

Part IA Sociolinguistics and Dialectology

Lecture 2: Dialects and Regional Variation

1. Regional variation

- Language variation over different regions has been widely recognised since antiquity. Serious study began in the nineteenth century and is therefore more detailed than many other aspects of sociolinguistics, which really began as a discipline in the 1960s.
- ‘Dialect’ is used by most non-linguists to mean ‘regional variety of language’ (though cf. our definition).
- Often dialects are viewed as deviations from the norm, usually a Standard Language, though established dialectal varieties *can* have prestige, as in ancient Greece.
- In England many ‘traditional’ dialects of English (Yorkshire dialect, ‘Potteries’ in Stoke-on-Trent, traditional Cockney, etc) are now mainly restricted to older speakers (especially NORMs—non-mobile older rural males) and are under threat. But regional variety is still very much alive.
- Traditional dialects of English are being replaced by ‘modern dialects’ or ‘sociolects’ (social dialects), e.g. Estuary English. These are often under-recognised, associated with young people only or stigmatized, just as the more traditional dialects were stigmatized by previous generations.

2. Key terms in dialectology

Dialect geography

Linguistic variable

Isogloss

Dialectal boundary

Archaism and Innovation

Isogloss bundle

Dialectal continuum

Focal areas and relic areas

www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/regional-voices/

www.bbc.co.uk/voices

3. Dialects in Latin

- *Latinitas est incorrupta loquendi obseruatio secundum Romanam linguam*

‘*Latinitas* is the attention to correct speech according to the language of Rome.’ (Varro, *de Lingua Latina*)

- There is limited evidence for regional dialects in Latin, though they certainly existed, and eventually resulted in the different Romance languages. In order to attempt to reconstruct a picture, **all** the available evidence must be used: literary texts, non-literary texts (e.g. letters), inscriptions, *testimonia* from ancient authors.

- Examples of possible regional variation in Republican Latin:
 - *orata genus appellatur piscis a colore auri, quod rustici orum dicebant, ut auriculas oriculas*

'*orata* is a type of fish so called because of its colour, gold, which the *rustici* used to call *orum*, as in the case of the pair *oriculae* for *auriculae*.' (Festus (2nd century AD) 196L)
 - *Praenestinis 'conea' est ciconia*

'For the Praenestines, a stork (*ciconia*) is called a *conea*' (Plautus *Truculentus* 691). Cf. also *filea* in an inscription from Praeneste.
- As the Empire got bigger, more authors start to comment on 'regional' accents and vocabulary.
 - *uenerat tum nobiscum ad eandem cenam Antonius Iulianus rhetor, docendis publice iuuenibus magister, Hispano ore florentisque homo facundiae et rerum litterarumque ueterum peritus.* (Aulus Gellius 19.9.2)

'There had come with us on that occasion to the same dinner the orator Antonius Julianus, a professional teacher of young men, a man with a Spanish accent, of brilliant eloquence and learned in ancient history and literature.'
 - *canorus uoce, sed Afrum quiddam usque ad senectutem sonans* (Historia Augusta, Septimius Severus 19.9)

'[The emperor was] tuneful in voice, but sounding somewhat African right up into old age.'

4. Dialects in Greek

- In **Greek** some dialects are associated with literary genres.
 - **Ionic:** Epic Poetry, Historiography, Medical works
πρήσσοι, μήτηρ, Μοῦσα, εἰμί

Hesiod, Homer (essentially archaic eastern Ionic but with Aeolic and other features not characteristic of any one particular dialect), Herodotus, Hippocrates
 - **Attic:** Tragedy, Comedy, Historiography, Oratory
πράσσοι or πράττουσι, μήτηρ, Μοῦσα, εἰμί

Note that Tragedy and Historiography favour slightly different (more Ionicising) varieties of Attic to Comedy, Oratory and Plato:

Sophocles, Euripides, Thucydides : πράσσοι

Aristophanes, Lysias, Plato : πράττουσι

- **Doric:** Choral Lyric, some Comedy and Prose, choruses in Tragedy
πρασσοντι, ματηρ, Μωσα, ήμι

Alcman, Pindar, Epicharmus, Archimedes

- **Aeolic:** Personal Lyric (monody)
πρασσοισι, ματηρ, Μοισα, έμμι
Sappho, Alcaeus

- **The Greek Epichoric Dialects: Some Isoglosses**

- Non-literary dialects recorded in inscriptions and other sources (e.g. Aristophanes' Comedies) are termed 'epichoric'.
- Epichoric dialects are now grouped as: Attic-Ionic, Arcado-Cypriot, Aeolic, Doric and North West Greek

1) Choice of -μες or -μεν as 1st plural verb ending.
East Greek λύομεν but West Greek λυομες

2) Change of *-τι > -σι.
Attic-Ionic, Arcado-Cypriot, (some) Aeolic
Hence Attic λύουσι but West Greek λυοντι
From original *λυοντι (compare Latin 3rd pl. ending -unt).

3) Change of original -ᾱ > η
Only Attic-Ionic

3) Change of original -ρσ- > -ρρ- (ἄρρην, θάρρος)
Attic, not Ionic, but some other neighbouring dialects

5. Features of Laconian / Messenian (dialect of Sparta)

- **Phonetic**
 - i) ᾱ < *ā where Attic-Ionic has η
 - ii) ε > ι before ο and ω
 - iii) η ω from 'lengthened' *e *o where Attic has ει ου
 - iv) -h- for -σ-
 - v) θ > spirant, sometimes written σ
 - vi) initial ɸ (*digamma*) kept. Lost early in Attic-Ionic.
 - vii) Retains -τι
 - viii) apocope (loss of unstressed vowel at the end) in κάτ, κά, πότ, πό, πάρ, πέρ

- **Morphological**
 - i) 1st plural -μες instead of -μεν
 - ii) τοι ται (not οὐ αὐ) nom. plural of article
 - iii) verbs in -ζω have aorist in -ξα (not -σα)
- **Lexical**
 - λεω 'I wish'; μολειν/ένθειν 'to come'; καλα 'fleet', lit. 'logs';
 - αὐ for εἰ 'if'; κα for ἄν.
- **Some examples of Spartan dialect**

a) Xenophon *Hell.* 1.1.23 (Spartan general Hippocrates' letter)

ἔρρει τὰ κᾶλα. Μίνδαρος ἀπεσσύα. πεινῶντι τῶνδρες ἀπορίομες τί χρῆ δρᾶν
'Ships are lost. Mindaros died. The men are hungry. Don't know what to do.'

Note τὰ κᾶλα; πεινῶντι; τῶνδρες; ἀπορίομες

b) Spartan Ambassador in Aristophanes (*Lysistrata* 1080-1)

ἄφατα. τί κα λέγοι τις; ἀλλ' ὄπα σέλει, παντᾶ τις ἐλσῶν ἀμὶν εἰράναν σέτω
'Terrible. What can anyone say? But let anyone who comes make peace with us
however he wants.'

Note κα; σέλει, ἐλσῶν, σέτω for θέλει, ἐλθῶν, θέτω

6. Further Reading (* for particularly helpful reading)

Adams, J. N. 2007. *The Regional Diversification of Latin* (Cambridge)

Buck, C. D. 1955. *The Greek Dialects*, second edition (Chicago/London)

Chambers, J. K. and Trudgill, P. 1998. *Dialectology*, second edition (Cambridge)

Clackson, J. 2011. 'The Social Dialects of Latin' in J. Clackson (ed.) *A Companion to the Latin Language* (Oxford): 505-526

*Clackson, J. 2015. *Language and Society in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge): Chap 3-4

Clackson, J. and G. Horrocks 2007. *The Blackwell History of the Latin Language* (Oxford):
Chapters 6-8

Colvin, S. 2007. *A Historical Greek Reader: Mycenaean to the Koiné* (Oxford)

*Colvin, S. 2014. *A Brief History of Ancient Greek* (Oxford): Chapters 6-8

*Galdi, G. 2011. 'Latin inside and outside of Rome' in J. Clackson (ed.) *A Companion to the Latin Language* (Oxford): 564-581

Horrocks, G. 1997. 'Homer's dialect' in I. Morris and B. Powell (eds) *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden): 193-217

*Horrocks, G. 2010. *Greek. A History of the Language and its Speakers*, second edition (London):
Chapters 1-3

Palmer, L. R. 1980. *The Greek Language* (London)

Tribulato, O. 2010. 'Literary dialects' in E. J. Bakker (ed.) *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language* (Oxford): 388-400