



WEEK 1 - Syllabus; Unit 1

Syllabus

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Midterm (Non-Accumulative) / Final (Semi-Accumulative; Unit 2, 7, new units) Mode

1. Multiple Choice
2. True or False
3. Refers to what pattern
4. Short Answers

Paper for Lucy

- Single-space all LING 115 papers

Languages and Dialects

Part I: the term 'language'

- Various terms for 'ways of speaking'
- 'varieties' (of speech) ⇒ A neutral term
 - Languages
 - Dialects

- Styles
- Registers
- Pidgins / Creoles

What counts as a language?

- The term 'language' is important
- Speakers of 'languages' may have linguistic rights to use their languages
- In education, employment, government, law
- Speakers of 'dialects' almost never have similar rights.
- Question: Are varieties of speech classified as 'languages' rather than 'dialects' on linguistic grounds - due to their linguistic properties?
- **The Invariant System Hypothesis**
- **The Mutual Intelligibility Hypothesis**

The Invariant System Hypothesis

- A language consists in:
 - A set of words (a vocabulary)
 - A set of rules of grammar and pronunciation
- These words and rules of grammar and pronunciation are used in the same way by a population of speaker
- But there is a major problem:
 - No two individuals make use of an identical set of rules and vocabulary when they speak.
 - US English vs. British English: words
 - gas/petrol
 - hood/bonnet
 - trunk/boot

- flashlight/torch
- sidewalk/pavement
- cookies/biscuits
- US English vs. British English: grammar
 - dive → dove/dive → dived
 - sneak → snuck/sneak → sneaked
 - get home → gotten home / get home → got home
 - Do you think Dressel will win again? He might. / Do you think Dressel will win again? He might do.
 - Chris is from L.A., right? / Jim's from London, innit?

The difference in American English

- The American Linguistic Atlas Project (mid 20thC)
- Example: “What do you call this insect”
 - Darning needle
 - Dragonfly

Conclusion

- We all have different, idiosyncratic ways of speaking to a certain extent.
- We all have our own, special ‘**idiolect**’.
- An idiolect is a unique, personalized way that each individual uses languages
- If a single, invariant set of rules is taken to define ‘English’ as a language, we must conclude that most people in the US and UK are NOT speakers of ‘English’.

The Mutual Intelligibility Hypothesis (MIH)

- An approach based on **mutual understanding** (or lack of it).
- Situation 1.

- If two speakers can understand each other when they speak ... then we can say these are two varieties of the same language.
- Situation 2.
 - If two speakers CAN NOT understand each other when they speak ... then we can say these are varieties of different languages.

But there are problems...

- Counter-examples to the MIH of two types:
- **Type 1:** 2+ varieties of speech are mutually intelligible, but are classified as different languages
 - Eastern Europe: Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian
 - Scandinavia: Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian
 - India: Hindi and Urdu
 - S.E Asia: Malay, Indonesian
- **Type 2:** 2+ varieties are mutually unintelligible, but are classified as varieties (dialects) of the same language.
 - Chinese: Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese, Shanghainese...
 - Madarian: wo bu zhi dao 我不知道
 - Cantonese: ngor m jii
 - Taiwanese: gwa m zai
 - Shanghainese: ngow va shotta
 - A similar case: Arabic
 - 'He will study.'
 - Morocco: yadi yeqra
 - Egypt: hayzakir
 - Lebanon: rah yidrus

Conclusion

- The MIH cannot account for real-world language-dialect divisions
- If varieties of speech are often not classified as 'languages' due to their linguistic properties, what factors do cause some varieties to be called 'languages' and others 'dialects'?
- **Socio-political factors.**
- Political events and situations in society lead to the formal recognition of certain varieties as languages, and others as dialects.

Example 1: Hindi and Urdu

- For a long time, the terms 'Hindi' and 'Urdu' were both used for the same way of speaking in north India
- 20thC anticipation of independence from Britain → politicization and polarization of the population along religious lines
- **'Hindi'** is used by **Hindu parties**. **'Urdu'** by the main **Muslim party**
- 1947 Independence. Partition into India and Pakistan.
- Pakistan declares Urdu its national language as a symbol of its Islamic identity.
- Hindi and Urdu are now both recognized as separate official languages of India.
- But when spoken colloquially, they are very close.
- Some differences in formal speech.
- **Hindi** creates a new 'high-end' vocabulary from **Sanskrit** words
- **Urdu** borrows formal words from **Arabic and Persian**
- **Hindi** is written in the **Devanagari script**
- **Urdu** is written in **Arabic script**
- But casual speech is as close as US and British English

Example 2: Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin

- 1946 unification of Balkan states as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
- General Tito declares that Serbs, Croats, and inhabitants of Bosnia and Montenegro all speak **a single language: 'Sebo-Croatian'**

- 1991 disintegration of Yugoslavia into separate states.
- Each state declares that its population speaks its own languages.
- Four languages are declared in place of one language.

Example 3: China

- Many mutually unintelligible varieties of speech, classed as dialects (方言) of a single language - 'Chinese'
- Cantonese, Mandarin, Xiang, Wu, Gan, Hokkien, Hakka
- Han Chinese people feel united by a long, shared cultural history, literature, and the same, single writing system.
- Political pressure from leadership not to class different varieties of 'Chinese' as separate languages.
- To discourage disparation.

Example 4: Ryukyuan

- Ryukyuan is mutually unintelligible to the Japanese.
- The Japanese leadership emphasized that Japan is a mono-ethnic, mono-cultural, mono-lingual nation.
- Ryukyuan is declared to be a dialect of Japanese.

A Language is a Dialect with an Army and a Navy

A famous saying about languages and dialects:

- "A language is a dialect with an army and a navy." (Max Weinreich)
- **Spain**: General Franco recognized Castilian Spanish as a language
 - Other varieties classified as dialects (e.g. Catalan, Galician)
 - Now: All regional varieties are referred to as languages
- **India**: Post-independence national census declared many regional languages to be just dialects of Hindi, for political reasons

Different classifications of languages and dialects

- The numbers of languages present in individual countries are often different in *linguistic surveys* and *official government reports*.
- The government often wishes to recognize fewer languages
- To downplay diversity + offer linguistic rights to fewer groups
- 2011 official census of India: 122 languages in India
- *Ethnologue* estimate: 447 languages in India
- Government of Mexico: 68 languages in Mexico
- *Ethnologue* estimate: 283 languages in Mexico

Dialects

Property 1.

- A dialect is a variety that is NOT recognized as a distinct language, but is related to some officially-recognized language - dialects are both similar to and different from some languages.
 - If someone says: "Budu is a dialect spoken in eastern Borneo.", you can ask: "What is it a dialect of?"
 - 'Language isolates' are not dialects.
 - Basque

Property 2.

- Variation in:
 - accent - pronunciation
 - vocabulary...
 - grammar
- Devon Dialect
 - Differences in pronunciation
 - onwiggler - irregular

- purtickly - particularly
- Differences in grammar
 - twadden - it was not
 - 'Us be proprt iggerant.' - 'We are really ignorant'
- Differences in vocabulary
 - clever - in good health
 - manful - powerful
 - grockle - tourist
 - nang - hit

Property 3.

- Dialects are commonly associated with a single geographical area/region.

Property 4.

- Linguists assume that the dialects of a language are all *mutually intelligible*, to a large degree.
- Non-linguists may group together varieties that are not mutually intelligible and call them dialects of a single language.

How do linguists identify and describe dialects?

- The work of 'dialect geographers'.
- These linguists may map out where different forms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar occur
- Example: the special features of SW British English
 - Where do people pronounce the 'r' sound in words like farm, car, and sir?
 - Where do people pronounce my as moi, and by as boi?
 - Where do people use words like nang and grockle?
 - Where do people use us in place of we?

Mapping the variables

- Boundary lines marking the distribution of dialect variables are known as '**isoglosses**'
- Adding the distribution of moi/boi for my/by; etc.

Dialect boundaries

- Some isoglosses may not line up fully with others, causing a more fuzzy dialect boundary
- Dialect boundaries are typically most clear/strong when there is some major geographical feature that separates neighboring populations.
- Sometimes, dialects seem to blend into each other, and it is hard to identify where one dialect ends and another dialect begins
- This phenomenon is called a '**dialect continuum**'.
 - Linking the **Slavic languages** of Western Europe:
 - Czech - Slovak - Polish - Ukrainian - Belorussian - Russian
 - Linking the **Romance language** area of western Europe:
 - Portugal - Spain - France - south Belgium

Extreme Dialect Forms

- Some isolated sentences in dialects can be hard to understand if many special features are all used at the same time.
 - Devon English
 - Nang ee on ee ed an eave ee in ee edge
 - 'h' is dropped (a lot)
 - no distinct forms for 'he/him/his', all 'he'
 - special vocabulary: eave = 'throw', nang = 'hit'
 - 'Hit him on his head and throw him in the hedge.'
 - But most of the time, the Devon dialect can be understood by outsiders

Three kinds of non-regional dialect

- **Religious dialects**
 - People with different religions speak the same language in different ways.
 - 20thC Baghdad: Muslim, Christian, and Jewish dialects of Iraqi Arabic
- **Social Dialects**
 - People from different social groups speak the same language in different ways.
 - India: Hindu caste group speaking Gujarati differently
 - Ethnic dialects
- **Ethnic dialects**
 - early Italian American immigrants, African American Vernacular English

Styles and Registers

- All speakers use their language in different ways sometimes – formal and informal **styles** of speaking.
- The type of speech used in a specific activity/job is called a '**register**'.
 - Livestock, commodities auctioneers
 - Sports commentators (horse-racing)
 - Elevator operators in department stores in Japan
 - TV/radio commercials highlighting the positive and negative properties of a product (esp. medical products)

Factors influencing shifts in style

- **The participants.**
 - Who is speaking, and who are they talking to?
- **The setting.**
 - Where is the conversation take place?
- **The topic.**

- What is being talked about?
- **The function of speech.**
 - Why are people talking?

Relations between participants

- **Solidarity.**
 - How close we are to other people we are speaking to.
 - More informal language to our friends/family, more formal and 'distant' styles with people we don't know well.
 - Pronounce for 'you' in Spanish (tu vs. Usted), German (du vs. Sie), Hindi (tu vs. tum vs. app).
- **Power.**
 - May cause special styles of language – talking with a company boss, a priest, a member of royalty.
 - E.g. use of special verb forms in Japanese/Korean to express respect.

Referential and affective communication

- Language is regularly used to convey information to others – **referential communication**.
 - News programs, documentaries, scientific discussions, and weather reports are all very high in their referential content.
- Another frequent use of language is for **affective purposes** – to initiate, maintain, and strengthen our social relations.
 - **Greetings** and **small talk** are used for affective purposes and convey little or no information. They are often culture-specific and sound odd when 'translated' into other language settings.
 - British people talk about the weather a lot, but they aren't really giving information, just using this topic for affective purposes.
 - Chinese people may greet each other with the question 'Have you eaten yet?', but this is not asking for real information (the reply should always be 'Yes.')

- Here in the US. people also greet each other with questions that don't really ask for information