

Introduction to the Study of Language

-Ling 1-
Fall 2020

Giuseppina Silvestri

g.silvestri@ucla.edu

Week 1 - October 7, 2020

Welcome to Ling 1 from

- Giuseppina (> Giusi > Giu [dʒu])
- Maura
- Andy
- Anissa
- Gabriel
- Matthew
- Phil
- Harold
- Russel

Roadmap for today's lecture

- 60 minute in total
 - highlights from the **syllabus**
 - 5 minutes break (I will read a couple of questions you post of the chat and try to reply)

❖ **Why study language?**

Highlights from the syllabus

- structure of the weeks
- attendance
- homework assignments
 - analysis papers
- exams with *Respondus*
- experimental credit
- email policy
- **Part B**

The language instinct

We humans, all of us, are all capable of
intuitions about language.

WHY?

Let's start from the words:

Linguistics and *Language*

< *lingua* = Latin 'language' and 'tongue'

Cf.: Italian *lingua*, French *langue*,
Spanish *lengua*, Portuguese *língua*,
Romanian *limba*

The science of the human faculty of language



Ferdinand de Saussure (1853-1917): “Place de la Langue dans les faits de Language”.
Cours de Linguistique Generale, (Paris: Editions Payot&Rivage, 1972), 27-28.

Some key words you are going to hear in our class:

sounds

structures

meaning

perception

articulation

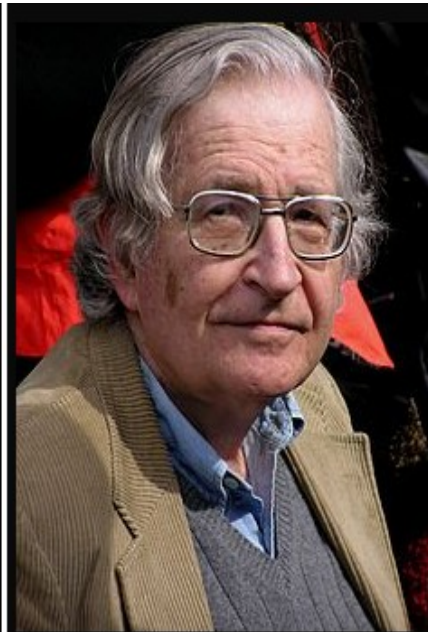
processing

variation

rules

grammar

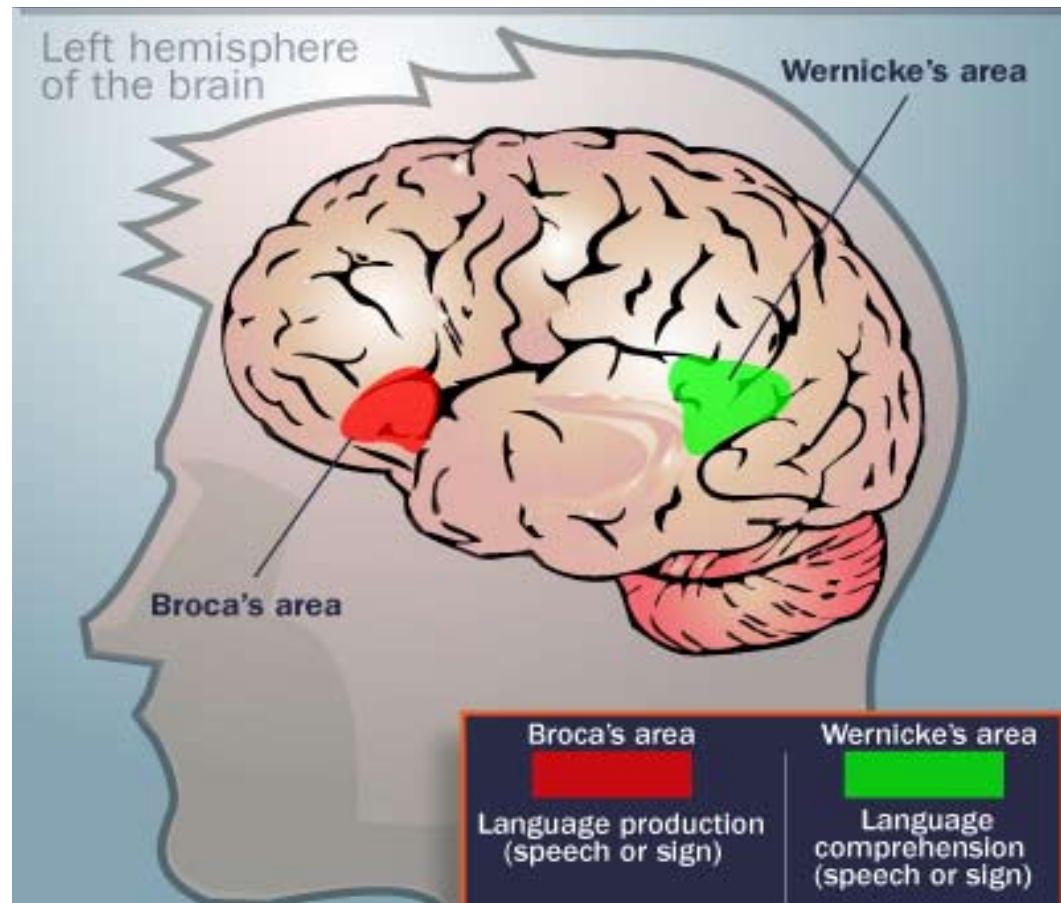
Language: the turn of the 1950s



Human language appears to be a unique phenomenon, without significant analogue in the animal world.

(Noam Chomsky)

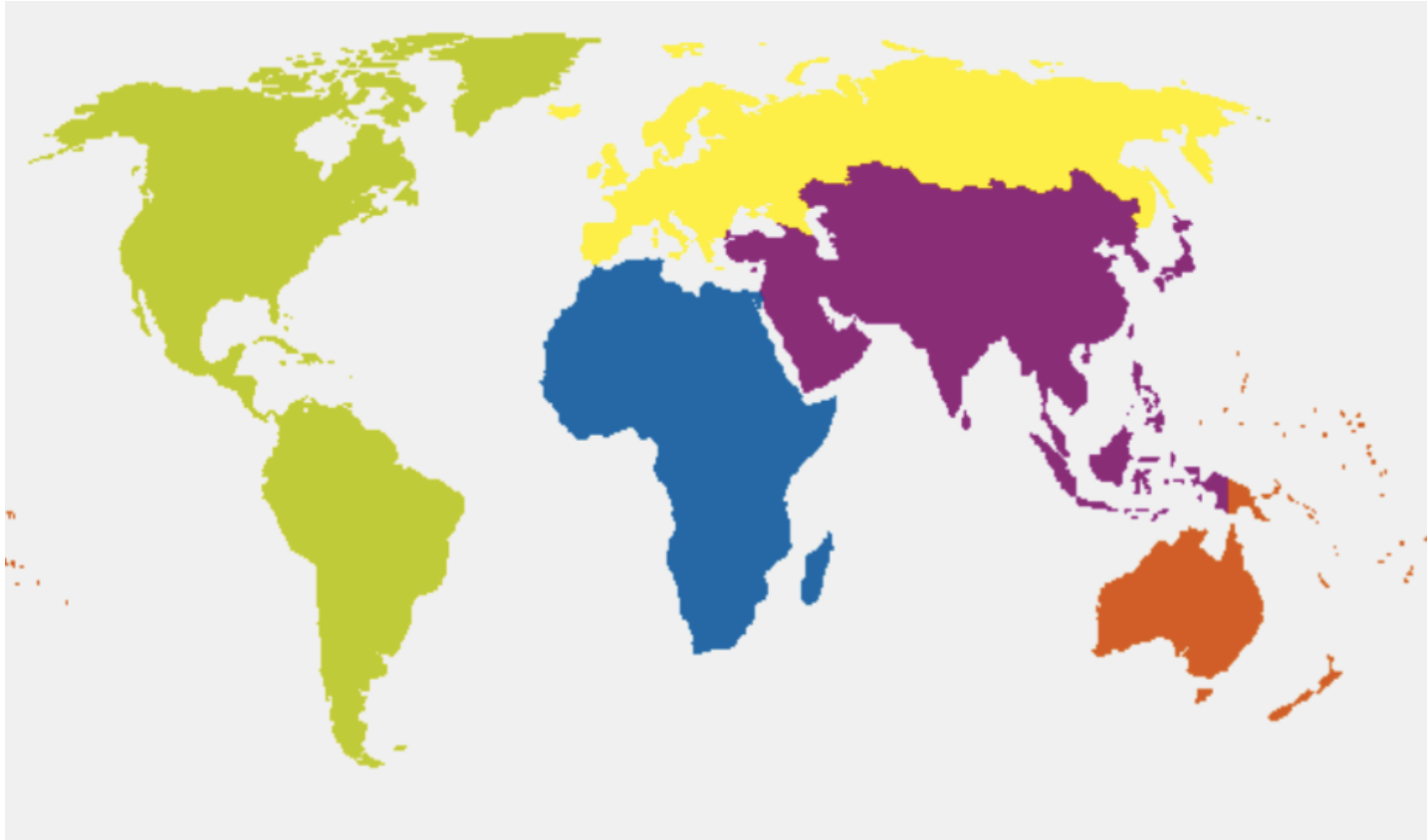
Only **one language**
for all human species



One language?

Many languages?

How many *human* languages?

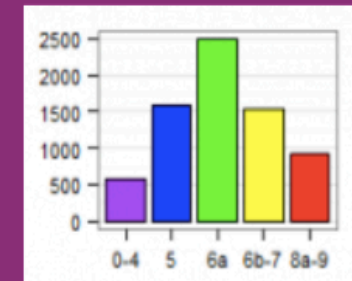


source: **ethnologue.com**

World

Population 7,106,865,254

Living Languages 7,102



Institutional: 578, Developing: 1,598,
Vigorous: 2,479, In Trouble: 1,531,
Dying: 916

For categories, see [Development](#)
and [Endangerment](#) above.

From **one** to **many**

- **One** human cognitive **faculty**
- **Many** languages **spoken** in the world

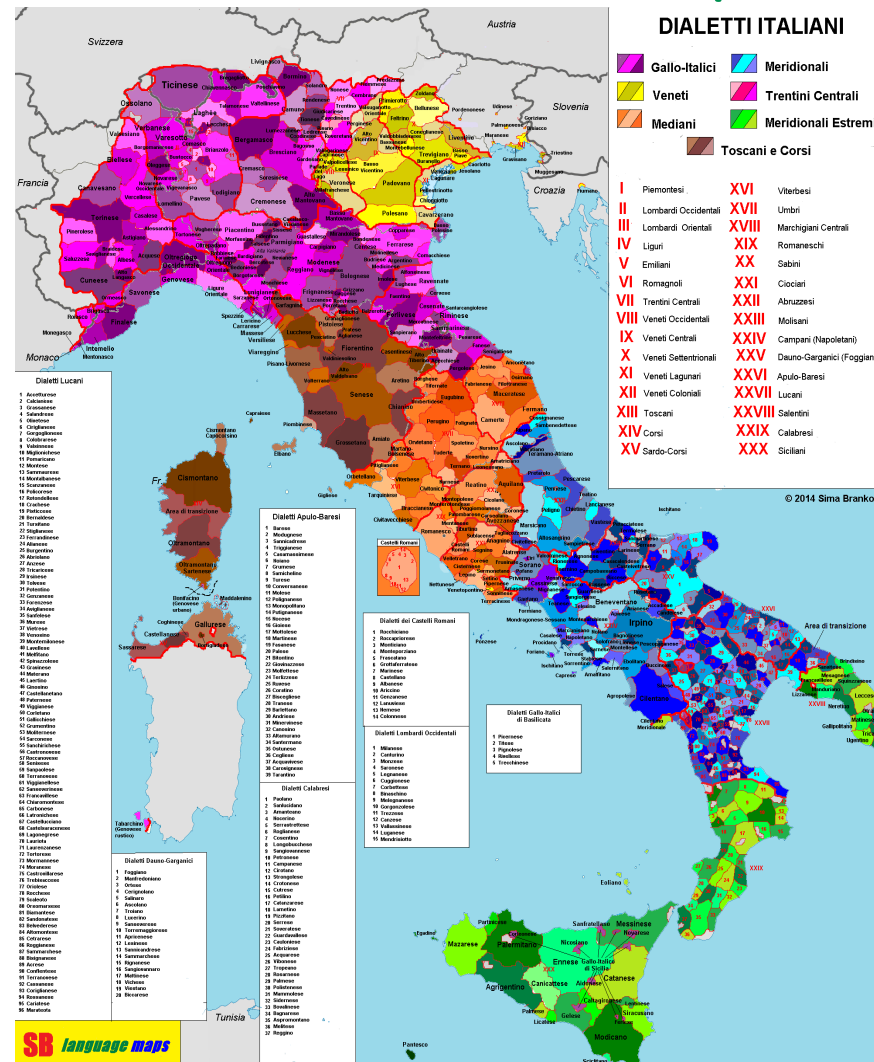
Introducing a case study: **Italy** and its linguistic landscape

Let's think about this statement:

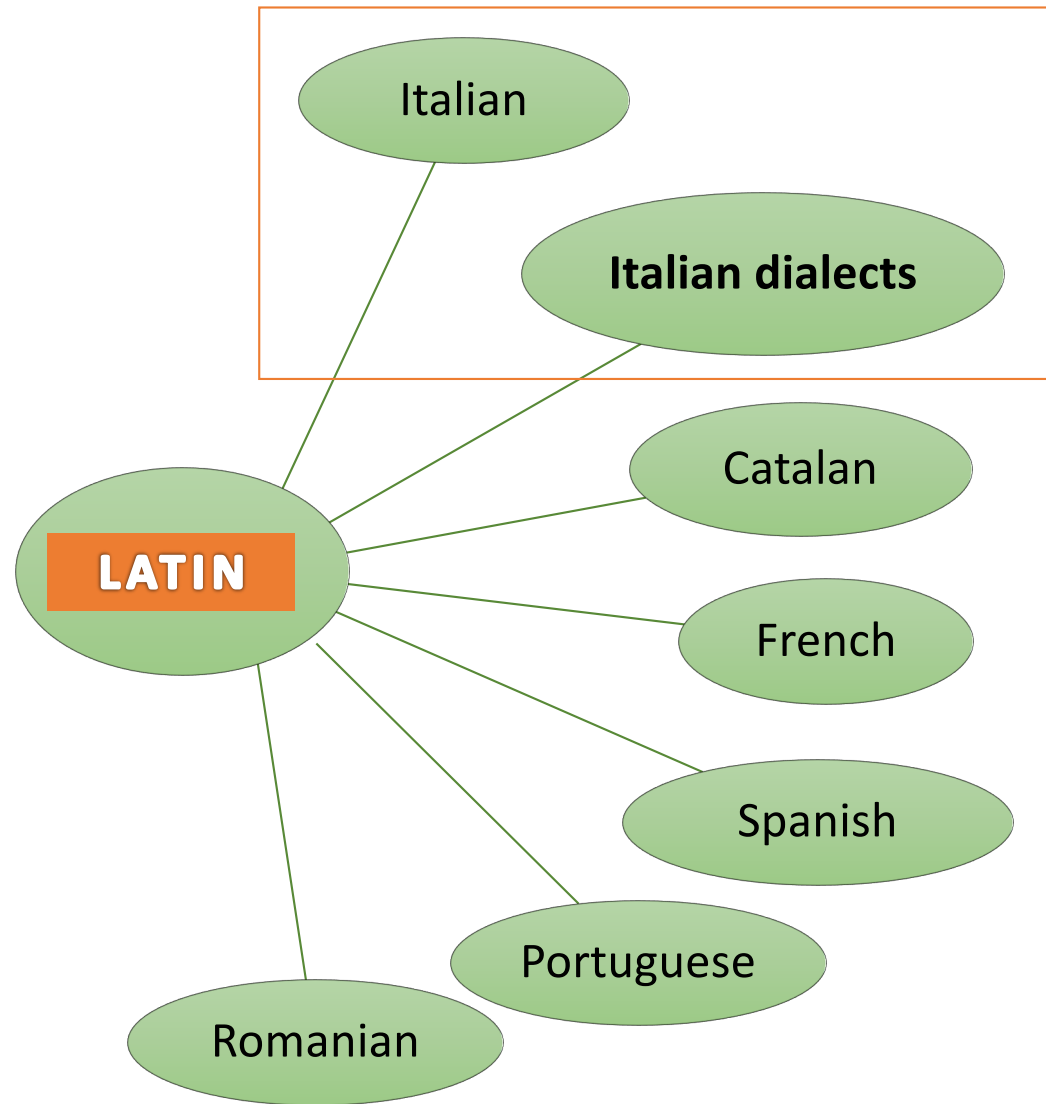
“The language of Italy is Italian.”

Do you think it is correct?

Italo-Romance varieties (=called 'dialects')



DIGLOSSIA
can describe well enough the linguistic situation in Italy



Diglossia

- Occurs In situations of longstanding **societal bi-/multi-lingualism**
- Two (or more) languages: **High (H)** and **Low (L)**, used by virtually everybody in the society
- Examples:
 - Standard and local Arabic in Morocco
 - French and Creole in Haiti
 - Standard Italian and Neapolitan in Naples

High (H) language and Low (L) language

- The two languages have different **domains**
= different contexts of use
- Speakers do not mix languages

High (H) language

- In formal domains
 - classroom lectures
 - formal religious rituals
 - literature
 - office
 - government, law,
 - newspaper editorials
 - TV news
- Used to talk to strangers, bosses, teachers
- Largely school-learned

Low (L) language

- In informal domains
 - home
 - schoolyard
 - market
 - street
 - newspaper cartoons
 - jokes
- used to talk to family, close friends, and supervisees
- Informally acquired

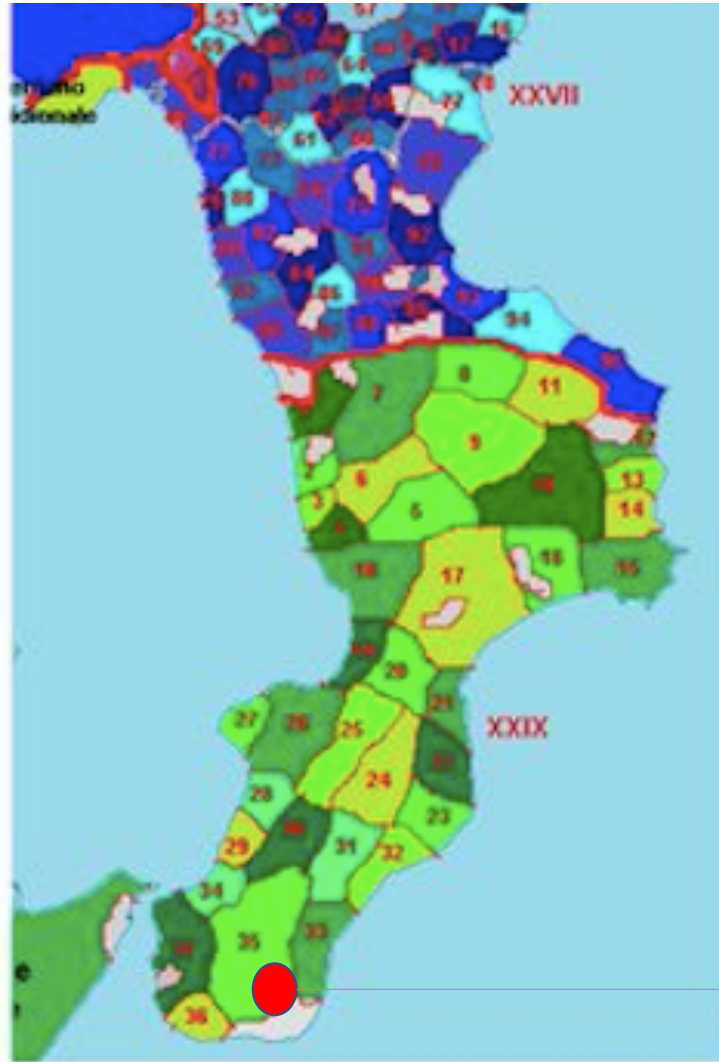
Diglossia =

functionally-determined language choice

Calabria

what languages?

Greek-Romance
language contact



upper southern
Italian dialects

Offspring of
Latin

extreme southern
Italian dialects

Greek-speaking area

“The **languages** of the world
differ in many obvious ways.
But at the same time,
they are also strikingly
similar.”

Trying to understand this tension between
language **diversity** and **identity**
is one the most fruitful research agendas of
*modern **linguistic theory***”.

(Ritter-Wiltschko 2009)

Knowledge of a language

- Knowledge of its **sound** system
- Knowledge of **words**
 - meanings of words
 - forms of words
- Knowledge of **sentences**

GRAMMAR

Grammar: what do we mean?

- The **knowledge** that speakers have about modules, units, and rules of their language(s)
- Such knowledge is usually **unconscious**.
- Grammar is one component of linguistic knowledge
- The other one is a mental dictionary we all have built in our brain and mind, called *lexicon*

So... Why study language?
 What is the study of language?

- The questions that we try to ask and answer when we study language concur to answer the ultimate questions about **human beings**.
- **Linguistics** is the scientific field that studies language.

- 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**.

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

- Do the reading: *An Introduction to Language*, pp. 1-16
- Homework 1 posted on Sunday 10/11 (due on 10/18)
- If you could not attend this class synchronously, you will have to take a small quiz to gain attendance.
 - quiz opens tomorrow morning (10/8) and closes on Sunday (10/11)
- **STAY SAFE**