Practice Unit 11

1. *I **don't know nothing** about that.*
   multiple negation: extremely widespread; highly stigmatised

   ***It don't** rain a lot around here.*
   No 3rd-person-singular inflection for auxiliary *do*: widespread; moderately stigmatised

   *She knows the **bloke what done** it.*
   Bloke: informal term for "man" used in Britain, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand
   What as relative pronoun: moderately wide-spread; stigmatised
   Done for *did*: moderately wide-spread; stigmatised

   ***Come quick**! We need a doctor.*
   Adverb of manner not marked by *–ly*: widespread in informal English; not stigmatised

   *He's the type that only **works good** under pressure.*
   Adjective *good* used in adverbial function instead of *well*: widespread; moderately stigmatised

   *Read this. That'll **stop you asking** any more silly questions.*
   Fully acceptable variant of "stop you from asking" in British English and other varieties strongly influenced by it; largely unknown in North America, but not stigmatised

   Is you is my baby or is you ain't?
   Is you is or is you ain't (ma baby)? is a classic of the Rhythm and Blues (R&B) genre that was first recorded in the 1940s and has been covered in many versions by African American and later also by white singers. It shows one of the most widespread and moderately stigmatised nonstandard features in the English-speaking world, *ain't* as the negative for *am/is/are*. More interestingly, it also features an African American English focus construction that will not be transparent to most speakers of English, roughly equivalent to "Is it that you are my baby or aren't you?"

   *He's **gonna wanna** talk to you again about it, I'm sure.*
   Contracted forms: *gonna* and *wanna* are widespread in varieties of English around the world and have rapidly increased in frequency over the past century. This means that they have by now become fully acceptable standard, especially in rapid and informal speech. Somewhat paradoxically, many speakers that use the forms themselves may still have some reservations against them, considering them sloppy or, if British, American usage. The nonstandard spellings would not be used in formal writing.

   ***Them** youngsters had it coming for some time.*
   demonstrative pronoun *them* for *those*:

2. The format of an atlas highlights the regional dimension of rhoticity in the US. Dialects in the mid-Atlantic region, Eastern New England and large parts of the South are non-rhotic, whereas the rest of the country is rhotic. Rhoticity is spreading. The ethnic factor is backgrounded in the atlas format. Originating in Southern speech, African American Vernacular English is non-rhotic and has spread to urban black neighbourhoods all over the US.

3. The passage shows how – in an at least outwardly more democratic and egalitarian public culture – contemporary R.P. speakers have to navigate their course between the conflicting pulls of overt and covert sociolinguistic prestige.

4. For the young speaker, African American Vernacular English is not just a dialect, but a part of her cultural heritage that she defends against linguistic prejudice, whether it comes from the white mainstream or from upwardly mobile blacks, whom she refers to as Oreos, alluding to the well-known biscuit that is black outside, but white inside. The older speaker does not endorse her own dialect in the same way, but even seems to share some of the prejudice held against it by outsiders.

   In other words: The young speaker is tempted to reject Standard English, thus possibly harming her chances for socioeconomic advancement. The old speaker, on the other hand, internalises other people's prejudices about her own dialect and cultural heritage, which is not a comfortable psychological situation, either. In a sociolinguistically enlightened world, speakers would not be forced to choose between dialect and standard, but be able to combine both.

5. Having studied both texts, you will have seen that you can talk about a sociolinguistic problem such as bilingual identities in the language of the academic expert and in the totally different language of the community insider's experience. In linguistic fieldwork, both perspectives come together and have the potential to complement each other for a fuller picture.