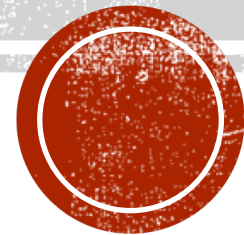


# LINGUISTIC VARIATION



# OBJECTIVES

- Learn about language variation
- Understand why studying language variation is important
- Discuss some technologies that depend on this concepts



# OUTLINE

## *Principles for Evaluation of Variation*

Language

Time

STANDARD VARIETY

Borrowings

Space

Context

Types of Variation

dialects

*stylistic variation*

Domains

DIFFUSION

**mobility**

How to test linguistic variation

*slangs*

**vernacular**

Why is this important?



## “The Lord's Prayer” in Old English (with Middle English and Modern English translations)

### Old English

Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum,  
si þin nama gehalgod.  
to becume þin rice,  
gewurpe ðin willa,  
on eorðan swa swa on heofonum.  
urne gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us todæg,  
and forgyf us ure gyltas,  
swa swa we forgyfað urum gyltendum.  
and ne gelæd þu us on costnunge,  
ac alys us of yfele soþlice.

### Middle English

Oure fadir þat art in heuenes  
halwid be þi name;  
þi reume or kyngdom come to be.  
Be þi wille don  
in herþe as it is dounin heuene.  
yeue to us today oure eche dayes bred.  
And foryeue to us oure dettis þat is oure synnys  
as we foryeuen to oure dettouris þat is to men þat han synned in us.  
And lede us not into temptacion  
but delyuere us from euyl.

### Modern English

Our father which art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done  
in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.



# WHAT IS LINGUISTIC VARIATION?

- **Linguistic Variation:** linguistic entity which varies according to social parameters (age, sex, social class, ethnicity), stylistic parameters (casual, careful, formal) and / or linguistic parameters (Segmental, suprasegmental)
- The variants of a single variable must have the same referential meaning regardless of which variant occurs
- Most of this variation is highly **systematic**: speakers of a language make choices in pronunciation (phonetics / phonology), morphology, word choice (lexical), and grammar depending on a number of **non-linguistic factors**.



### (1) Varieties of language

(a)	<i>Standard English.</i> No one has gone to the post office yet.
(b)	<i>Jamaican Creole</i> .Nobadi no gaan a puos yet. ‘No one has gone to the post office yet.’
(c)	<i>Southern US white Non-Standard dialect from Atlanta.</i> Nobody don’t like a boss hardly. ‘Hardly anybody likes a boss.’
(d)	<i>New Guinea Pidgin (Tok Pisin).</i> Papa, min bin mekim sin long God na long yu. ‘Father, I have sinned against God and against you.’
(e)	<i>Older Standard English of the ‘King James version’ Bible.</i> Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.
(f)	<i>Scots, from Leith.</i> When ah wis a boy ma mither an faither died. ‘When I was a boy my mother and father died.’
(g)	<i>Standard English &amp; English slang (ball-ache)</i> Walking 5 miles to work is a real <i>ball-ache</i> . ‘Walking 5 miles to work is really inconvenient.’

- All aspects of language are subject to variation.
  - Phonological / Phonetic – [ə] vs [ɪ]
  - Morphophonological – **ing** casual [ɪn] vs formal [ɪŋ]
  - Morphological – **Past tense of dive:** dived vs dove; awoke vs awaked
  - Syntactic – **negation:** ain’t, isn’t, ‘s not, is not
  - Lexical – **colour** vs **color**; **tire** vs **tyre**; **checkbook** vs **chequebook**





# TYPES OF VARIATION

- *Interspeaker variation* – variation between languages, dialects, and speakers.
- *Intraspeaker variation* - variation within the language of a single speaker.
  - Individual patterns often match group patterns



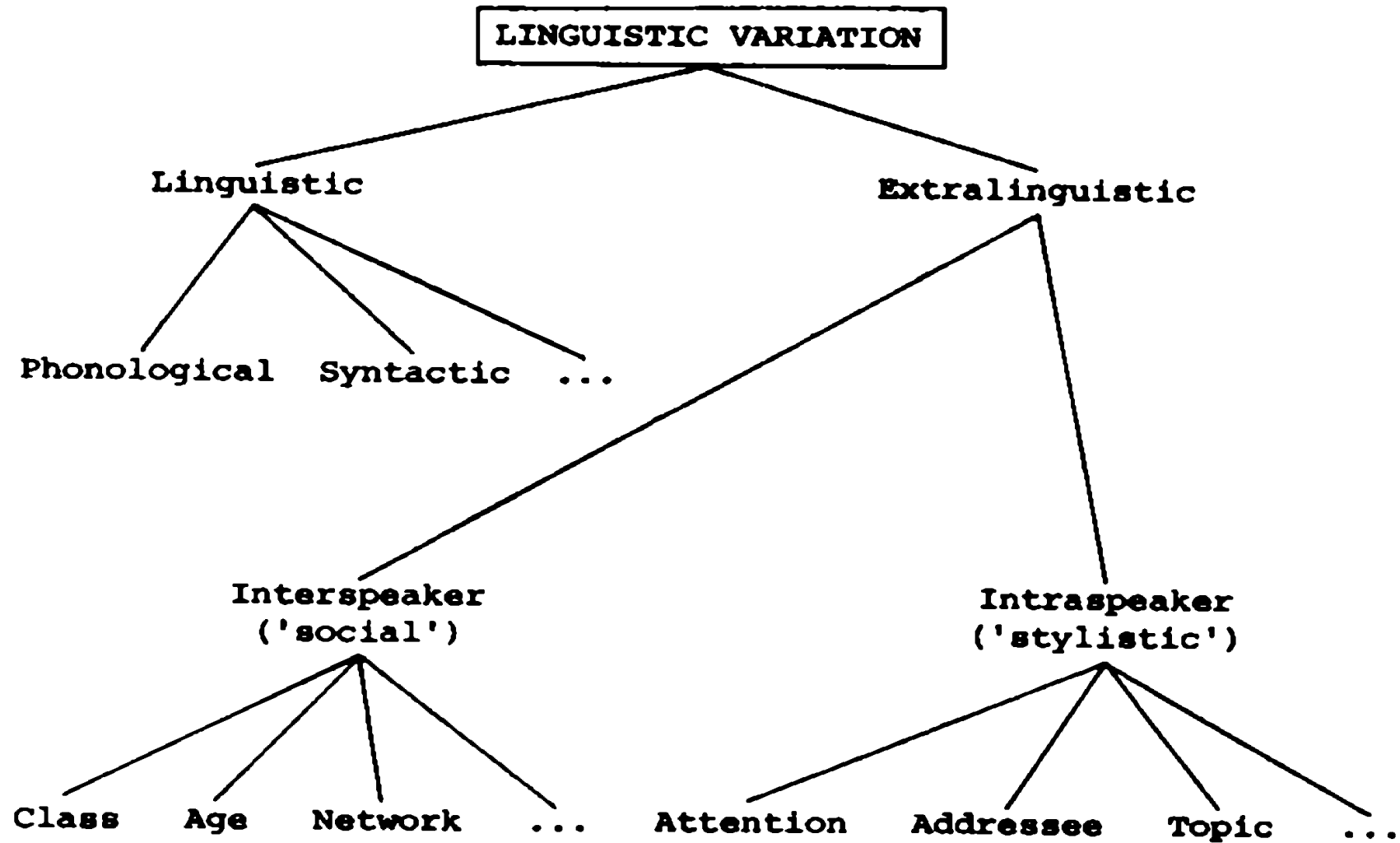
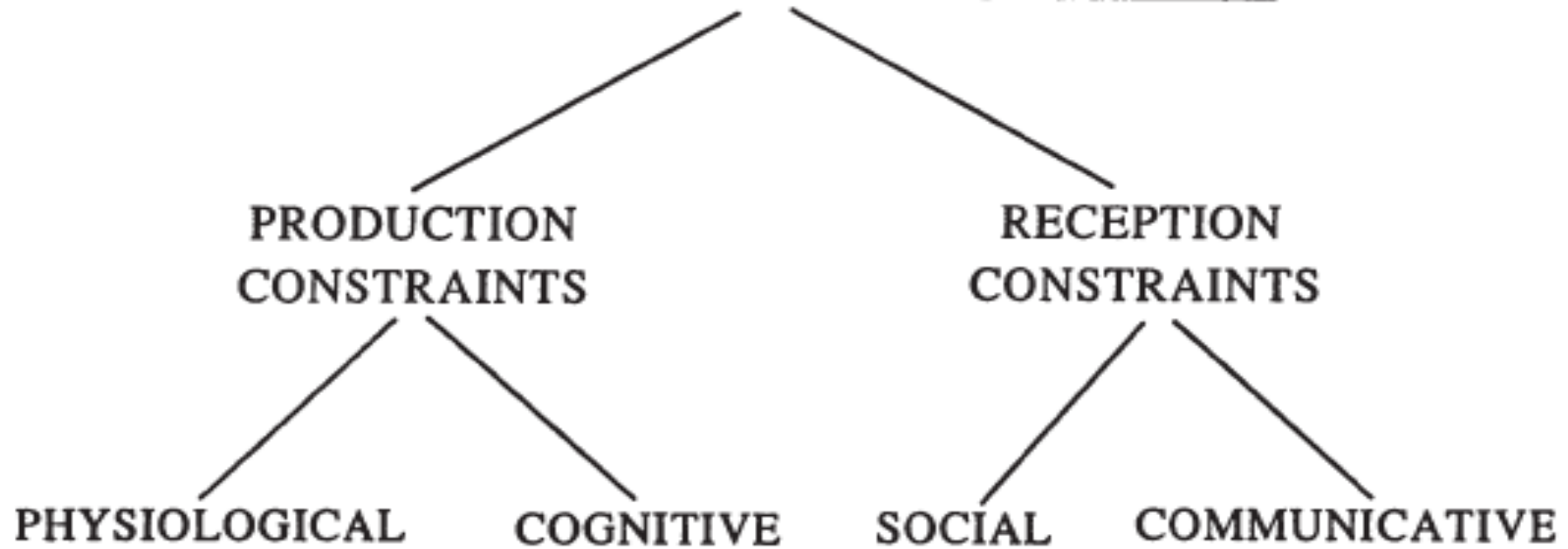


FIGURE 1: Some factors influencing language variation.





DYNAMICALLY INTERACTING DETERMINANTS  
OF  
INTRASPEAKER PHONETIC VARIATION



**FACTORS INFLUENCING PHONETIC VARIATION**



# STANDARD VARIETY

- One of many variants that has been **given special prestige** in the community.
- It is an **artificial, idealized** form of language. One must learn its rules in school because **it is not anyone's true first language**.
- Different languages make this choice differently:
  - English: grammarians' choice favored the dialect spoken by the aristocracy.
  - Yoruba: **koine**
- All other forms apart from the standard form are **vernaculars / dialects / varieties** of the standard form.
- Not all languages have a standard form.



	TURKISH	TURKMEN	UZBEK	KAZAKH	KIRGIZ	UIGHUR
1	bir	bir	bir	bir	bir	bir
2	iki	iki	iki	iki	eki	ikki
3	üç	üç	üç	üş	üç	üç
4	dört	dört	tört	tort	tört	töt
5	beş	bäş	beş	bes	beş	bäş
6	altı	altı	altı	altë	altë	altä
7	yedi	yedi	yetti	jeti	jeti	yättä
8	sekiz	sekiz	säkkiz	segiz	segiz	säkkiz
9	dokuz	dokuz	toqquz	toğëz	toğuz	toqquz
10	on	on	on	on	on	on

TABLE 2. *The numerals from 1 to 10 in some Turkic languages.*



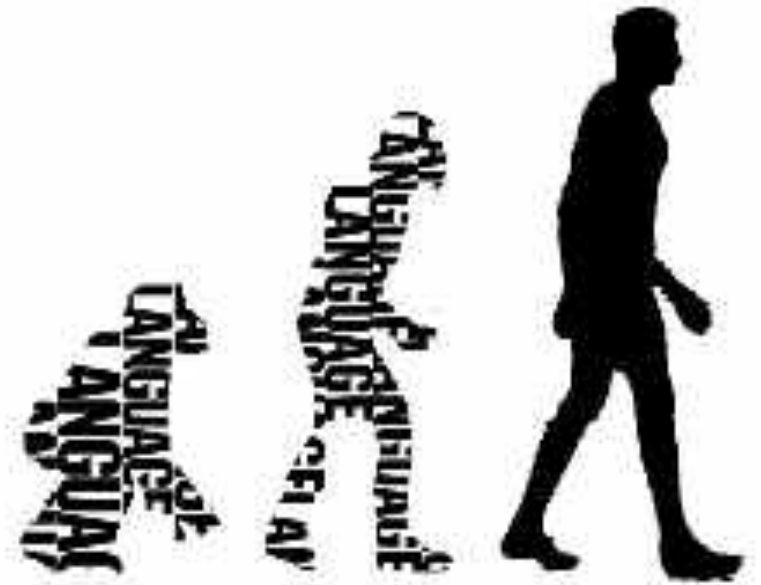
# PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATION OF VARIATION

- Quantitative Modelling – The strength of association between a contextual feature and the linguistic variable
  - Context – linguistic environment, social phenomena
- Principle of Multiple causes – It is unlikely that any single contextual factor can explain variability observed in natural language.
- Individual speakers may differ in use of a variable rule
- Individuals in the same speech community should be similar or identical in the factor values assigned to linguistics constraints on the rule.



# LANGUAGE AND TIME

- Linguistic variation can be a precursor to **language change** or **change in progress**
  - “When social and stylistic factors are held constant, linguistic differences between generations of a population (apparent-time difference) would mirror actual diachronic developments in the language (real-time linguistic changes)” Chambers, J. K., Schilling-Estes, N., & Ebooks Corporation. (2013). *The handbook of language variation and change* (Second ed.). Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Certain **age grades** are often **late adopters**
  - Professional pressures can affect certain age-grades



# STYLISTIC VARIATION

- Attention to speech approach – speech style is contingent on formality of speech situation and is chiefly reactive
- Audience design approach – stylistic changes are influenced by audience and not in response to shifts in attention to speech.
- Speaker design approach – focuses on speaker's creative use of stylistics to shape or reshape identities, situations etc.



# DOMAINS

- Social network is a means of capturing the dynamics underlying speaker's interactional behaviours.
  - Explores the effect of interpersonal relationships on language choices
- Network strength scale assesses speaker's network characteristics on five indicators of multiplexity and density:
  - Membership of a high density territorially based **group** (e.g sport group)
  - **Kingship ties** with more than two households from the neighbourhood
  - Same workplace as at least two from the neighbourhood
  - Same workplace as at least two others of the same **gender** from the neighbourhood
  - Voluntary association with workmates in **leisure hours**





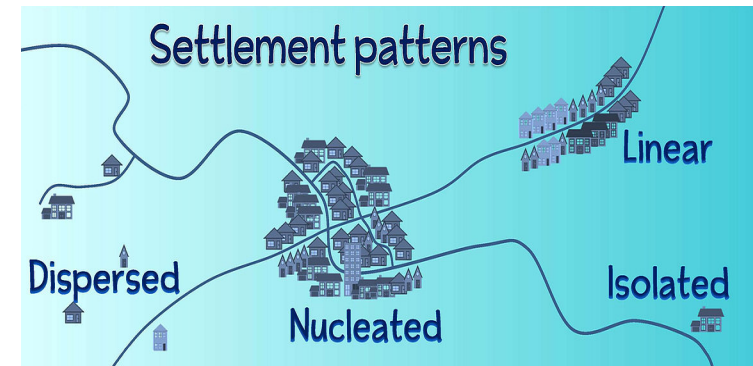
# SPACE, DIFFUSION AND MOBILITY

- Given time and space, language changes:
  - Language varies
  - Dialects form
  - Whole new languages emerge (**Intelligibility tests**, **language families**)
- Space :
  - Euclidean
  - Social – human organization
  - Perceived – perceptions of immediate and not immediate environments



# SPACE, DIFFUSION AND MOBILITY

- Studying human geography is important in language variability
  - Settlement patterns
  - Migration routes – Where did they first settle / come from ?
  - Geographical factors – rocks, mountains, seas, etc
  - Language contact – wars, commerce, [language borrowings](#)
- Why do people from different regions in the United States speak so differently?  
Why do they speak differently from the people of England?



# HOW TO TEST LINGUISTIC VARIATION

- Lexicostatistics – compute percentage of similarity of variants
- Intelligibility tests – how well a speech variety is understood.
  - Inherent intelligibility is an understanding that is unlearned and that is attributed to the (inherent) linguistic similarities (such as sound systems and grammatical structures) that are shared by the two speech varieties. *The greater the inherent similarities shared between two varieties, the more likely that the speakers of each will be able to understand the same literature.*
  - *Acquired* intelligibility a level of comprehension of a speech variety achieved through *learning*.



# WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- The study of language variation guides language development activities.
  - For example, when choosing data for a language, it is desirable for it to be acceptable to the largest number of speakers of the language.
  - Understanding variation will ensure that data represents all variants as much as possible.
- Social acceptance
- Linguistic variation may result in language change.
  - Kroch, A. (1994). Morphosyntactic variation. In *Papers from the 30th regional meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society: Parasession on variation and linguistic theory* (Vol. 2, pp. 180-201). Chicago Linguistics Society Chicago.



# APPLICATIONS

- Siri
- Predictive text
- Voice recognition devices



# SUMMARY

- Linguistic variation – various styles employed in language to convey the same thought.
- Systematic
- Same referential meaning

