

Variation and language

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Variables and variants

- A **variable** is a *linguistic feature* that varies according to some category or dimension. A **variant** is a *specific instantiation of a variable* in the language of an individual.
- Example: 나_도 vs. 나_두 ‘*me too*’
 - What is the **variable**?
 - What are the **variants**?
 - How many variants are there?

(Un)constrained variables

- What about the pronunciation of “ㄷ” /t/?
 - 당근 ‘carrot’ [t̚aŋɡɪn]
 - 자두 ‘plum’ [t̚aɗu]
 - 먹다 ‘eat’ [mɐk̚t̚a]
- Does the pronunciation of “ㄷ” /t/ also vary? What determines the pronunciation of “ㄷ” /t/ in these words?
 - These different pronunciations are called realizations.
- The realization of “ㄷ” /t/ is constrained. The appearance of these different realizations is *completely* predictable.

(Un)constrained variables

- The variable here is not just “나도” vs. “나두”. Are there other examples of variation between /o/ and /u/?
 - 우징어
 - 두서관
 - 구려대
 - 내일 부자!
- If the appearance of different variants is random, we say they are in **free variation**. This means we *cannot* predict when they will occur.

Envelope of variation

- As linguistic research has advanced, it has become increasingly clear that truly free variation does not really exist. The appearance of individual variants is never *truly* random.
- The set of contexts in which a variant occurs is called the **envelope of variation**.

Regional vs. social dialectology

- **Regional dialectology** is the study of how variants differ from region to region.
- **Social dialectology** is the study of how variants differ according to “speakers’ participation or membership in social groups, or in relation to other non-linguistic factors.”
- “Dialect” or “variety”?

Stereotypes and markers

- A linguistic **stereotype** is a feature of a dialect that speakers are widely aware of and frequently comment on. Stereotypes are what people typically use to describe or impersonate (or mock) the dialect.
- A linguistic **marker** (or **indicator**) is also a feature of a dialect, but one that speakers are less aware of and may not comment on.
- Do stereotypes always reflect linguistic reality?

Homework

- Send me an email if you haven't already (instructions are at the end of the syllabus, which can be found on Blackboard).
- Read Meyerhoff Ch. 2
 - Focus on pp. 10-13 ("variables and variants") and 26-29 ("stereotypes, markers, and indicators")
- You may get a head start on Meyerhoff Ch. 3 if you'd like