Answers Unit 11

1. *I don't know nothing about that*: multiple negation; widespread in vernacular usage throughout the English-speaking world, moderate to high degree of social stigmatisation.

   If you're honest, it don't matter whether you are rich or poor: invariant present tense form due to zero for 3rd person sg. While the absence of 3rd person singular inflections on all verbs is attested in a small number of British traditional dialects (e.g. East Anglia) and wide-spread only in African-American English and English-based pidgins and creoles, the use of *he/ she/ it don't* is very common in vernacular usage throughout the English-speaking world, with moderate degrees of stigmatisation.

   I don't know where I've putten the bloody receipt: irregular participle form. In comparison to *put*, *putten* represents an older form, much like the participles *forgotten* and *gotten* (AmE) are closer to the Old English forms than *got*. This particular form is regionally restricted and found, for example, in some North Eastern English dialects, where it has considerable covert prestige locally.

   I'll be afraid as long as they haven't caught the bloke what done it: relative particle *what* instead of relative pronoun *who* – widespread, particularly in British English vernaculars but stigmatised; *done* shows levelling of preterite and past participle forms. In this case, past participle extends to preterite; reverse direction of change attested as well: cf. *I've went*. Common but stigmatised.

   Come quick! We need a doctor: no formal distinction between adjectives and adverbs. This use is very common in informal spoken English, where it is hardly stigmatised at all.

   He's the type that only works good under pressure: no formal distinction between adjectives and adverbs. Despite the structural parallel to the example above, this use is stigmatised somewhat more strongly (though equally widespread).

   Read this. That'll stop you asking any more silly questions: variable verb complementation pattern: *stop so. doing* vs. *stop so. from doing*. This is standard usage in British English and those post-colonial varieties derived from it in the 19th and 20th centuries.

   Is you is my baby or is you ain't?: *ain't* as negated form of *be*. In near-universal use in vernacular varieties, but stigmatised. *you is*: non-standard concord; widespread, particularly in African-American English and varieties with a history of creolisation, stigmatised; initial *is*: Focus construction typical of African-American and creole varieties of English, roughly: "Is it that you are my baby, or is it that you aren't?"
   In all, the example shows two things. First, this particular instance of African-American English displays both features which are in widespread use in non-standard varieties in general and features which are largely restricted to African-American English itself. Second, what appears to be ungrammatical gibberish at first sight turns out to be intricately structured

grammar on closer inspection.

He's gonna wanna talk to you again about it, I'm sure: contraction of *going to* and *want to*. Despite some stigmatisation, such forms are in widespread use in spoken and informal English everywhere.

Them youngsters had it coming for some time: use of *them* instead of demonstrative pronoun *those*. Widespread in vernacular use world-wide, but stigmatised.

2. In the 17th and 18th centuries, /r/ was consistently pronounced in North America. Since then, however, areas in the Eastern United States have emerged where post-vocalic /r/ is vocalised, probably helped by the prestige that non-rhotic pronunciations developed in British English from the early 19th century onwards. Historically, the urban centres of the /r/-less pronunciation were Boston, Providence, New York, Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, and Atlanta. In New York City, the /r/-less pronunciation characterises the spontaneous speech of all speakers except those from the upper-middle and upper classes. The pronunciation of post-vocalic /r/ in the formerly /r/-less areas is a superposed dialect feature which has been on the increase in the United States since the mid-20th century.
   In the South of the US, post-vocalic /r/ is pronounced by all speakers in all styles of speech, although two factors are relevant here. Younger and/or more educated speakers pronounce more post-vocalic /r/s than older and less educated speakers.
   Only speakers of African-American vernacular vocalise /r/ in all positions.

   excluded: social (socioeconomic status, profession, ethnicity) and functional (register/style) variation

3. Remember the definitions of **overt** and **covert** prestige:

   "In overt prestige, forms are valued which follow the norms recommended by powerful groups or institutions within society (such as public schools, broadcasting institutions and usage manuals). An example would be the forms associated with Standard English. This kind of prestige is overt because the forms are openly and publicly recognized as socially desirable."

   "In covert prestige, forms belonging to vernacular dialects are positively valued, emphasizing group solidarity and local identity. This kind of prestige is covert, because it is usually manifested subconsciously between members of a group (...)."
   (source: Crystal, David. 1997. *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*. Oxford: Blackwell.)

   According to the author of the column, the accent carrying overt prestige,

i.e. R.P., has been undermined by local accents carrying covert prestige. As an educated R.P. speaker, she adapts her speech to a local vernacular, in this case popular London or even Cockney, whenever her interlocutor speaks with such an accent because, subconsciously, she seems to be ashamed of her "proper" accent. Signalling in-group membership and local solidarity seems to have become more important than displaying education, social status and economic power, the qualities typically associated with forms of overt prestige.
Note that the male speaker portrayed seems to be more at ease with this kind of accommodation than the female. With some allowance made for humorous exaggeration, this is a fair representation of a sociolinguistic drift which has characterised post-WW II Britain.

4. Again start from the the definitions of overt and covert prestige given above (see Exercise 3).

   In the first of the two statements, the teenager Fabiola consciously chooses not to adopt linguistic forms that carry overt social prestige. She prefers to stick to her own vernacular dialect that for her represents group membership and local identity. In other words: she opts for the covert prestige of African-American Vernacular English rather than the overt prestige of Standard English.

   Penelope Johnson, on the other hand, is aware of the fact that the standard carries social prestige that can help to get a job and keep you employed. She therefore consciously tries to suppress her own vernacular dialect in order to come close to the overt social linguistic norms. This shows the pull of overt prestige even on those who do not speak the standard.

   <u>Non-standard linguistic forms</u>:

   <u>Fabiola</u>:
   they be trying, I be like: use of base form of copula verb *be* instead of inflected forms *are, am*.

   Fabiola uses a typical feature of African American Vernacular English, i.e. the base form of the habitual copula *be*. This usage, commonly referred to as habitual be, is very salient both within the community and outside of it and figures prominently in representations of AAVE in the media. Note that it happens to be the only non-standard feature in the passage.

   <u>Penelope</u>:
   dis way: replacement of dental fricative by alveolar stop; *childrens*: non-standard plural inflection; *I tries*: non-standard verb inflection

   In spite of her positive attitude toward the standard, Penelope actually uses more and more diverse non-standard features than Fabiola.

5. All three statements throw a light on the tricky issue of language and identity. As a predominantly working-class immigrant group, Latinos cannot identify with standard American English or standard Spanish. The use of non-standard varieties and the mixing of languages, for example in code-switching, are the linguistic reflection of a group identity characterised by shifting loyalties.
   Note, however, that all tidy functional divisions – Spanish as the language of emotions and private life, English as the language of work; Spanish as the language of culture and heritage, English as the road to economic success – will fail to account for the complexity of the data. Sometimes language choice may be informed by such permanent pre-given constraints; more often than not, though, it is negotiated spontaneously and in a context-dependent way in ongoing discourse.

   To understand such apparently unsystematic and unpredictable "code-switching," think of the bilingual speaker as using his or her linguistic resources in the discourse situation. Where a monolingual might speak more loudly to emphasise his point or repeat it in other words, bilinguals might use their "other" language to the same effect.