

Language Variation

- ◆ Universal
- ◆ Occurs along two dimensions: geographic and social

Geographic Variation

- ◆ Historically, gradual variation was the norm
- ◆ E.g. in rural speech from Galicia to Catalunya, there is a dialect continuum
- ◆ From Southern France to Alicante, there is another
- ◆ Hence, geographic variation can be two-dimensional
- ◆ Can ignore political boundaries
- ◆ However, it can be disrupted, and is sensitive to social factors

Social Variation

- ◆ Operates along any combination of many social variables: age, gender, social class, education, income, ...
- ◆ Example: *-ado* participles: [áðo], [á^ðo], [áo], [áw]
 - [áw] more common in working class speech
 - Women resist [ð] deletion
- ◆ Social variation is multi-dimensional
- ◆ It also varies in the speech of a single speaker (e.g. register)

Diachronic Variation

- ◆ All languages change over time
- ◆ Change is usually fairly rapid
- ◆ Often viewed as new forms replacing old ones:
 - [lá:tus] > [ládo] > [láðo] > [lá^ðo] > [láo] > [láv]
- ◆ However, it is more accurate to view this as different ranges of variation at different points in time.

- Stage 1: [lá:tus] [ládo]
- Stage 2: [lá:tus] [ládo] [láđo]
- Stage 3: [ládo] [láđo] [lá^đo]
- Stage 4: [láđo] [lá^đo] [láo]
- Stage 5: [láđo] [lá^đo] [láo] [láv]
- Stage 6: [lá^đo] [láo] [láv]

- ◆ Diachronic variation can differ word to word
- ◆ A process seen in one word, may be reversed in another:
 - Stage 1: [nído] [níðo]
 - Stage 2: [nído] [níðo] [ní^ðo]
 - Stage 3: [níðo] [ní^ðo] [nío]
 - Stage 4: [níðo] [ní^ðo]
 - Stage 5: [níðo]

◆ In other cases, no intermediate forms remain, e.g.

- Latin [sédere]

- Spanish [sér]

- ◆ These different results argue for a variationist approach to language change - that is, language change results in a new range of variation
- ◆ Change is always relative to the geographic and social dimensions of variation
- ◆ While labels such as 'Vulgar Latin', 'Old Spanish', etc., are convenient, they incorrectly suggest a standardization, which is rarely the case.

Variables

- ◆ A linguistic feature that exhibits variation is a *variable*
 - E.g. [x] ~ [h], according to region: [xamón] ~ [hamón]
 - The different realizations (e.g. [x] or [h]) are called *variants*

Co-Variation

- ◆ A variable may operate along geographic, social, and diachronic dimensions.
- yeísmo - the merger of /y/ and /l^y/:
 - [káyo] 'island' vs. [kál^yo] 'tripe' non-yeísta
 - [káyo] 'island', 'tripe' yeísta
- ◆ Originally diachronic/geographic, now also social

Register

- ◆ Speakers use different variants in different situations
- ◆ Three parameters:
 - Field (what is being discussed)
 - Mode (written, spoken)
 - Tone (nature of the communications, who is addressed, etc.)
- ◆ Can determine [láðo] [lá^oo] [láo] [láv] in a single speaker

Hypercorrection

- ◆ *bacalao* has a subset of the range of variants of *pescado*:
 - [peskáðo] [peská^ðo] [peskáo] [peskáw]
 - [bakaláo] [bakaláw]
- ◆ This can lead to hypercorrect forms such as [bakaláðo]

Past Variation

- ◆ Since all languages observed have the types of variation discussed here, we assume this was always the case for all past languages
- ◆ Given that historical records only show examples of written languages, this cannot be tested directly
- ◆ However, indirect evidence exists - e.g., graffiti, spelling variants, historical commentary, prescriptive grammars, ...