

Part IA Sociolinguistics and Dialectology

Lecture 1: Introduction

1. Outline of lectures

1. Introduction to sociolinguistics and dialectology
2. Dialects and regional variation
3. Language and social class
4. Language and gender

2. Sociolinguistics and dialectology

Sociolinguists study the **variation** in language and attempt to diagnose factors **motivating** the variation. They also identify and analyse **awareness** of variation amongst speakers and their reactions to it. Dialectology is a sub-category of sociolinguistics.

Today we will introduce some of the variation found in Greek and Latin, and consider how the Greeks and Romans talked about this variation.

3. Which of the following texts are in Greek, which in Latin, which neither?

- (1) ti-mo-ku-po-ro-se o-ti-mo-ke-re-te-o-se e-pe-se-ta-se ki-li-ka-wi to-i ka-si-ke-ne-to-i
- (2) εβολασετυ αδριουνα καταστασ[αι ισαγε]ραι ε ηικαι μηειαλετι και εφιεωοται
- (3) ιος τα μανκαι κακουν αδδακετ, τι ετιτ[τ]ετικμενος ειτου
- (4) τας ταγας κοινενειντουν τεν παντα χρονεν
- (5) ματρεβο γλανεικαβο βρατουδεκαντεν
- (6) Τί λέγι; Γοργόνος πέρι τὸ γραμματέο σὺ τῆ κεπαλή;
- (7) σκριψι μη ακκηπισσε α Τιτω [...] δηναριους σεσκεντους βιγεντι
- (8) *quisquis ama valia peria qui nosci amare*
- (9) *ίνίμ. λίγατύίς. abellan[ύίς] ίνίμ. λίγατύίς. núvlanύίς πύς. senateίς. tanginúd suveίς.*
- (10) *in hoce loucarid stircus ne quis fundatid neue cadauer proiecitad neue parentatid*
- (11) *topper citi ad aedis venimus Circai*
- (12) *foied,uino.pipafo.cra.carefo*
- (13) *duenos med feced en manom einom duenoi ne med malos tatod*

4. Towards some definitions

- **Idiolect:** The language of an individual.
- **Language:** Any variety of speech considered by its speakers to be a distinct language.
- **Dialect:** A set of idiolects that share a significant set of linguistic and other features (region, class, gender, etc.).
- **Variety:** Any kind of language that we wish for some purpose to consider as a single entity. Speech that differs from another only in pronunciation could be termed a separate variety. Can also be used to replace the terms 'language' and 'dialect'.
- **Register:** Different varieties applicable for different uses: e.g. formal, academic, medical.

5. Ancient terminology for languages/dialects

- **Greek terminology for language and dialect:**
 - γλῶσσα / γλῶττα = 'language, dialect, foreign language'
 - φωνή = 'speech, dialect, accent, language, foreign language'
 - διάλεκτος = 'discourse, language, dialect'
 - βαρβαρίζω = to speak a different language
 - ξενίζω = speak a different dialect (Demosthenes 57.18)
 - ἐλληνίζειν = 'to speak Greek' (Thucydides 2.68)
 - Ἑλλάς γλῶσσα = 'the Greek language' (Herodotus 6.98)
- **Latin terminology for language and dialect:**
 - lingua* = 'language, dialect'
 - uox* = 'voice, language, dialect'
 - oratio* = 'speech, language, dialect'
 - lingua Latina* = 'Latin'

6. Idiolects

Idiolects have plenty of variation within them.

This is because all individuals vary their language based on the context.

Register variation

- Register variation may show different lexical items, as well as different choice of verb forms (e.g. passive vs. active) and other structures.
- An example from the Latin lexicon:
 - stercus* 'excrement': formal term, used in Laws, high prose
 - fimus* 'dung, manure': originally agricultural term, Pliny the Elder
 - merda* 'shit': more colloquial, Martial, inscriptions
 - **caca* 'poo, shit': not attested directly but probably part of spoken language

Your idiolect also interacts with your idea of the “standard language”, the language of government, education, etc. Some people are more fluent in the standard than others.

7. Age variation

- Sometimes it can be quite clear to us that older people speak differently from younger people.
- All languages change over time; if we take a ‘snapshot’ of the language at any given moment, older and younger people speak differently because of the changes that are currently in progress.
- Older people often claim that their speech is closer to the standard language and punish variation away from their standard.
- Young people’s language can often be policed as “slang” or “non-standard”.

8. Ancient attitudes to language variation

Were the Greek dialects **mutually comprehensible**?

- ἀλλὰ τί οἶει, ἔφη, λέγειν, ὃ Σώκρατες, Σιμωνίδην ἄλλο ἢ τοῦτο, καὶ ὀνειδίζειν τῷ Πιττακῷ ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα οὐκ ἠπίστατο ὀρθῶς διαιεῖν ἅτε Λέσβιος ὢν καὶ **ἐν φωνῇ βαρβάρῳ** τεθραμμένος;

‘Well, Socrates, he said, what else do you think Simonides meant? Was he not reproaching Pittacus for not knowing how to distinguish words correctly, Lesbian as he was, and nurtured **in a foreign tongue**?’ (Plato *Protagoras* 341c).

- Εὐρυτᾶσιν, ὅπερ μέγιστον μέρος ἐστὶ τῶν Αἰτωλῶν, **ἀγνωστότατοι δὲ γλῶσσαν** καὶ ὠμοφάγοι εἰσὶν, ὡς λέγονται.

‘Eurytians, who form the largest tribe of the Aetolians, and are (they say) **the most unintelligible in language** and eaters of raw-flesh.’ (Thucydides 3.94).

- ὥσπερ οὖν ἂν, εἰ τῷ ὄντι ξένος ἐτύγχανον ὢν, συνεγιγνώσκετε δήπου ἂν μοι εἰ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ **φωνῇ** τε καὶ τῷ **τρόπῳ** ἔλεγον ἐν οἷσπερ ἐτεθράμμην

[Socrates begs forgiveness for his ignorance of the correct expressions to be used in a law-court, and hopes he will be forgiven] ‘Just as you would, of course, forgive me if I were really a stranger, and I spoke in that **accent** and **manner** in which I was brought up.’ (Plato *Apology* 17d)

What about a sense of 'Greekness' and 'Greek'?

- αὐτίς δὲ τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἔδον ὁμαιμόν τε καὶ ὁμόγλωσσον καὶ θεῶν ἰδρύματά τε κοινὰ καὶ θυσίαι ἤθεά τε ὁμότροπα

'Greekness is common descent and language, and the shared worship of the gods and sacrifices and customs being made in the same way...' (Herodotus 8.144)

How did the Romans react to variation?

- *Mestrium Florum consularem, admonitus ab eo **plaustra** potius quam **plostra**, dicenda, postero die **Flaurum** salutavit.* (Suetonius *Vesp.* 22)

'Vespasian was rebuked by Maestrius Florus for saying *plostra* rather than *plaustra*, so the next day he greeted him as Flaurus.'

8. Further reading (* for particularly helpful reading)

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*Willi, A. 2010. 'Register variation' in E. J. Bakker (ed.) *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language* (Oxford): 297-310