Part IA Sociolinguistics and Dialectology
Lecture 3: Language and Social Class

1. Language and social class

- Variation in language due to social stratification interacts with other variables, such as gender and region.
- In English there is less variation between members of social elites through geographical location, and much more for those with little education: see Trudgill's Triangle.
- Many speakers vary between different styles of speech in different circumstances, with variation towards and away from the **standard language**. In order to understand social variation, it is necessary to have an idea of what standard languages are.

2. Standard languages and standardization

- The standard language is used in education, administration, law and various other formal settings. Standard languages are the result of a process of 'standardization' which is normally described in **4 stages**:

    o **selection**: a particular variety is chosen as the model.
    o **codification**: the variety is described in grammars / dictionaries and taught in schools.
    o **elaboration**: development of technical vocabularies and styles appropriate for various official functions.
    o **acceptance**: speakers view the standard as the correct form of the language, and may prioritize it above others.

3. Social variation

- Social dialects often relate to the privileged form of the standard, and speakers will 'upgrade' or 'downgrade' their language.
- Key terms:
        prestige
        covert prestige
        hypercorrection

4. Social variation in the ancient world

- Sources for 'lower class' speech:
    (a) Commentary on language by ancient writers.
    (b) Authors' representations of speakers, especially in comedy.
    (c) Non-literary texts written by those with limited education: graffiti, curses
    (d) Texts written principally for the consumption of readers or listeners with less education or without literary aspirations, e.g. works on agriculture, architecture, medicine, Christianity.

5. Greek

(a) Commentary

διάλεκτον ἔχοντα μέσην πόλεως
οὔτ᾽ ἀστείαν ὑποθηλυτέραν
οὔτ᾽ ἀνελεύθερον ὑπαγροικοτέραν

'Having the middle-of-the-road speech of the city, neither the refined and effeminate language, nor the slavish and rustic one.' (Aristophanes Fr. 706)

(b) Representation

Around 50 lines between 1001 and 1225 of *Thesmophoriazusae* assigned to the Scythian policeman guarding the Relative may contain possible examples of 'slave' or 'rustic' speech.

e.g. τί λέγι; Γοργόνος πέρι τὸ γραμματέο σὺ τὴ κεπαλὴ
'What you say, you carry de 'ead of de scribe Gorgo?' (Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusae* 1102)

> Note: πέρι = φέρεις, κεπαλὴ = κεφαλὴ
> λέγι = λέγεις (cf. later changes in Greek vowel system)

Other features include: omission of final nu; active for middle; disregard for syntax; fluctuations in gender. The first two are the most likely to be 'vulgarisms' rather than 'barbarisms'.

(c) Non-literary texts

Attic vases:
ΟΛΥΠΙΟΝΙΚΟΣ , ΑΦΙ, ΣΦΙΧΣ for Ὀλυμπιονικός, ἀμφί, σφῖγξ
ΠΑΥΣ for παῖς (cf. γραῦς)

Much research is currently underway on variation in the Koine, most of the evidence comes from papyri from Egypt.

6. Latin

- *sermo uulgaris* = 'Vulgar Latin'
- Standardized nature of Classical Latin reflected in attitudes of speakers to the language, and ridicule of those who cannot speak 'properly'. Many tales of hypercorrection.
- Note that non-standard or 'Vulgar' Latin should be understood as a whole continuum of different dialects, not a single unified dialect opposed to the speech of the elite. Within it there were probably many different sociolects etc. Nevertheless the same deviations are found again and again throughout the Empire, probably due to the high mobility of the population.

- **Some features of non-standard Latin**

  Phonetic
  o Vowel system reshaped, with loss of length distinction but new quality distinction, e.g. *e:* and *i* merge as [ẹ] etc.
  o *ae* and *au* become single long vowels.
  o Consonantal *u* [w] develops to [β] and merges with *b*.
  o Palatalisation of *ti, ci, gi.*
  o Loss of final consonants -*m* and -*t.*
  o Loss of initial *h*-.
  o Syncope (loss of short unstressed vowels in open syllables).
  o Assimilation, e.g. -*nd-* > -*nn-*, *mn* > *nn* or *mm, ps* > *ss.*

  Morphological
  o Loss of neuter, confusion between genders and declensions (3rd > 1st/2nd, 4th > 2nd, 5th > 1st).
  o Confusion of deponent and active.
  o Confusions between different conjugations, tendency towards regularization (e.g. *uolo > uoleo*).
  o Development of periphrastic formations e.g. *amare habeo* (> French *j'aimerai*) for *amabo*.

  Syntactic
  o Confusion/syncretism between cases and increased use of prepositions for case functions. Eventual development of two case system (nominative v. oblique)
  o Change in word order from Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) to Subject-Verb-Object (SVO).
  o Use of *quod/quia* clauses to introduce indirect speech.
  o Decline of participles.
  o Development of articles, *unus* > Fr. *un(e)*; *ille, illa* > Fr. *le, la*

  Lexicon
  o Preference for longer word-forms (e.g. compounds and diminutives), e.g. *comedere/manducare* for *edere, dabo* for *do*
  o More 'colourful/forceful' vocabulary, e.g. *fabulari* for *dicere*
  o Many individual semantic changes e.g. *bucca* 'cheek' > 'mouth'.

- **Examples of non-standard Latin**

(a) Commentary

- Catullus 84

  Chommoda *dicebat, si quando **commoda** uellet*
  *dicere, et **insidias** Arrius **hinsidias**,*
  et tum mirifice sperabat se esse locutum
  *cum quantum poterat dixerat **hinsidias**.*

'Arrius said "shuitable," when he wished to say "suitable," and, when he wants to say "ambush," he says "hambush," and he was hoping that he was speaking remarkably, when he had said "hambush" as much as he was able.'

- *Mestrium **Florum** consularem, admonitus ab eo **plaustra** potius quam **plostra**, dicenda, postero die **Flaurum** salutauit.* (Suetonius *Vesp.* 22)
'Vespasian was rebuked by Maestrius Florus for saying *plostra* rather than *plaustra*, so the next day he greeted him as Flaurus.'

> NB 'populist' language of the Emperor and also Publius Clodius Pulcher (elected Tribune of the Plebs 58 BC) with 'populist' spelling of the name v. father and brother Claudius Pulcher, (populist spelling also adopted by two of his sisters). Flaurus also homophonous with Greek φλαυρός 'worthless'.

- *Cotta noster, cuius tu illa lata, Sulpici, nonnumquam imitaris, ut iotam litteram tollas et e plenissimum dicas, non mihi oratores antiquos, sed messores uidetur imitari.* (Cicero *de oratore* 3.12.46)
'Our friend Cotta, whose broad pronunciation, Sulpicius, you sometimes imitate by deleting the letter I and saying a very full E, seems to me to imitate not the orators of old but farmhands.'

(b) Representation

Representation of the speech of freedmen by Petronius in his novel *Satyricon* (1st century AD).

- *'dies' inquit 'nihil est. dum uersas te, nox fit. itaque nihil est melius quam de cubiculo recta in triclinium ire. et mundum frigus habuimus. uix me **balneus** calfecit. tamen calda potio uestiarius est. staminatas duxi, et plane matus sum. **uinus** mihi in cerebrum abiit.'* (Petronius *Satyricon* 41.10–12)

He [Dama] said 'Day is nothing. Night is on you before you can turn round. Then there is no better plan than going straight out of bed to dinner. It was precious cold. I could scarcely get warm in a bath. But a hot drink is as good as an overcoat. I have taken some deep drinks, and I am quite soaked. The wine has gone to my head.'

> Note:
> o e.g. *balneus* for *balneum* and *uinus* for *uinum*.
> o Syncopated forms *calda, calfecit* (though these not too 'vulgar')
> o *matus* may < either *maditus* or *mactus.*

- *et ego tibi plodo. computa, et tibi plus do quam accepi. manus manum lauat. uideris mihi, Agamemnon, dicere: 'quid iste argutat molestus?' quia tu, qui potes loquere, non loquis. non es nostrae fasciae, et ideo pauperorum uerba derides. scimus te prae litteras fatuum esse. quid ergo est? alia die te persuadeam, ut ad uillam uenias et uideas casulas nostras? inueniemus quod manducemus, pullum, oua. belle erit.* (Petronius *Satyricon* 45.13f.)

[From a speech by a character called Echion] '... and I clap my hands at you. Reckon it up, and I gave you more than I got. One good turn deserves another. Agamemnon, you seem to be saying "What's this fool on about." Just because you keep quiet and you can talk proper. You're not in

our bunch, and so you laugh at the words of us plebs. We know that you are mad with learning. Well, what do you want? Some day I'll persuade you to come to my estate and see our maisonette. We'll find something to eat, a chicken, eggs. It'll be swell.'

> Note:
> o *plodo* for *plaudo.*
> o Deponents conjugated as actives: *loquere = loqui, loquis = loquere.*
> o Declension of *pauper* as 2nd, not 3rd, declension: *pauperorum = pauperum.*
> o Vocabulary: *casulas*, *manduco*, *pullus, bellus* - all of these survive into the Romance languages.

(c) Non-literary texts

Some graffiti from Pompeii:

- *quisquis ama ualia peria qui nosci amare*
  bis tanti peria quisquis amare uota
  felices adias maneas o Martia si te
  uidi du nobis maxima cura place

  'May he fare well whoever loves, and may he perish whoever does not know how to love; may he perish twice as much whoever forbids love. May you come and stay with the fortunate, Martia. If I ever see you, my greatest concern, you please us.' (*CIL* 4.1173)

  > Note:
  > o Loss of –*t* in *ama(t) ualia(t) nosci(t)* etc.
  > o Raising of *e* to *i* in *ualia = ualeat*, *adias = adeas.*
  > o *du* for *tu* (cf *Bompeiiana* for *Pompeiiana*).

- *abiat Venere Bompeiiana iratam qui hoc laesaerit*
  'May he get Venus Pompeiana angry who harms this.' (CIL 4.538)

  > Note: Loss of *h-* in *abiat = habeat*; loss of -*m* in *Venere(m) Bompeiiana(m)*

- Wax tablet recording extension of a loan to Gaius Novius Eunus (15th September AD 39) from Murecine near Pompeii. Draft has been written on the inside by Eunus and then written up by a professional scribe on the outside.

  …stertertios mile ducentos quiquaginta nummos reliquos ratione omini putata, quos ab eo mutos accepi, quem suma iuratus promissi me aut ipssi Hesuco aut C(aio) Sulpicio Fausto redturm k(alendis) Noembrib[u]s primis per Iobe Optumm Maxumu et nume dibi Augusti et Genium C(aii) Cessaris Augusti…

  …sestertios mille ducentos quinquaginta nummos reliquos ratione omni putata quos ab eo mutos accepi, quam summam iuratus promisi me aut ipse Hesycho aut C(aio) Sulpicio Fausto redditurum

k(alendis) Nouembribus primis per Iouem Optumum Max(umum) et numen diui Aug(usti) et Genium C(aii) Caesaris Augusti…

'…1250 sesertii cash outstanding by every considered reckoning, which I received from him as a loan, and which total I promised I would repay either to Hesychus himself or to Gaius Sulpicius Faustus on the first of November, by Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the godhead of the divine Augustus and the Genius of Gaius Caesar Augustus…'

Note:
- Omission of nasals, word finally (*Iobe*, *nume* but ? *redturm, Optumm*) and internally before a stop (*quiquaginta*).
- *-e* for *-ae* (*Cessaris*).
- Confusion of *b* and consonantal *u* (*Iobe, dibi*).
- Confusion over writing geminate consonants (*mile, scripssi, ipssi*).
- Omission and addition of vowels (*omini*, *redturm*).
- BUT… No *au > o*, omission of final *-s*, omission or hypercorrection of *h-*, perhaps because these forms particularly stigmatized under the Republic.

7. Further Reading (* for particularly helpful reading)

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