

THE LINGUISTIC ATLAS OF THE GULF STATES

THE BASIC MATERIALS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	FICHE
INTRODUCTION	1
A MANUAL FOR DIALECT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTHERN STATES, 3rd ed.	2
1. An Introduction to the LAGS Project Lee Pederson	
2. Field Procedures: Instructions for Investigators, Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States Raven I. McDavid, Jr.	
3. Folklore and the LAGS Fieldworker Charles W. Foster	
4. Linguistic Geography and the Classroom Teacher Charles E. Billiard	
THE TABLE OF INFORMANTS	5
THE IDIOLECT SYNOPSES	6
THE PROTOCOLS	17
THE URBAN SUPPLEMENTS	1135
APPENDIX TO THE PROTOCOLS	1176
LAGS WORKING PAPERS, FIRST SERIES	1177
Introduction	1177
#1 A Conference to Plan a Linguistic Atlas for the Southeastern States, May 16-17, 1968 Lee Pederson	1178
#2 The Conduct of an Atlas Interview in the Gulf States Raven I. McDavid, Jr. Edited by Susan E. Leas	1179
#3 The Emory Collection of the Louisiana Workbooks Susan E. Leas	1181
#4 Toward the Publication of the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States Lee Pederson	1182
#5 A Compositional Guide to the LAGS Project, 2nd ed. Lee Pederson Edited by Susan E. Leas	1183

#6	The Phonological Content of a Field Record Guy Bailey	1185
#7	A Preliminary Survey of Terms in the LAGS Urban Supplement Susan E. Leas	1186
#8	The Regional and Social Dialects of East Tennessee: A Preliminary Overview Lee Pederson	1187
#9	A Plan for the LAGS Concordance Lee Pederson Susan E. Leas	1190
#10	LAGS Field Records: Form and Content Marvin Bassett Susan E. Leas	1191
#11	LAGS Demographics: Communities and Localities Lee Pederson Susan E. Leas Guy Bailey Marvin Bassett	1192
#12	LAGS Informants: Social Characteristics Susan E. Leas	1193
#13	LAGS Fieldworkers: Styles and Contributions Lee Pederson	1194
#14	LAGS Scribes: Idiolects and Habits of Composition Lee Pederson	1195
#15	LAGS Protocols: Editorial Procedures Susan E. Leas	1196
#16	LAGS Typescripting: A Preliminary Program Marvin Bassett	1197
	INDEX OF TOPICS, TABLES, AND MAPS	1198

INTRODUCTION

The materials collected here provide a complete graphic record of the basic research of the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States (LAGS) project since its inception in 1968. The investigation includes a combination of two familiar methods of language study, both of which have been substantially modified by the use of the tape recorder in the collection of the data. These approaches join the conventional survey of regional and social dialects, as formulated in this country by Kurath, and the more flexible survey of inventorial research that places no bounds on the ranges and varieties of native speech drawn from the informants and reported in the atlas. Properly executed, the second aspect of this research is no more than an extension of the method pioneered by Kurath, and it was an appreciation of the promise of the atlas model that led to the development of the program organized in the Gulf States.

The great contributions of Kurath and his associates in the Atlantic States--in both the linguistic atlases of New England and of the Middle and South Atlantic States--extended far beyond the carefully articulated descriptions of regional and social variation among work-sheet items systematically studied in those investigations. Any reader who took the time found an enormous body of valuable evidence in the work books upon which the atlases were constructed, but few readers had access to that data, a rich documentation of native

American usage of extraordinary referential content. The failure of American linguists, philologists, and sociologists to reflect the intelligence of those findings in their own research suggests several large problems of overspecialization, all of which have diminished the potential of every phase of English studies in the country. Although a large part of the burden must be shared by the linguistic geographers themselves for not attending to the composition of a convenient instrument of reference, the general disregard of the data gathered in those surveys by American structuralists has been astonishingly cavalier. However imperfect the procedures of sampling, the narrow phonetic notations of Bloch, Lowman, and McDavid are a national resource as a descriptive key to native usage during those decades immediately before and after World War II. With their inclusion of elderly informants whose nativity antedates the Civil War, many of the LANE records and some of the LAMSAS records provide matchless evidence for future historians of American English, but most of that remains unrealized to this date.

The LAGS Project was organized to do precisely what Kurath and his associates had done earlier, but accepting also the charge to provide a coherent reference instrument that would exhaustively record, index, analyze, and describe the data in a methodical operation. The present set of materials is the initial effort in that program. By combining the LANE method with a global survey, preserved fully on magnetic tape, this project aims to gather the widest possible range of phonological, grammatical, semantic, and paralinguistic information and to keep all of that available for all kinds of research as the indexes, analytical, and descriptive tasks proceed.

A global survey, a deliberate effort at inventorial research, seeks information that will be useful to all students of language, whether the data provide evidence to distinguish regional boundaries or merely expand the understanding of the national idiom by learning more about its forms and applications. If a set of allophones, an aberrant complex of inflections, a parcel of phrases or a recurrent anecdote serves that purpose, the information is appropriate subject matter in a global survey. All such information must be easily available to any reader, and for that reason the multiple formats of this atlas have been planned. These range from the tape-recorded interviews, through the phonetic notations that dominate the present publications, to the concordance in conventional orthography that will follow, and the maps and its legendry that will order the evidence in the format of a historical dictionary. Properly executed, this work will offer a large corpus of linguistic data.

Although the present material is limited to approximately 1,500,000 words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs--the entries in the 1,118 protocols--behind that graphically recorded evidence stands a larger corpus of approximately 50,000,000 linguistic units recorded on magnetic tape and available immediately for audial analysis and soon to be converted into conventional orthography for visual study. The aim of the present collection is to begin an orderly advance upon that ultimate goal, an exhaustive analysis and description of the full text, 5,268 hours of tape-recorded native speech in the Gulf States of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, as well as in the neighboring states of Tennessee, Georgia, and Arkansas.

These materials are organized here in five principal divisions:

1) A Manual for Dialect Research in the Southern States, 2) the Table of Informants, 3) the Idiolect Synopses, 4) the Protocols with Urban Supplements, and 5) the Working Papers. The principle of organization followed here combines historical and descriptive considerations. The Manual identifies the plan and the research instrument; the Table of Informants offers the most comprehensive summaries available to characterize the 1,118 informants; the Synopses offer an abstract of the idiolects reported in the protocols; the Protocols provide the graphic data base for the project; the Working Papers detail the course of the research from 1968 to the present.

As a book of instructions for fieldworkers, the first edition of the Manual (1972) was prepared to explain the work sheets and their uses. All of the essays, maps, and indexes complement the work sheets that are the center of that text. Four preliminary essays identify the aims, methods, and applications of the research. The maps and the full list of Gulf States communities (counties and parishes) outline the territory to be investigated. A second edition appeared in 1974 with revisions as the survey was extended. The present edition offers a final summary of both the territorial grid and the work sheets. This includes the expanded territory, all of Georgia and Arkansas, as well as an extension of the territory in Texas to include Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, and San Antonio. The revised work sheets included the fully modified basic form and the complete urban supplement. The latter is a set of 200 items that were administered to 164 informants across four generations in both black and white subcultures. Most of those informants represent the speech of

these urban centers: Knoxville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Jacksonville, Tampa, Miami, Nashville, Birmingham, Montgomery, Mobile, Memphis, Jackson, Little Rock, Shreveport, New Orleans, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio.

The full table of informants follows as the second unit of these materials. Here the 1,118 informants are assigned basic numbers to identify 911 primary records and 207 supplementary records. This distinction is necessary to accommodate all of the field records, some of which are partial and others of which represent superabundant coverage within a grid unit. The informants are ordered according to sector, community, and locality and identified according to sex, social class, racial caste, age, education, and social experience. In the table, each is further characterized in terms of parental and ultimate ancestry, as well as generations in the community, ethnic group affiliation, occupation, and sociolinguistic classification, including eight scales that distinguish the informant with respect to his position in the speech community with reference to both native community and the entire LAGS sample. In addition to this all informants with a mother tongue other than English are explicitly marked and identified with that language, whether Choctaw, French, German, or Spanish.

The idiolect synopses represent the most abstract set of linguistic evidence in the collection, providing summaries of the phonological, grammatical, and lexical forms of each informant's speech. Each synopsis records the incidence of 15 vowel phonemes in as many as five contexts, drawn in narrow phonetic notation from the protocol. All 24 consonant phonemes are also represented in this section. This is followed by five plural inflections, five function words, and the principal parts of eight verbs. The synopsis concludes with 28 regionally or

socially distinctive lexical forms.

The principal component of this collection is the 1,118 protocols, 164 of which are supplemented with urban work sheets. These report the core content of the 1,118 field records and include all of the raw linguistic data that will be indexed, analyzed, and described in the further publications of the project. Fully described and illustrated later in Working Paper #5, A Compositional Guide to the LAGS Project, 2nd ed., the LAGS protocol can be identified here simply on the basis of its form and composition.

The term protocol, as used in the LAGS Project, suggests three aspects of a document previously identified by American linguistic geographers as the field record, a term reserved here for the tape-recorded interview, the actual record made in the field. The protocol is a set of scribal notes that comprise 1) the first written draft of an event or transaction, i.e., the tape-recorded interview, 2) a preliminary memorandum prepared to assist auditors of the tapes, and 3) the formal account of the information included in the field records. The first of these considerations indicates that the entire corpus of the atlas is limited to that which is preserved on tape and that the entire process of transcription is limited to that which the scribe can perceive from that electro-magnetic record--nothing is transcribed in the field; nothing is included that cannot be verified. The second consideration indicates that the transcriptions are aimed at further, more nearly comprehensive, analysis and that they are subject to correction, even now after they have been published. The third consideration indicates that the LAGS methodology remains squarely within the

tradition of conventional linguistic geography and that all departures are accretive and supplemental--accretive in that a self-corrective capacity is recognized within the project and supplemental in that the principle of inventorial research and global description have been preserved from the outset. As a result, only the field record is inviolate. Any protocol errors observed through audition and further study will be supplemented in a detailed errata list, and such is to be expected in any composition that deals with more than a million entries in narrow phonetic notation.

The form and content of the LAGS protocol are based on the investigative work sheets identified in the Manual, including numbered pages and line references that correspond to the items in the research instrument. In earlier American atlas projects, this form is called a field book, prior to transcription and a field record after the entries have been made. Six parts of the protocol are identified here: the personal data sheet, the community/character sketch, the protocol line, the primary and secondary entries, the marginalia, and the tape index. Each of these features is discussed in detail in the Guide.

The personal data sheet is the first page of each protocol and offers all social characteristics of the informant--except name, address, and other intimately personal information--transcribed from the field record. Combined with the community/character sketch that immediately follows it, this form provides the fullest set of informant information in conventional orthography. These details of personal data underlie the classification of informants, as outlined in the working papers, and provide the evidence that is abstracted in the Table of Informants.

The protocol page is divided in three parts: the upper (unlined)

margin, the base, and the base margin. The upper margin is reserved for general reference, the number of the page is entered by the scribe at its center, and the informant and community codes, identified in the Table of Informants, are entered on either side of the page number. All notation is made in the base and base margin. The base has 35 rules that are divided into nine numbered sections. These nine sections are designated as lines and correspond to the items in the work sheets. The responses to work-sheet items are recorded in the base form as prescribed by the work sheets; these are the primary entries. Spare lines are identified in the Guide to indicate places for the inclusion of supplementary information unrelated to work-sheet items; the forms recorded there are the secondary entries. The base margin of the protocol page is reserved for the description of primary and secondary entries. These include phonological, grammatical, and lexical glosses, as well as usage labels, explanations, illustrations, cross references, and the tape index. That index indicates the reel, side, and position where each recorded form occurs in the field record and reflects the aim of the survey to make possible the verification of every recorded form. Appended to these protocols are three lists: 1) a roster of all 1,118 volumes, ordered by informant number; 2) a full set of abbreviations that recur in the data sheets; and 3) a synopsis of the work sheets that identifies the subject of each line of the basic format and urban supplement.

Finally, 16 working papers are included to elaborate generalizations made elsewhere in the collection and to provide background that illustrates the ways in which the research was developed. Arranged chronologically, these papers prepared by the editors trace the development of the project from the first planning conference of May, 1968, through the bibliographic

research, the organization of field and scribal procedures and an evaluation of that work, to plans for the composition of the concordance and the descriptive materials of the atlas. Although the Guide had been copyrighted and reproduced at Emory in 1977, none of these working papers have been previously published. A full bibliography of LAGS-related research will be published in the handbook that will further elaborate these materials. The topics and tables of these working papers, as well as the rest of this collection are indexed in the final fiche.

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