

Introduction to the Study of Language

-Ling 1-
Fall 2020

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Clarification point

- Readings, i.e. case studies
 - goal of the readings: provide you with more concrete research examples of what is discussed in the recorded classes
 - you should read them carefully
 - and try to relate what you read to the contents of the recorded lectures
 - you do not need to memorize them

A few points from last week (1/2)

About Language

- We all have high-level grammatical insights without even being aware of it.
- These grammatical insights are described by linguists.
- **Linguistics** is the scientific field that scientifically studies language.
- Language is a cognitive faculty and can be expressed by speakers in **multimodal dimensions**
 - **Sign Languages (SLs)** =
SLs provide some of the best evidence of a ‘universal’ language device

A few points from last week (2/2)

About Languages

- We live in a **multilingual** world
 - Bilingualism / Multilingualism
 - Language diversity
 - Diglossia = same speaker using two languages in two distinct social occasion, one formal and the other informal.

Roadmap of today's lecture

- 60 minute in total
- at the end, I will leave 10 minutes for you to ask questions
- you can ask question
 - by raising hand and speak up
 - by writing in the **chat** (see next slide)

❖ How do languages vary?

The Zoom Chat: how do we use it?

- Neither the TAs nor I are going to be able to answer questions you post in the chat while I deliver the lecture.
- Answers to the questions you ask to your classmates in the chat **cannot be validated** by the Ling 1 team due to time constraints.
- At the end of each live lecture I, the instructor, will answer questions from you either when you:
 - ask orally using the raise-hand button
 - send **me** a **private** chat message

I'll give you
one incontrovertible truth about languages:

LANGUAGES VARY

Two parameters of language variation

- I. space/place
- II. time / age

I. space / place

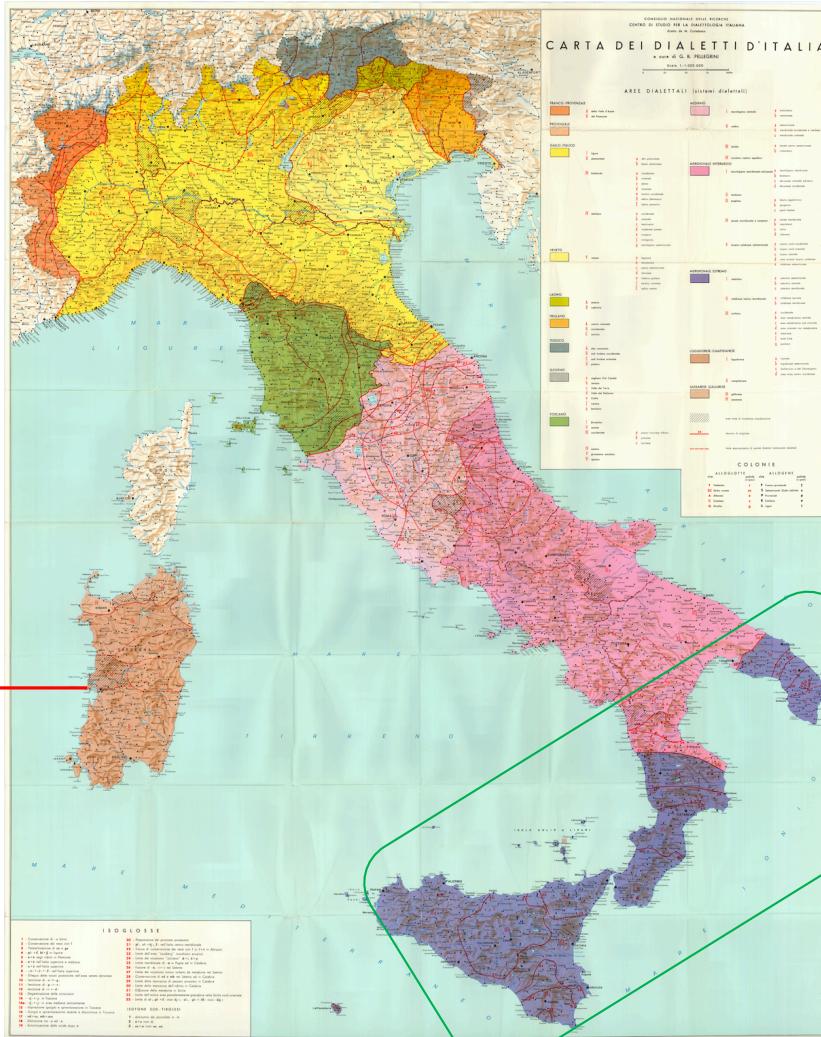
Space / Place

- Regional differences are something everybody acknowledges
- There are differences at any level of language use
 - For example, British vs. American English

Why do regional/local differences develop?

- Different places/varieties established by **people** from different places, backgrounds, varieties
- **Barriers** to interaction let each variety develop in its own way (or avoid changes that happen elsewhere)
- Different varieties are in **contact** with different other languages or varieties
- This is easier to understand by looking at actual examples ➔

Italo-Romance varieties



Sardinian varieties are different from the rest of Italo-Romance varieties.

WHY?

Carta dei Dialetti d'Italia
(Pellegrini, 1977)

The varieties of the extreme south of Italy are different from the rest of the dialects spoken in the Peninsula.

WHY?

II. time / age

II. time / age

- Languages vary in time
 - the same language shows remarkable differences based on the time (centuries) of attestation
- The way the speakers speak changes in a lifetime

Old and contemporary Italian

Italian - end of 1200	Ella	non	parea	figliuola	d'uomo	mortale	ma	di Deo ¹
	she	not	looked	daughter	of man	mortal	but	of God
Italian - 2020	Lei	non	sembrava	la figlia	di un	mortale	ma	di un dio
	she	not	looked	the daughter	of a	mortal	but	of a god

‘She did not look like a mortal’s daughter, but a God’s.’

¹ Dante, *La vita nova*, II

field of investigation: historical linguistics

Variation and Change

- We do not change our language overnight
 - We all use both old and new forms together for a while
 - Some of us use old form, some use new
- So *change* over time is reflected in *variation* at any single time point...
 - BUT not all variation is part of a change!
 - Some variation is *stable*, sticks around for centuries

Time and Age

- What does it mean if people of different ages speak differently?
 - We have two possibilities.

Possibility 1: *age grading*

- There are stable ways of talking based on our age
 - When today's younger people will age, they'll adopt older generation ways of speaking
- These *changes across the lifespan* could be due to different changes in life (for ex., entering the workforce)

field of investigation: sociolinguistics

Possibility 2: *Apparent time hypothesis*

- People born in 1930 reflect a 1930s way of talking, people born in 1990 reflect a 1990s way
 - This assumes that the way we speak is more or less steady throughout our lives
- Comparing generations lets us see change as it happens
- **What does this mean for linguistics?**
 - we can study **change while it happens!**

field of investigation: sociolinguistics

Language variation: Sign Languages (1/3)

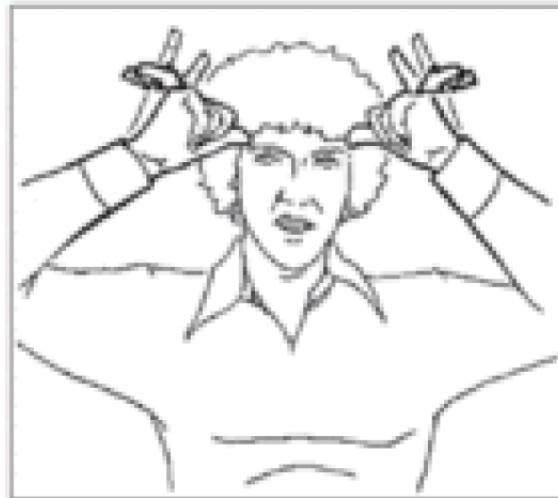
- Sign Languages (SLs)
 - fully developed human languages
 - languages of deaf communities
 - express meanings and convey grammatical features through a **visual-gestural system** (body, hands, facial gestures)
- Universality confirmed!
 - despite the **different modality** in which meanings and grammar are expressed, SLs confirm that language is a **biological ability** and a **cognitive faculty** acquired by **all human beings**

(See pp. 15-16 of our textbook)

Language variation: Sign Languages (2/3)

American Sign Language (ASL) varies from **place** to place: e.g. *cow*

- Two-handed *vs* one-handed variants of the ASL sign *cow*.



Used more by signers of southern regions of US.

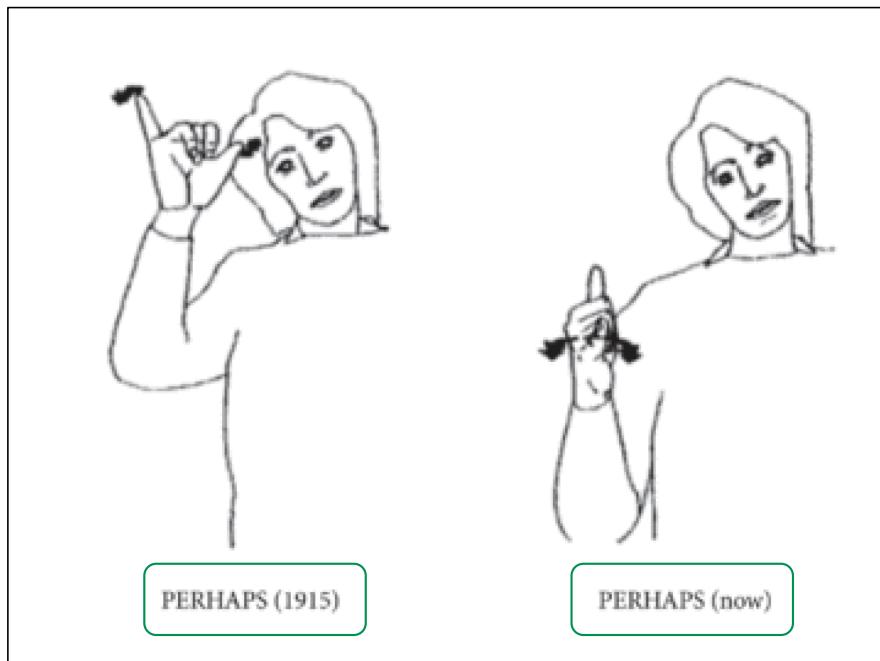


Used more by signers of other regions of US.

(Woodward J. C., & DeSantis S. 1977. Two to one it happens: Dynamic phonology in two sign languages.
Sign Language Studies 17 : 329-346.)

Language variation: Sign Languages (3/3)

Change in **time** in British Sign Language (BSL): *perhaps*



(Kyle J., & Woll B. 1985. *Sign language: the study of deaf people and their language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)
22

I will see you next Wednesday -
what can we do in the meanwhile?

- Do the readings:
 - *An Introduction to Language*, pp. 269-290
 - *Spoken Soul*, pp. 203-207, Baugh
 - *A Moral Panic in Oakland*, Lippi-Green
- Homework 1 due on Sunday 10/18
- Homework 2 posted on Sunday 10/18
- If you could not attend this class, you will have to take a small quiz to gain attendance
 - quiz opens tomorrow morning (10/15) and closes on Sunday (10/18)

STAY SAFE

- Tips on how to proceed every week?

I suggest you take the following **6 steps** in this order:

1. Go through the **readings**.
2. Watch the recorded **lectures** and take detailed notes.
3. Take a look at the **quizzes** to see if you understand all the questions (before completing them).
4. Attend the **live** lecture.
5. Attend the live **discussion** sections.
6. Complete and submit your **assignments**.