

What's Your Sign For PIZZA? An Introduction to Variation in ASL

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Taking as a departure point Labov's (1982) and Wolfram and Schilling-Estes' (1995) principles whereby linguistic researchers should use the knowledge based on data collected in speech communities for the benefit of the community, we present a 23-minute video and accompanying guide designed to introduce the Deaf community and the general public to the nature of sociolinguistic variation in American Sign Language (ASL). Based on data collected as part of a seven-year project in which 207 signers in seven sites across the United States were videotaped in natural conversation, sociolinguistic interviews, and lexical elicitation tasks, the materials provide an introduction to sign language structure and then focus on phonological, syntactic, and lexical variation. These materials will be available from Gallaudet University Press (<http://gupress.gallaudet.edu>) in the fall of 2003.

The video is both open-captioned and voiced-over and therefore completely accessible to both hearing and deaf audiences.

Mountain Talk

Produced and directed by Neal Hutcheson

Executive Producer: Walt Wolfram

North Carolina Language and Life Project

Mountain Talk is an hour-long documentary on the language and culture of Southern Appalachian to be aired on PBS in the winter of 2004. It tells the story of the unique linguistic heritage of the Southern Highlands through the inimitable personalities of the region. The documentary captures the quick wit, good humor, and glib resolve that have sustained Appalachian people and their language for centuries. The full spectrum of language use is exhibited in the natural conversations and indigenous activities, ranging from the performance of traditional music to the ordinary, everyday interactions among intimate friends.

The producer, Neal Hutcheson, spent three years establishing friendships, filming local activities, and researching culture and language in the picturesque, rugged terrain of the Smoky Mountains in Southwestern North Carolina. In fact, the lush forest, underground caves, and natural water sources that provided the natural setting for this documentary is the same region where the notorious fugitive Eric Rudolph hid from federal authorities for nearly 5 years; it is also a primary sociolinguistic fieldwork site for current research being conducted by the North Carolina Language and Life Project. The results of this extended effort, culled from over 100 hours of filmed footage, is a unique portrait of one of the richest dialect traditions ever developed in the US. The story is told exclusively through the voices of the authentic characters themselves, who illustrate, comment on, and reflect about the past and present state of mountain speech. N.W.A.V.E. will be the premier viewing of this extraordinary documentary on Southern Appalachian language and life.