What is the difference between a *dialect* and a *language*?

From a linguistic point of view, these terms are problematic.

They might have a particular meaning from a socio-political point of view.

A 'language' tends to be associated with a standard language, which is almost always written, and is almost always associated with the speech of a wealthy, educated social class.
Dialects

- From a linguistic point of view, there is no such thing
- Linguistic variants can be separated geographically by isoglosses
- However, each isogloss will have a different geographic distribution, yielding a huge number of 'dialects' (given thousands of variants)
- Similarly, variation along social dimensions is non-discrete
The concept of a 'language' is similarly problematic (e.g. the Spanish language).

This problematic both temporally and geographically.
Temporal delimitation

Given that language change occurs item by item, in various orders, there is no non-arbitrary point where, for example, Latin gives way to Spanish.

Nevertheless, there are two reasons to distinguish languages temporally:

- To label geographically distinct varieties
- As a result of standardization
Geographic delimitation

- An artificial method of delimiting the geographic distribution of a language is through political boundaries - only relevant for languages with some official standardization.

- However, political boundaries and linguistic boundaries rarely coincide.

- Mutual intelligibility is problematic, as it is non-discrete, and often asymmetrical.

- Orthography is not necessarily keyed to similar varieties.
What is wrong with saying "Andalucian is a dialect of Spanish"? It is based on erroneous assumptions:

- That a uniform standard language fragments into dialects
- That the standard is somehow prior to the dialects (Castilian was based on a variety spoken around Burgos, transplanted to Toledo, then to Madrid, all for political reasons)
- In addition, some varieties may share features with more than one standard language (e.g. some dialects that share features with Castilian and Catalan)
The set of linguistic features that defines a person's speech is a **variety**.

These differ from neighboring varieties in terms of all the parameters of variation (geographic, social, register, etc.).

The bundling of isoglosses is not uniform, and not equally distributed.

The space between social parameters is even more problematic.
Tree Model

- Developed in historical linguistics to represent shared features between varieties
- Only used for differences along the geographic parameter
- The tree model has an false analogy in the classification of species
- Less successful varieties often survive as non-standard varieties
Problems with trees

Problematic because of shared features - assumes that once varieties 'split', there will be no more shared features (e.g. Aragonese versus Catalan/Castilian)

Sometimes explained as borrowing (o>we, vs. -ete/ -eta)
Variation in trunk

- The tree model ignores variation in the trunk

- Western Romance
  - Spanish
  - French
  - Portuguese

- Eastern Romance
  - Italian
  - Romanian

- Based primarily on voicing of stops V__V ([lá:tus] [ládo])
Tree model of Romance

Western Romance
  - Hispano-Romance
    - Spanish, etc.
  - Gallo-Romance
  - Rheto-Romance
  - Northern Italo-Romance
    - Piedmontese, etc.

Eastern Romance
  - Central and Southern Italo-Romance
  - Daco-Romance
    - Italian, etc.
    - Romanian, etc.
  - Sardinian Romance
    - Sardinian, etc.
Classification Issues

- Pomeiian graffiti shows g where you would expect c
- Tuscan varieties should intervocalic voicing
- Central Pyrenean varieties often lack voicing
- Mozarabe lacked voicing
- Perhaps based on social variation
Wave Model

- Isoglosses spread out in a wave-like manner from a prestige source
- Yields the nuanced variation often found
- Nevertheless, difficult to represent social variation and non-categorical variation
Non-nuanced variation

- Can stop at an important political or linguistic boundary
- Competing prestige centers
- Population displacement