

# Language and Society (CL2.203)

Monsoon 2021, IIIT Hyderabad  
30 August, Monday (Lecture 4)

Taught by Prof. Dipti Misra Sharma

## Variation in Language

Labov made the distinction between a *variable* and a *variant*.

A variable is an inconsistency or disagreement that a particular form of language may exhibit from an abstract standard. For example, the second person formal conjugation in Hindi is a variable.

The variants of a variable are its forms; for example, the form आप आओ of the conjugation is a variant.

## Variables as Indicators, Markers or Stereotypes

Variables can have different *social values* (separate from their linguistic values) associated with them:

- *indicators* have a demographic associated with them and are not subject to stylistic or situational change.
- *markers* are the change of a variant depending on casual or careful speech.
- *stereotypes* do not reflect social factors, but views about the norms of speech.