

## Paying Attention!

The beauty of sociolinguistics is that our lives are rich with the stuff we study: linguistic variation and language commentary. Many influential papers started with a linguist just noticing something in their regular life, then pursuing it in their research. The aim of this assignment is to get you paying attention to linguistic variation and language-related discussions happening around you.

### Instructions

Start looking out for language in your day to day life, and take notes! The focus is on NATURALLY OCCURRING variation and commentary – what do you notice in the people you hear speaking, and/or in any materials you happen to be reading.

There are two types of things to look out for.

#### 1) Linguistic variation/phenomena you notice

- at any level of linguistic structure (sounds, words, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, spelling)
- take note of who said it, and any other details you think might be important

*Example observation:*

*A 50ish year-old white male from Northern USA said "Anymore we use computers to do X." Speaking to me (female New Zealander in 30s), at a coffee store. It's interesting because I can only use "anymore" in sentences that have negation in them ("We **don't** use computer to do X anymore") but his sentence didn't have a negative word (like "not") in it.*

#### 2) Comments/prescriptions about language that you see/hear

- What features/varieties of language are people discussing? What are they saying about it?
- Can include institutional/automated responses to language (grammar checkers, instructions on assignments, etc.)
- Commentary can be positive as well as negative

*Example observation:*

*I was reading an interview with actress Kathleen Turner in Vulture. She is quoted as saying "I teach women how not to compromise and I work with them on their self-presentation. I tell them, 'If you say 'like' one more time I will kick you!'". She's associating "like" with young women's speech and feels negatively about it. She implies it makes them look bad ("compromise", "self presentation") and seems to be strongly against it. She doesn't explain why "like" is bad – seems to assume we all know and agree.*

You must make a minimum of 10 observations, with no fewer than 3 of a given type (at least 3 variation, at least 3 commentary).