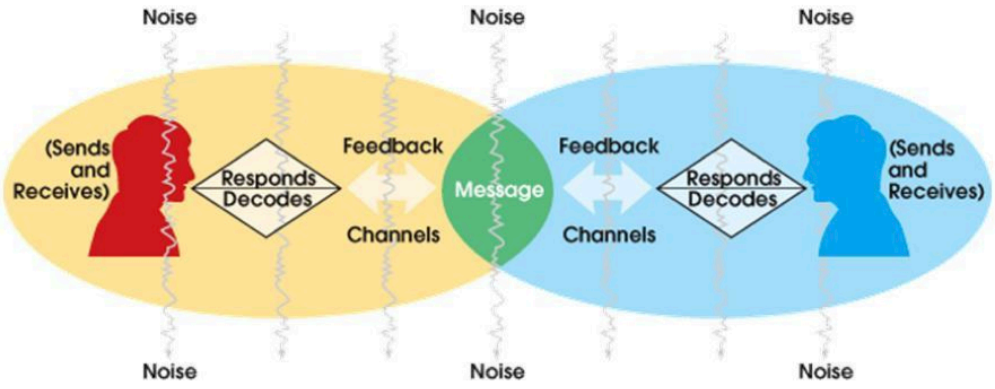
Tracking How We Talk

Problem: People are bad at communicating.

Potential Solution: Recording and analyzing how we speak can help us understand the obstacles that prevent us from clear communication.

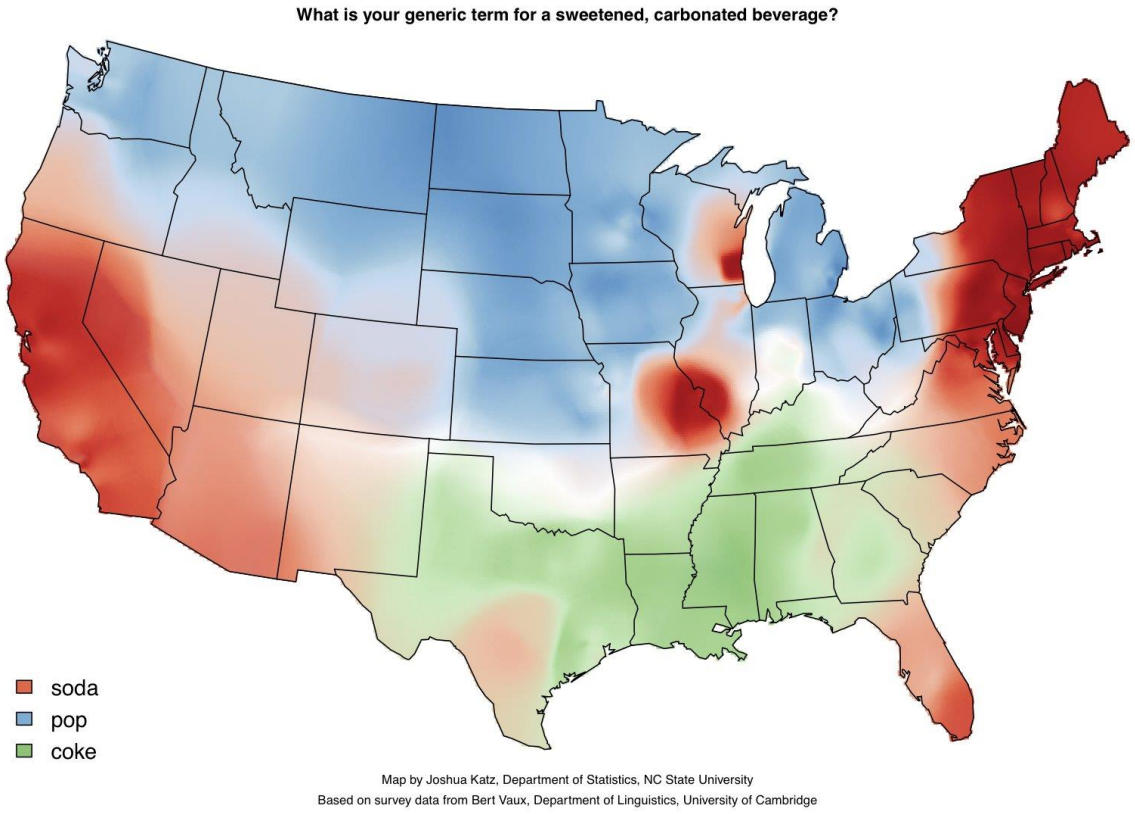
Communication is the cornerstone of successful interpersonal relationships, but it is often the case we are unaware of what we say and how we say it. Most people don't have planned scripts for what they want to say or analyze what they've already said, instead they just *respond*. We are vastly ignorant of our own speech habits, patterns, cadences, tics, and the like, because we don't stop to consider them, the same way we don't notice the scenery of a place we pass daily. To understand how we communicate, the transactional model of communication seen below helps describe how each person encodes and sends a message that the next person must then decode, and how noise and interpretation can lead to a message being scrambled. As stated by Professor Malcolm Parks of the University of Washington, "the most important communication skill is being able to anticipate how others will perceive your messages". To do this, you need to know your speaking style. Most people are bad at talking, but knowing how you speak can change that.



The Transactional Model of Communication

A simple Google search will reveal that people want to build better speaking habits, with a search for "proper speaking techniques" returning 81,800,000 hits. Whether it's to improve public speaking skills, to sound more professional, or to get rid of a nervous tic or speech impediment, people want to improve their ability to speak well. An article in Fortune Magazine titled, "The way you talk at work, like, matters – you know?" discusses how certain speech patterns can be hazardous to career

advancement. People are still littering their sentences with like's, umm's, uhh's, and more. But a person's speaking personality if you will, isn't just limited to those tics, but include pace, tone, inflection, vocabulary, and more. Having some sort of device taking speech analytics would provide valuable and insightful data, potentially including statistics on number of words said a day, different word frequencies, sentence lengths, conversation lengths, even how many questions you asked, when you spoke the fastest, or whether you typically say "hi", "hello", or "hey". This data could be used on an individual basis for the sake of self-reflection and changing poor speech habits, but could also be used on a wider scale to see trends in how different groups of people communicate. Whether it's looking at differences in gender, age, or geographical location, there is a veritable treasure-trove of speech information that sophisticated analytical technology could make available to us.



If a dialect map on who says pop and who says soda can gather hundreds of thousands of views, what other kinds of speech data are people interested in?