacher who's maybe a little more enlightened and admits that there is such a game as chess, and who will say to the kids, it's OK. The kids who are from chess families-- they'll say to them, it's OK for you to play chess in the privacy of your own home with your family.

But it's important for you not to play it in public because people will get the wrong idea. It's really important for you to be good at checkers. Checkers is the really important game. That's what the teachers will say. And the teachers have a point because this is a version of America in which checkers is what people expect you to be good at.

If you go for a job interview or in political campaigns-- presidential campaigns always involve a huge checkers tournament between the candidates, political correspondents watching the game and commenting on the moves. And if somebody tries to make a chess move in a checkers game, well, then, no one will vote for them. That's the metaphor.

There. Now, if it's not yet clear what I'm talking about, hopefully it will be in a second. Are there any questions about the metaphor other than, what? [CHUCKLES] OK.

AUDIENCE: [? Is it a ?] fact that [? humans ?] see that checkers is [? used ?] [INAUDIBLE] will be superior [INAUDIBLE]?

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Yeah. So you have to imagine that checkers is the superior game in this version of the story. I could have told the story the other way around. But I told it this way.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Yeah. Yeah. Other questions? OK. So seemingly unrelated topic-- remember negative polarity items? Negative polarity items were these expressions that you used together with negation to say things like, "I didn't see anything." And what we said about them-- so "anything" is a negative polarity item.

And to call it a negative polarity item is to say it's an expression with some restrictions on where it can be used. We talked a little bit about the different kinds of quantifiers that make it possible to use a negative polarity item. One of them is-- well, negation makes it possible to use a negative polarity item. That's how they get their name.

But in a sentence like, "I saw anything," there's something wrong with that. Yeah?

AUDIENCE: What about, "I will eat anything?"

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Ah! So negative polarity items often have another use. Let me find a piece of chalk. For some reason, this always happens. There are many erasers but no chalk. There's actually literally no chalk. Where are the-- what the heck?

"I will eat anything." This is sometimes called "free choice 'any.'" And it's very interesting. Notice that it's also restricted. So "I saw anything" is actually no good. You can't use either free choice "any" or negative polarity "any." But you're right there's another possible use of these kinds of things. Having admitted that you're right, let me just suppress that point. Yeah. You're absolutely right. There are complications. Yeah. Yeah?

So, plenty of languages have negative polarity items. And maybe unsurprisingly if you are using-- if you're going to answer a question like, "What did you see?" in the language that I'm now speaking, "anything" is not a possible answer. We can be unsurprised by that in a couple of ways.

One would be to say, well, yeah, this gets us back to the kinds of things we were talking about when we were talking about ellipses. So if we want to think of this as an utterance that just consists of a noun phrase-- "anything"-- then it's unsurprising that it's bad. It's bad, well, because "anything" doesn't have any negation anywhere to make it happy. Yeah. That's what NPIs need-- Negative Polarity Items.

Getting back to your point-- if the question was, "What will you eat?" a possible answer is "anything." You can also do the free choice version of "any." If we want to think about this as ellipsis-- that is, if we want to think of it as, I ask you "What did you see?" and you are in some sense saying, "I saw anything," well, that's bad because "I saw anything" is bad. There's no negation in the sentence.

And I guess what we're learning-- maybe you remember-- when we were talking about ellipsis, we talked about the fact that when you do ellipsis-- when you say things like, "John likes his father, and Bill does too," there's some kind of requirement that the missing phrase-- the missing verb phrase, in this case-- be the same as another verb phrase and we talked about the fact that you sometimes have to do some work to figure out what counts as the same.

So we decided that this was an ambiguous sentence. "John likes his father, and Bill does too" can mean at least two things, possibly some others as well. It's unclear whose father we're talking about in this second clause. All right. So this could mean that John and Bill both like John's father, or that John likes John's father and Bill likes Bill's father.

I guess it could also mean that they both like Seymour's father-- some other person. It could mean that. Yeah. So when we do ellipsis, we have something that's missing, that is understood as being the same as something that's there. And I guess what we're learning here is that if I ask you, "What did you see?", if we want to think of that as involving ellipsis, we want to think of ourselves as being required to fill in "I saw anything."

We don't, for example, have the option of putting in "didn't see." And that's got something to do with the fact that the question doesn't have negation in it. It's a positive question. So a couple of ways of not being surprised by this fact. Is everybody sufficiently unsurprised?

How do you answer a question like this? "What did you see?" Well, one way you can do it is by saying "Nothing." So we have another kind of expression that you use that's negative all by itself. It's not an NPI. It doesn't need to combine with negation. OK so far? I'm just describing facts about the language that I'm speaking-- not just the language that I'm speaking. There are plenty of languages like this out there.

Here are some Greek data that are the same. So in Greek there's an expression, [GREEK], which is like "anything." Anybody here speak Greek? Cool. Then I won't mispronounce Greek at you. I'm afraid I don't speak Greek. [GREEK]-- that means "anything." And it combines with the Greek word for "not," which is "then."

And so you can say in Greek, literally, "He or she didn't see anything," with "not"-- [GREEK]-- but [GREEK] can't be in a positive sentence. You can't say, "He or she saw anything." And before anybody asks, I don't know how to say things like, "I will eat anything" in Greek. I don't know whether they can do that here. Yeah.

So this is just to show you when we were talking about NPIs, we were talking about English. But it's not just an English thing. It's cross-linguistically very common to have NPIs and for them to behave this way-- NPIs-- Negative Polarity Items.

But there is another kind of language out there. Here's a Ukrainian sentence. In Ukrainian, if I ask you, "Who did you tell?" A possible response is this word, which I won't try to pronounce because I don't speak Ukrainian. We might as well translate it as "nobody" because it's a possible response that means "I didn't tell anybody."

Anybody want to pronounce this word for us? Do you--

AUDIENCE: [UKRAINIAN]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: [UKRAINIAN]? OK. Cool. But Ukrainian is different from English in that the same word, [UKRAINIAN], can combine with their negation. So it's not an NPI. It can combine with their negation. And the result is a single negation.

So if you want to say, "I didn't tell anybody," in Ukrainian, you say [UKRAINIAN]-- that same word that you would use to answer the question, "Who did you tell?" We could think of that word as meaning "nobody." But if you want to say, "I didn't tell anybody," in Ukrainian, you use that word. And you also use the word for "not."

So you say, literally, "I didn't tell nobody." But they don't have-- so the word-- that doesn't mean-- so that means "I didn't tell anybody." That's what that means. Ukrainian is not the only language like this.

Italian is like that. So in Italian, if I ask you, "What did you say see?" you can say in Italian, "niente." So we can translate "niente" as "nothing." But if you want to say, "I didn't see anything," in Italian, you say, "Non ho visto niente,"-- literally, "I have not seen nothing." "I have not seen 'niente.'" So this is a different system.

In English, we have these-- the language I'm speaking, in Greek as well-- we have these expressions-- these negative polarity expressions-- which aren't possible answers to positive questions like, "What did you see?" If I ask you, "What did you see," you cannot say "anything." You have to say, "nothing."

If we use that as a test for whether we're looking at an NPI or not-- as a test for figuring out whether we're looking at "anything" or "nothing," then Ukrainian and Italian and many other languages have a different system. One in which instead of having NPIs, you have these expressions which express negation all by themselves-- [UKRAINIAN] and [ITALIAN], which mean things like "nobody" or "nothing"-- that can be answers to questions like, "Who did you tell?" or "What did you see?"

But in question-- statements that are longer than that-- they don't have ellipses-- if you want to say things like "I didn't see anything" or "I didn't tell anybody," you use these same expressions. There isn't a specialized class of NPIs, at least not for this kind of sentence. Is that clear? Does that make sense?

The second kind of language is sometimes called a negative concord language. And let me give you some background for that. Concord is a phenomenon which I think we haven't talked about in this class. There are plenty of languages out there in which, when you have a noun phrase that has multiple things in it-- say it has-- there are adjectives or there are demonstratives.

There will be morphology on the noun of the kind that we have talked about a little bit-- morphology that indicates things like, this is masculine, or this is feminine. It tells you what noun class the noun is in. Or it'll tell you whether the noun is singular or plural. Or sometimes there'll be morphology telling you the case of the noun, whether it's a subject or an object or something else.

So Italian is a language, for example, in which there's concord-- the word for "butterfly" in Italian is "farfalla." And the "ah" at the end marks the butterfly as being singular and also feminine. It's in the feminine noun class. It's of the feminine gender.

And to say that it's of the feminine gender is to say that if you want to modify this butterfly with adjectives-- a beautiful butterfly is a "farfalla bella" So you use the feminine marker on the adjective as well as on the noun. And if you want to say, "this beautiful butterfly," well, you use that "ah" again. So "this beautiful butterfly"-- you can see there are three "ahs," all of them saying over and over again, this butterfly is feminine and singular. You don't just realize that fact on the butterfly itself. You realize it all over the noun phrase.

And if any of you have studied-- this is cross-linguistically a very popular phenomenon. It's all over the Indo-European languages. English doesn't have it because we're not big on morphology in general but especially not on our nouns. But it's widespread. If you study Italian, or Spanish, or French, or German, you'll have to learn about things like this.

And it's found outside Indo-European as well. So there's a Lardil example here-- [LARDIL], "this big rock." This is an accusative big rock. It's the kind of phrase you'd use to say, "I picked up this big rock." It's an object. You're going to mark the rock with accusative, but also the word for "this" and the word for "big." So this is called concord.

And there's an Icelandic example there which I took from a paper-- "four little snails," which are nominative. "Four" and "little" and "snails" all have suffixes on them telling you that the snails are nominative and masculine and plural. So Italian has concord for number and gender-- so feminine and singular. Lardil has concord just for case. Icelandic has concord for all three-- case, number, and gender.

So concord-- it's a phenomenon. It's a phenomenon with the following shape-- sometimes a fact-- in this case, say the fact that a noun is feminine, or that it's singular, or that its accusative is marked not just on the noun but on a bunch of things near the noun, and so the noun, but also adjectives and demonstratives and other kinds of things. It's called concord.

And to say that these languages are negative concord languages is to say, yeah, in a language like Italian, if you want to say, "I didn't see anything," you're going to mark negation not just in what's called sentential negation-- the Italian word for "not" which is "non"-- yes, you'll use that word. But you'll also mark it on the object. So you will say, in effect, "I not saw nothing." That's how you do this in Italian, or Ukrainian, or Russian, or a zillion other languages-- lots of languages that do this-- negative concord languages.

Now, we have talked about English as though English has negative polarity items. And that is true of the version of English that I am speaking. But there are other versions of English in which there is, instead, negative concord. So there are versions of English in which the right way to say, "I didn't see anything," is, "I didn't see nothing," in which that's the way you say this. Has anybody encountered this version of English? Did anybody grow up speaking this version of English? Yes? Yeah? Sort of.

So I grew up in Alabama. I was surrounded by people who spoke this version of English. I grew up in Alabama in a university town. My parents are from further north, so I have always had the accent that I have. It made-- it was the beginning of a long life of being peculiar, surrounded by people who talk differently than me.

And one of the things that I did was that I spoke negative polarity item English, not negative concord English. But we were given tests when I was a kid-- I noticed recently my son, who's in fifth grade, he's also given tests and homework assignments in which he is asked to fix problems with sentences. So sometimes the sentences-- the capitalization is wrong, or there's a word that's misspelled, or the punctuation is wrong.

But sometimes the sentences have negative concord in them. And his job is to say, no, that's not the right way to speak English. You should speak-- you should have NPIs. You shouldn't have negative concord. I remember taking tests like that too.

Those of you who grew up in English-speaking places, do you remember being given tests like this? So these are tests in which people are checking which dialect of English do you speak? Are you from a checkers family or a chess family? And if you're from a checkers family, these tests are easy for you. Because, well, checkers is what you play at home. Yeah, it's easy.

But if you're from a chess family, then you have to remember, oh, yeah, I'm surrounded by people who don't believe in the existence of chess. They only believe in checkers. And so it's your job to try to pretend to be a speaker of this other dialect of English.

To put it another way, if you're growing up in the States-- and I think this is not just true of the States. This is pretty common in a lot of places. There are a variety of ways to speak the majority language. And there's a certain set of them that are approved-- that schools approve of. And there are others that schools feel it's their job to try to steer you away from, even if it's, in fact, your native language. This is a tricky position for schools to be in.

Does this ring true with your experiences in school? Do you remember doing this? There's this weird disconnect between different kinds of things that happen. Negative concord is the kind of thing that I was explicitly taught not to do.

And when I was growing up in Alabama, I could see why they were teaching us not to do this because, well, I was surrounded by people who were doing it. And so you could see why the teachers felt as though they had to stamp it out. Like I said, it wasn't my dialect of English, so it was-- these tests were easier for me.

There are other kinds of things that are not-- not been targeted by education. And so they have a different status. This is another one. The percentage sign at the beginning of this sentence is a mark linguists sometimes use to indicate that some speakers accept this and others don't. It's what the percentage sign is for. So you guys have seen stars on things that say they're ungrammatical-- other kinds of marks-- percentage sign says a certain percentage of English speakers can say this.

So I grew up with this. It's called positive anymore. This is a version of English in which you can say things like "I used to walk to work, but anymore, I take the T." Is there anybody here who can do this? Yes? Cool.

AUDIENCE: My brother talks like that a lot. And I think it has to do with the fact that in Spanish, the word "ya," and "yano," is "anymore," or "already," or "now." And it can kind of mean "anything."

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Oh, that's interesting.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: OK. Cool. Is there anybody else who can do this? Is there anybody who is looking at this and wondering if I suffered some kind of injury on the way to class today, and this can't possibly-- yeah. OK. So I often-- when I get to this slide in this lecture, I get these kinds of looks. They're like, what?

So I don't come from a Spanish-speaking background. I come from a West Virginia background. So my mother is from West Virginia. And positive anymore is a feature of the area around West Virginia and Pennsylvania. There's this place where, if you go there, you will hear people saying things like this. It means something like, "these days." "Anymore"-- so "Anymore I take the T," means, "as of now, I take the T."

For me, at least-- I was doing some googling about it. It's most common in places like this where you're contrasting the modern day with the past. Yeah. So here's another place where my English is odd. And I'm very much in the minority. So there's me, and there's Faith sort of, and Faith's brother. Yeah. And the rest of you have me outvoted.

But this particular feature of a certain regional version of English is somehow not on the radar of the people who write textbooks. So I don't remember any teacher ever telling me not to do this. I think people didn't notice that I was doing this. I got away with it.

But, yes, this is a feature of some versions of English. Or, similarly, we've talked about other things in this class. So people vary to the-- about the extent there are phonological differences between different versions of English.

People vary with respect to whether the name "Mary," and the adjective "merry," and the verb "marry" sound the same. To me, they do all sound the same. But there are people for whom the verb, in particular, is "maeh-ry"-- a different vowel. And I believe there are even people for whom all three of them have different pronunciations. This is a feature of the area around New York and New Jersey, whether you speak like this or not.

I grew up in Alabama where "pen" and "pin" sound pretty similar. They're both like "pin." I grew up in Alabama where the default word for a soft drink is a Coke. So a fizzy drink with lots of sugar in it-- I think-- now, let's see-- I live in a soda place now, right? Don't-- aren't we-- this is the soda part of the world? And there's a pop part of the world. Who here grew up saying soda for those kinds of drinks? Did anybody grow up saying pop?

AUDIENCE: My mom did--

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Your mom did.

AUDIENCE: --when she was a girl.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: And did she-- she survived to adulthood, didn't she? She's OK.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Yes. OK. Cool.

AUDIENCE: [LAUGHTER]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: And did anybody grow up saying Coke for these kinds of things?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS:	Oh, well, yeah, Peter did because Peter is like me. He's from the South. Where are you from?
AUDIENCE:	Mississippi.
NORVIN W. RICHARDS:	Yeah. OK. So Southerners-- represent. So in my version of English-- the version of English I grew up with, "Coke" was the default name for all of these things. It's kind of like "Xerox" for a copying machine or whatever. So people would ask questions like, "Would you like a Coke?" And if the answer was, "yes," the next question was, "OK. So would you like Sprite or Mountain Dew? Because that's what we've got." So "Coke" is just the default word for these kinds of beverages.

Or-- and this is a place-- another place where languages or dialects of English vary a lot with each other-- English used to have a distinction between singular "you," which was pronounced "thou," and plural "you," which was pronounced "you." And the plural "you" was also used for formal. And then it kind of took over. So it got used both for singular and plural.

And modern standard English-- the version of English that I'm currently speaking-- doesn't distinguish "you" singular and "you" plural. But it's handy being able to distinguish "you" singular and "you" plural. And so various dialects of English have come up with solutions for this. I come from the "y'all" part of the country. I used "y'all" until I came up here, and then I was mocked into coming up with other expressions.

I seem to have fallen into "you guys" as the plural of you, which I wish I didn't have because "you guys" I think of as being markedly masculine. So I need to-- I don't know-- embark on a series of self-hypnosis sessions or something like that and get myself back to using "y'all."

And then, there is, again, an area-- I think around Pittsburgh-- where people say "y'unz" as the-- or "you'ns" as the plural of you. Did anybody here grow up with an interesting plural for you? Yeah? |
AUDIENCE:	Yeah. So, basically, when I lived in Minnesota, I grew up in a very small town with a very, very high Dutch population where a lot of people said "yous".
NORVIN W. RICHARDS:	"Yous"-- oh, yeah. I left "yous" out of here. Yeah, you're absolutely right. So "yous" is absolutely another option. Anybody else have another option? "Y'all"-- I think "y'all" is still markedly Southern, right? If I were to say, "y'all," people would think of me as being from Alabama, which I am. Raquel?
AUDIENCE:	I've heard my mom and my uncle, who are both from Pittsburgh, saying "yenses" but like as a joke.
NORVIN W. RICHARDS:	"Yenses?"
AUDIENCE:	I don't know if it's because they have heard people say "yenses."
NORVIN W. RICHARDS:	Wow.
AUDIENCE:	It might have just been like a possessive thing, like "Yenses family is here" or something.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Oh, oh, OK. Yes. That I could kind of get a handle on. I thought of the plural as being "yens," but maybe there's also "yenses." This is a thing that happens, actually, that something that was already plural gets marked plural again.

This is the story of "children," which plural of "child" used to be "childer." And then "-er" became a very uncommon-- in fact, "childer" was the only noun that had "-er" for it's plural. And so people just added another plural at the end that you get in "oxen." And so now it's like "childses." That's children. That's our modern word for "child." So the German plural for child, "Kinder," still has that "-er"-- that "er" suffix, [? single. ?]

So big surprise-- there are different dialects of English. There are different dialects of lots of different languages. I'm bringing this up for a variety of reasons. One is that there's a model that you get exposed to-- at least in school, at least I was; let's see whether all of you were-- in which, well, there are different dialects of English, but there's a correct version of English. And then there are failures to speak the correct version of English.

Like, that's the picture you're given in English classes. So you're given assignments like the one I was just talking about for my son, where it's like, fix the problems in these sentences. And some of the problems are things like, oh, this person apparently speaks a different dialect of English. We can't have that. That's wrong. We've got to fix that. Is that the picture of English that you guys grew up with as well?

And so just to be clear, I mean, if we were going to figure out what counts as English, these descriptions are things that people talk about. Maybe-- and so from your reactions, I think maybe nobody had exposed most of you to positive "anymore." So don't say you didn't learn anything in this class. Positive "anymore"-- it exists. It's a thing.

But these kinds of things are things that people talk about-- about there being variations in English. And people's reactions to these variations vary. So I think, probably, I never got an assignment in English class growing up in Alabama in which somebody said, fix the problem with this sentence, and the problem was, "Would you like a Coke?" "Yes, I'd like a Sprite." Nobody said, oh, this is wrong. You should change 'Coke' to 'soda' or 'pop.'"

When I was growing up in Alabama, when we wanted to mock people from the North-- and it was a thing we did sometimes-- we would use words like "pop" and "soda." We thought that was funny that y'all talked this way. [COUGH] Excuse me.

So there are some of these kinds of things that are not the subject of deliberate repression by the educational system. But there are others that are, like negative concord. So there are dialects of English that have negative concord-- a dialect of English in which you say, "I didn't see nothing." "I haven't done nothing." And those dialects are the subject of deliberate repression by teachers. So teachers attempt to stop you from doing that.

And if you've ever heard speakers of-- I have some websites coming up on the next slide. I'll put these links up on the website. There are people who self-describe as speakers of English who I, at least, have a very difficult time understanding. So one of the websites I'll show you is to the Scots Dialect Atlas.

There's this wonderful group of linguists who are going around various parts of Scotland chronicling different aspects of regional speech in various places. And these people are not speaking a Celtic language. They're not speaking Gaelic. They would describe themselves as speaking English. But, boy, you can't tell [LAUGHS] listening to some of these recordings. It's very opaque.

When we-- I had a-- when I was in grad school, there was a guy in the class above my-- a really excellent linguist named Andrew Carnie, who's now teaching at University of Arizona. And he grew up in Canada, but his parents were Scottish. And they came down when he graduated.

And I was sitting around with them attempting to make small talk. And I could just barely understand his mother. But his father could have been speaking Hebrew. I mean, I just-- I had no idea. And I can remember doing a lot of nodding and smiling. It was just opaque. I couldn't understand this at all. But this is a guy who would have said that he was speaking English.

So-- yeah, and so here are some websites-- one to a group at Yale that's doing a study of dialect variation within English. And this other is the Scots Syntax Atlas. I'll put links to both of these up in the chat.

So, I've been talking about English because here we are in America. And I had this metaphor and everything. But this is a pretty common phenomenon. There are lots of languages where there is regional variation in the way that language is spoken. And what we do in America about this-- where you fixate on particular properties of particular dialects and attempt to wipe them out, things like negative concord-- attempt, I should say, completely unsuccessfully.

So negative concord has been around in English for centuries. It's still around. It's not clear that English teachers have ever had any effect on it. But they have succeeded in-- probably not just them, and society kind of generally have succeeded in making negative concord stigmatized. So we're all taught that negative concord is illogical. Two negations make a positive. Is that something you were all taught at some point?

So the next time someone tells you that negative-- if you ever In casual conversation have somebody tell you that negative concord is illogical and that people who say, "I didn't see nothing," they just can't think straight-- they're not logical-- you should point them to Ukrainian and Italian. There are plenty of languages out there where this is what you do. It's just that there's a dialect of English that's like them.

So-- but this is a question that comes up when people are doing things like trying to count languages, for example. so if you're trying to figure out how many languages are spoken in the world, or if you're trying to make policy decisions about how many languages are spoken in the country, or how many languages a government document ought to be translated into, for example, you have to make decisions about how many languages there are-- where to draw lines.

What counts as English? What counts as Japanese or German? How do you know if two people speak the same language? What do you think? What's the answer to that question? What should we do? Are people clear on what the question is? So what's-- how do you decide if two people are speaking the same language or not? Yeah?

AUDIENCE: My first guess is if two speakers-- if it's mutually intelligible, if one can understand the other when they talk and vice versa, then they speak the same language.

NORVIN W.
RICHARDS: That's a popular answer. Are there-- yeah?

AUDIENCE: As a counter argument, I had a friend in middle school who I spoke German too, and he spoke Italian back to me. And I knew a little bit of Spanish, and he knew a little bit of Polish or something, so we could kind of understand each other.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm.

AUDIENCE: [? Even ?] [? though ?] [? it ?] [? wasn't ?] in the same language.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Yes.

[LAUGHTER]

That is an awesome story. [LAUGHS] Yes?

AUDIENCE: Yeah. If I run into someone who speaks Portuguese, I can get a sense of what they're saying. I don't speak Portuguese, but I do speak Spanish.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. Yeah. So this is-- I was going to use Spanish and Portuguese in just a second. What I had heard about Spanish and Portuguese was-- and I heard this from Portuguese speakers, so I don't know whether it's true. Portuguese speakers believe that Portuguese speakers are better at understanding Spanish than Spanish speakers are at understanding Portuguese. I don't know if this is true or not. Raquel?

AUDIENCE: My native speaker is a speaker of Portuguese. And she said that, like, exactly.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Yeah, yeah. That's the kind of thing Portuguese speakers say. There are all kinds of reasons that it could be true. Portuguese has undergone various sound changes that have eliminated sounds that are present in Spanish.

So I can-- I don't know very much about either of these languages. But for example, the Spanish word for "hot" is "caliente." And the Portuguese word for that-- I'll spell it in IPA. It's something like [PORTUGUESE]. So that's Brazilian Portuguese for "hot."

And what's happened is, first of all, the A has palatalized the T, so it's become a "chuh," and you've also lost the final E. So T has become "chuh." And the final E is gone. And the intervocalic L is gone. That's another thing that happened in the course of the evolution of Portuguese. So-- and then some other fancy things happened to the vowels. So we ended up from "caliente" to [PORTUGUESE].

Actually, Portuguese isn't descended from Spanish. These are both from Latin-- "calentem." And then like that, it became both of these forms. Spanish was much more conservative. And Portuguese has done a lot of things including getting rid of sounds that are still present in Spanish. And it's probably easier to ignore sounds that are there-- which is what Portuguese speakers have to do if they want to understand Spanish-- than it is to figure out what sounds would have been there if they were not gone, which is what Spanish speakers have to do when they're trying to understand Portuguese. That's one theory anyway about what's going on.

Another is just that there are more situations in which Portuguese speakers need to understand Spanish than there are situations in which Spanish speakers need to understand Portuguese. Yeah. So that's the kind of thing that may-- I don't want to pick on Kateryna's proposal, which is a popular proposal. It's about mutual intelligibility. But there are places where the intelligibility is kind of one way, or where, in fact, people who don't understand-- don't have a common language can speak to each other through the magic of interpretive dance. Yeah. Yeah. That's a thing that happens.

There are other bunch of examples here. There's a popular linguist's response to that question-- how do you know when you're looking at two languages as opposed to-- it's often phrased as, what two things count as two languages as opposed to two dialects of a single language? And there's a popular linguistic response to that which says, you should really try to stop asking that question.

So here are two classic statements from linguists about that. One of them is by the great Yiddish scholar, Max Weinreich, who said-- he said it in Yiddish.

"A shprakh iz a dyalekt mit an armey un flot,"

"A language is a dialect with an army and a navy." So what he meant was we don't draw distinctions like is this a language or a dialect on the basis of anything linguistic. It's not about how different they are linguistically. It's about political power, whether they are spoken in different countries or not. So lots of kinds of cases, including the Portuguese, Spanish example that we talked about before.

Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish-- anybody speak any of those languages? So I'm not making this up. I promise. I was once on-- I was in Norway flying to a conference. I was flying from Southern Norway up to Northern Norway up to Tromso. I was sitting next to a Norwegian linguist.

And we were flying Norwegian Air. And various people were making announcements over the-- so the captain came on and made an announcement in Norwegian. A plane full of Norwegians-- all of them are understanding. The copilot came on and made an announcement in Norwegian. And then somebody else came on. And I forget-- the purser or something came on and made an announcement.

And the Norwegian linguist who was sitting next to me said, "He's speaking Danish." Because there's no reason not to, apparently. If you're speaking Danish to a bunch of Norwegians on Norwegian Air, ah, they'll figure it out.

AUDIENCE: [LAUGHTER]

NORVIN W.   So we call them Norwegian and Danish because they're spoken in Norway and Denmark. And they are different
RICHARDS: from each other. Actually, Danish is more different from Norwegian and Swedish than Norwegian and Swedish are
              from each other. Norwegian and Swedish are quite similar in lots of ways. Danish is a little bit different.

But, as I say, close enough that on Norwegian Air, you can announce things in Danish. It probably helps that if you're announcing something on a plane, probably the passengers know what you're saying, usually, unless there's something unusual happening.

There are examples of the other kind, too. I've got Mandarin and Cantonese up here. I encounter this a lot. I work on Tagalog sometimes, which is a language spoken in the Philippines. The Philippines is a country with many, many languages-- lots and lots of related languages. But they are very different from each other in lots of ways. So I speak Tagalog, which is the language spoken around Manila.

If I'm listening to somebody speaking Cebuano, or Ilocano, or Hiligaynon, or any of a zillion other languages that are spoken in the Philippines, I cannot understand them. I mean, they're at least as different as Spanish and Italian. You can tell they're related but quite different from each other.

But Filipinos are used to calling them dialects. And I've had arguments with Filipinos in which I will ask one who's from some area of the Philippines far away from Manila-- I'll say, "What language do you speak?" And they'll say, "Oh, I speak a dialect of Filipino." And I'll be like, "Which dialect?" And he'll say, "Cebuano," which is OK-- related to Tagalog but not mutually intelligible with it.

There's something similar going on with Mandarin and Cantonese. We tend to call those dialects of Chinese because they're both spoken in China. But-- and they do use-- it's a beauty of the Chinese writing system that if you write them down, they look very similar.

But if you are speaking Cantonese to someone who only understands Mandarin, then you will have a hard time getting anything across is my understanding. They're different enough that-- they have different tone systems. They have different phonologies. The Mandarin word for "I," the first-person singular pronoun, is [MANDARIN]. In Mandarin, it's something like [CANTONESE]. They're just different. They're different languages. Sorry. Yeah?

AUDIENCE: Wait. Which one is [INAUDIBLE]?

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: In Mandarin, I think it's [MANDARIN].

AUDIENCE: Yes.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Yeah. And in Cantonese, I believe it's [CANTONESE]-- just different, different [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] [? vowels ?] [INAUDIBLE]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Oh, it's--

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Do you--

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: What is it?

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: Like, the vowel is pretty similar.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Oh, OK.

AUDIENCE: But that first consonant--

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: The consonant is different. OK. Cool. Thanks. Yeah?

AUDIENCE: I think it's interesting that you brought up Spanish and Italian.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Yeah?

AUDIENCE: Because one time I gave a story in Italian to my mom, and she understood it 100% without even trying. I was like, how do you know that? It's just like Spanish.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Oh, yeah. Cool. So your mom is clearly linguistically gifted.

AUDIENCE: [LAUGHS]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: I think if someone had-- you gave it to her written down?

AUDIENCE: No. I just read it out loud.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Oh, you read it out loud. Wow. So, wait, do you speak Italian?

AUDIENCE: No. But I was just pronouncing--

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: You were pronouncing it out loud. Cool. No, that's awesome. Neat. I have had the opposite experience. I don't speak Spanish at all. I speak a little bit of Italian. And so I have attempted to speak in Italian to Spanish speakers, to which the response is always, "I don't speak English."

AUDIENCE: [LAUGHTER]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: OK. Sorry. My Italian is not all that good. Maybe that was the problem. Yeah?

AUDIENCE: So, aside from Mandarin and Cantonese [? being-- ?] most dialects in China, [INAUDIBLE] [? they ?] [? still use ?] the same writing systems.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Yes.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] some sort of [INAUDIBLE] system. So [? could ?] I say that having almost the same [INAUDIBLE]-- does that count as [INAUDIBLE] or [INAUDIBLE]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Well, so I wonder-- I mean, so Engl-- if I understood what you said correctly, there are a couple of different-- I don't know if this is what you're talking about. There are a couple of variations on the Chinese writing system. I've heard them called the traditional and the simplified characters. Is that what you're talking about, where you have slightly different ways of writing particular characters? Is that what you mean when you say Mandarin and Cantonese are using different--

AUDIENCE: No. It's just when they already know [INAUDIBLE] They're most definitely Chinese [? culture. ?]

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: But I can read them, actually.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Oh, that's interesting. OK. Yeah. So I don't know why that would be. So look-- the different-- whatever we're going to call them within China because it's not just Mandarin and Cantonese. You're absolutely right. There are many of them. They're all related to each other. They're members of a language family of the Sino- Tibetan language family, it's sometimes called.

And my understanding is that most of them have a lot in common syntactically, like the basic word order is the same. And they have [INAUDIBLE], and they have a lot of properties in common. There's a lot of careful work on the syntax of, for example, Mandarin and Cantonese showing that they're not exactly the same. There are lots of interesting distinctions between them.

So, for example, Mandarin will allow you-- Mandarin has what are called numeral classifiers. So if you want to count things, there's a morpheme that goes between the number and the thing that you are counting which tells you something about the nature of what you're counting. So if you want to say three books, there's a morpheme that goes between three and books that clarifies that it is a book you are talking about. And you'll use that for anything book-like. If you're talking about three pens, there's another classifier which is used for things that are long and thin, things like that.

Mandarin and Cantonese both have those. Cantonese is unlike Mandarin in that it can use numeral classifiers even when there is no number. So it can just start a noun phrase with a numeral classifier. So there are those smallish differences between these approaches. Sorry. You're raising your hand. [INAUDIBLE]

AUDIENCE: No. I just-- I was going to say something. Sorry.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: Never mind.

NORVIN W. RICHARDS: Oh, OK. There are those kinds of differences between Mandarin and Cantonese, but they have many properties in common. And I think this is probably true of a lot of the, again, dialects or languages-- whatever we're going to call them-- within China that, you know-- [INAUDIBLE] or [INAUDIBLE] or whatever. There are all of these different versions. They have lots of things in common.

It's a property of the Chinese writing system that if you write a character down, it doesn't matter what language you're speaking. So for that matter, if I were to write English using Chinese characters, someone who didn't speak English but could read Chinese characters would probably be able to figure out what I had written down.

So if I use this symbol-- this is the Chinese character for a person. I apologize. My handwriting is bad in every language. But it's something like this. That's got a pronunciation in Mandarin that's something like [MANDARIN]. If I decided to write English using Chinese characters, I would use this character for the word "person." And it would be your job to read it as "person." And you'd-- if you-- again, if you knew Chinese characters but couldn't-- didn't speak any English, you'd be able to read that. Not because you knew English, but because you knew these characters.

And when Mandarin and Cantonese speakers-- if you have a monolingual Mandarin speaker and a monolingual Cantonese speaker, and they're both writing things down, if they do use the same characters, they'll be able to read-- each will be able to read what the other has written. But it's not-- that doesn't have anything to do with whether they speak the same language or not. It's a property of the Chinese writing system. You're writing down not sounds but words in a sense. Does that make sense? It's a very long, involved response. Yeah? OK.

Yeah. So various examples-- Serbo-Croatian is another example. Down here you have to be careful-- there used to be a language that was called Serbo-Croatian before the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. There are now people who are very fierce about the fact that they are distinct languages-- Serbian and Croatian. They are, again, written with different writing systems-- actually, different alphabets. And there are differences in their grammars. But the fact that people are fierce about them being different languages has to do with where national borderlines have been drawn and other things about history.

So a popular linguist's response to this question, how do you know when you're looking at two languages or two dialects of a single language, is to say-- I think I did this in class-- "mu!" Yeah. Don't ask that question! That question contains some kind of false presupposition.

Chomsky in '96, in a book called *Knowledge of Language,* laid out a way of thinking about this that I have always thought made a lot of sense. He said, look, there are-- and his claim was there aren't actually such things as languages or dialects. What there are are people. So there are people. We can agree that there are people.

And people have mental grammars-- all the stuff we've been talking about all semester, all the-- if we knew everything about what was going on in your brain as it interacted with language-- if we knew everything about your lexicon and the phonological and syntactic and semantic status of every representation that you were messing with, and we had a perfect description of everything that was going on in your head-- imagine that we had that-- we can call that your I-language, call it your individual language.

So that's your mental state. And now, Chomsky said, it is a fact about the way that people tend to interact with each other, and the way that people grow up and learn to speak, and the way that people interact with each other as adults that we tend to end up growing up in domains where there are lots of people with pretty similar I-languages.

And that's what gives us the illusion of this other kind of thing. He called it an E-language, an external language-- things like English, or Mandarin, or Japanese, or French, or whatever-- these objects that are abstractions over many people's I-languages. And it's OK to talk this way as a loose way of talking. This is the way we're used to talking about languages. But we should bear in mind, he was saying, that in the final analysis, these things don't exist. They're just generalizations over lots of different I-languages.

So if we knew everything about the I-languages of-- let's stick to every native speaker of English in this room. If we looked at each of us in turn, we'd discover that we have lots and lots of things in common. But that there are small differences between them. I'm apparently the only one with positive "anymore," maybe Faith too. I and a couple of other people have "y'all" as a second person plural pronoun. So there are these little differences between pairs of us. And some of us are "soda" people. Some of us are "pop" people. Some of us are "Coke" people-- little differences between pairs of us. And that's all we really need to say.

So what we have are a bunch of people who have pretty similar I-languages. And if we work too hard to try to figure out, well, which of those languages is really English and which of them are deviations from English, then we're, Chomsky was saying, asking ourselves the wrong question.

Trying to decide whether two people speak the same language or not, it's like trying to decide on a fall day whether two leaves are the same color. So you could look at two leaves, and say, yeah, those are both red. But if you looked hard enough at them, you'd convince yourself they're not exactly the same. One of them is a little deeper. One of them's a little browner.

So what's the right answer? Well, there isn't a right answer. It's just a question of how fine-grained do you want your analysis to be? That was Chomsky's way of talking about this. I bring this up because it short circuits a lot of ways people have had of talking about dialects.

So I started off with this metaphor about chess and checkers and the teachers who pretended that there was no such game as chess. And I've already talked a little bit about ways in which this metaphor has correspondences in real life. So there are dialects-- negative concord dialects-- that are the subject of deliberate suppression by the education system. And this has consequences for people who grow up speaking these dialects.

There are dialects that have been particularly attacked which go by various names-- sometimes called African American English. It's also been called African American Vernacular English. Decades ago, it was once called Ebonics. Does anyone still use this term? Has anyone heard the term Ebonics used for African American English? It was an attempt to make African American English sound different from African American English-- make it sound like something you might want to study.

When people first-- so people have been talking about this version of English for a long time. And a lot of the discussion has been like the teachers that I was asking you to think about in the metaphor-- the ones who said, what are you doing? That's not how you play checkers. You're just moving the pieces around randomly. Stop it and learn to play a game with some rules.

So the people who talk about African American English often make a point of saying that it's a version of English-- this is William Raspberry, who's African-American, I believe, saying it's a version of English that has no rules. There's a lot of really interesting reasons and not-so-recent research on African American English, some of it by African-American linguists. There's a really excellent series of works by a linguist, Lisa Green, who I recommend that you look up if you get interested in these topics.

It has a number of properties, which because we're running out of time, we probably won't get a chance to talk about all of them. But I'll run through a couple of them. First of all, to talk about it as a monolithic entity is an oversimplification. There are a lot of varieties of African American English, just as there are of non-African American English. But it's characterized by negative concord, which is one of the reasons that negative concord is picked out for abuse.

It has a richer tense and aspect system than the version of English that I'm speaking. So a version of the English that I'm speaking would use the same kind of verb to express these things. So I would say for both of these, "They are usually tired when they come home," and "They are tired right now."

African American English distinguishes these. So you use "be" for the habitual one, the first one, and nothing-- so "They tired right now," for the second one. Again, is anybody familiar with this dialect of English? Is this something any of you have grown up around? Have you heard this?

Have you heard people saying things like, "They tired right now?" Yeah. So I certainly have growing up. And, at the time, I believed and was taught to believe that this was because these speakers were, you know, they were lazy. They were leaving out words that they should have said. What they were actually doing was expressing an aspectual distinction that my version of English doesn't express.

This is a distinction that's also expressed in Spanish. It's a distinction between what's sometimes called stage level and individual level properties. So individual level properties are properties that hold of someone over a long period of time, so use "ser" in Spanish for-- to express individual level properties like "I'm North American." "Estar" is used for temporary properties like being tired. That's a distinction that my version of English doesn't make, but African American English does.

It's also got, famously, a rule-governed version of copula drop. So I do want to talk about this in a little bit of detail. So in the context in which you can leave out the copula-- when the aspectual distinctions allow you to use the null copula in African American English, there are rules about where you can do it.

So, for example, you can do it in a sentence like "He rich." But you can't do it at the end of a sentence. So you can't ask-- you can't say things like, "I don't know how rich he," in this version of English. You also can't do it in infinitives. And you can't do it in the past tense. So the past tense is "He was rich." It's not, "He rich." And you don't do it when there's negation.

So there is this phenomenon of copula drop if you're describing a temporary property. But it's copula drop that's subject to these rules which I've just gone through real fast. It's not just say whatever you want. There are these restrictions which linguists have studied and figured out.

These particular distinctions are of interest because they have a correspondent in the version of English that I am speaking, which is sometimes called standard English. So standard English has a phenomenon where we can contract various kinds of things including the copula. So you can say, "He is rich." But you can also say, "He's rich."

And this is also subject to restrictions. So you can't, for example, do it at the end of a sentence. You can't say-- you can say, "I don't know how rich he is." You can't say, "I don't know how rich he's." And I'm about to go through all of the context that we did on the last slide, but what we're going to see is that what African American English is doing is dropping copulas under just the circumstances where my version of English-- the version of English that I'm speaking-- can contract copulas. And that's it.

So they're not being lazy or stupid. They're not failing to say a word that they ought to say. They just have a version of a contraction that's a little more emphatic than the version that I use. They don't just get rid of the vowel. They get rid of the whole thing. But the restrictions on where you can do this are the same restrictions. So just like in my version of English, you can't say "He'sn't rich," doing contraction both of the copula and of negation, similarly, you can't do copula drop there in African American English.

Did anybody get a chance to look at the optional reading for today? I put up an optional reading. And as I put up the optional reading, I thought, here I am putting up an optional reading for a one-day topic on the day when a paper is due. What are the odds that anyone will have a chance to even consider thinking about actually even reading the announcement that there is an optional reading? These people-- it's the end of the semester.

The optional reading is still on the website. It's worth having a look at sometime when you have time. I can just describe for you what it is. It's an African-American author who is addressing arguments about how African American English ought to be treated in schools.

And he has a very sophisticated set of arguments. He's replying to various people who have argued the conservative position, which is that it's fine for people to speak African American English in the privacy of their own homes, but it is important that we teach them standard English in schools in order for them to get ahead in life.

He's taking issue with these arguments. But the cool thing about the essay is not just that he takes issue with these arguments, but that it's written in African American English. So the essay is written in the version of English that he is describing. And it's a cool and difficult experience attempting to read it. So if it's not your native dialect of English, it's not trivial figuring out how to read the article. So it's an interesting experience. I recommend it to everybody. Questions about any of this? Other things people want to talk about?

So the goal-- and we are now in the part of the semester where I attempt as a public service to combat various things people believe about language or maybe have heard about language. So the goal of today was to get you to at least hear the idea that when people speak English or whatever your native language is in a way that's different from the way that you speak it, it's not because they're stupid.

It's because languages do that. There are varieties of languages. Maybe it's because there aren't actually such things as languages. There are just people. And people are different from each other. Yeah? All right. Go forth and frolic. Thank you for listening to me talk about this. And I will see you again on Thursday.