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Dialectology

Second edition

J. K. Chambers and
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DIALECTOLOGY

J. K. CHAMBERS
AND
PETER TRUDGILL

SECOND EDITION

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In revising this textbook, we have taken pains to retain the features that have made it a staple for linguists and students for eighteen years. *Dialectology* presents the fundamentals of studying language variation between and within communities. More than one reviewer of the first edition noted that ours was the first book to survey those fundamentals although dialect studies have been pursued systematically for about a century and a half. For this second edition, one of the topics most in need of updating was dialect geography, which had lost much of its impetus in the decades before our first edition but has since been revitalised. Partly this revitalisation is mechanical, stemming from technological advances in the handling of large databases, but partly it is theoretical, resulting from increased representativeness in sample populations and closer attention to the social dynamics of diffusion and change. Our integration of sociolinguistics with more venerable traditions as a highly influential new branch of urban dialectology surprised a few readers but was generally received as an interesting innovation. Now it would be shocking, and hopelessly muddled, if someone tried to keep them apart.

JKC, PT
Toronto, Lausanne 1997

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 1993)

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)

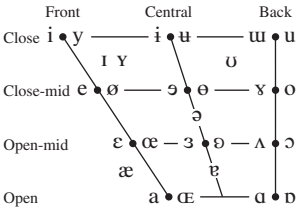
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k g	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ		
Trill	ʙ			r					ʀ		
Tap or Flap				ɾ		ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant		ʋ		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	ʟ			

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

CONSONANTS (NON-PULMONIC)

Clicks		Voiced implosives		Ejectives	
ʘ	Bilabial	ɓ	Bilabial	’	as in:
|	Dental	ɗ	Dental/alveolar	pʼ	Bilabial
!	(Post)alveolar	ʄ	Palatal	tʼ	Dental/alveolar
ǂ	Palatoalveolar	ɠ	Velar	kʼ	Velar
‖	Alveolar lateral	ʛ	Uvular	sʼ	Alveolar fricative

VOWELS



Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

OTHER SYMBOLS

ʍ	Voiceless labial-velar fricative	ɕ ʑ	Alveolo-palatal fricatives
w	Voiced labial-velar approximant	ɺ	Alveolar lateral flap
ɥ	Voiced labial-palatal approximant	ʧ ʤ	Simultaneous ʃ and x
ʜ	Voiceless epiglottal fricative		
ʢ	Voiced epiglottal fricative		
ʡ	Epiglottal plosive		

Affricates and double articulations can be represented by two symbols joined by a tie bar if necessary.

k͡p t͡s

SUPRASEGMENTALS

ˈ	Primary stress	ˌfoʊnəˈtɪʃən	
ˌ	Secondary stress		
ː	Long	eː	
ˑ	Half-long	eˑ	
˘	Extra-short	ĕ	
.	Syllable break	ɹi.ækt	
|	Minor (foot) group		
‖	Major (intonation) group		
‿	Linking (absence of a break)		

TONES & WORD ACCENTS

LEVEL		CONTOUR	
˥ or ˦	Extra high	˩˥ or ˨˦	Rising
˦	High	˥˩	Falling
˧	Mid	˦˥	High rising
˨	Low	˧˩	Low rising
˩	Extra low	˩˥˩	Rising-falling etc.
↓	Downstep	↗	Global rise
↑	Upstep	↘	Global fall

DIACRITICS Diacritics may be placed above a symbol with a descender, e.g. ŋ̊

◌̥	Voiceless	n̥ d̥	◌̤	Breathy voiced	b̤ a̤
◌̬	Voiced	s̬ t̬	◌̰	Creaky voiced	b̰ a̰
◌ʰ	Aspirated	tʰ dʰ	◌̪	Linguolabial	t̪ d̪
◌̹	More rounded	ɔ̹	◌ʷ	Labialized	tʷ dʷ
◌̜	Less rounded	ɔ̜	◌ʲ	Palatalized	tʲ dʲ
◌̟	Advanced	u̟	◌ˠ	Velarized	tˠ dˠ
◌̠	Retracted	i̠	◌ˤ	Pharyngealized	tˤ dˤ
◌̈	Centralized	ë	◌̃	Velarized or pharyngealized	ɫ
◌̽	Mid-centralized	e̽	◌̝	Raised	e̝ (ɹ̝ = voiced alveolar fricative)
◌̩	Syllabic	ɹ̩	◌̞	Lowered	e̞ (β̞ = voiced bilabial approximant)
◌̯	Non-syllabic	e̯	◌ˤ	Advanced Tongue Root	e̘
◌˞	Rhoticity	ə˞	◌ˤ	Retracted Tongue Root	e̙

◌̍	Dental
◌̺	Apical
◌̻	Laminal
◌̃	Nasalized
◌ⁿ	Nasal release
◌ˡ	Lateral release
◌̚	No audible release

BACKGROUND

1
Dialect and language

Dialectology, obviously, is the study of dialect and dialects. But what exactly is a dialect? In common usage, of course, a dialect is a substandard, low-status, often rustic form of language, generally associated with the peasantry, the working class, or other groups lacking in prestige. DIALECT is also a term which is often applied to forms of language, particularly those spoken in more isolated parts of the world, which have no written form. And dialects are also often regarded as some kind of (often erroneous) deviation from a norm – as aberrations of a correct or standard form of language.

In this book we shall not be adopting any of these points of view. We will, on the contrary, accept the notion that all speakers are speakers of at least one dialect – that standard English, for example, is just as much a dialect as any other form of English – and that it does not make any kind of sense to suppose that any one dialect is in any way linguistically superior to any other.

1.1 Mutual intelligibility

It is very often useful to regard dialects as DIALECTS OF A LANGUAGE. Dialects, that is, can be regarded as subdivisions of a particular language. In this way we may talk of the Parisian dialect of French, the Lancashire dialect of English, the Bavarian dialect of German, and so on.

This distinction, however, presents us with a number of difficulties. In particular, we are faced with the problem of how we can distinguish between a LANGUAGE and a DIALECT, and the related problem of how we can decide what a language is. One way of looking at this has often been to say that 'a language is a collection of mutually intelligible dialects'. This definition has the benefit of characterising dialects as subparts of a language and of providing a criterion for distinguishing between one language and another.

This characterisation of 'language' and 'dialect', however, is not entirely successful, and it is relatively simple to think of two types of apparent counterexample. If we consider, first, the Scandinavian languages, we observe that Norwegian, Swedish and Danish are usually considered to be different languages. Unfortunately for our

definition, though, they are mutually intelligible. Speakers of these three languages can readily understand and communicate with one another. Secondly, while we would normally consider German to be a single language, there are some types of German which are not intelligible to speakers of other types. Our definition, therefore, would have it that Danish is less than a language, while German is more than a language.

There are also other difficulties with the criterion of mutual intelligibility. The main problem is that it is a criterion which admits of degrees of more or less. While it is true, for example, that many Swedes can very readily understand many Norwegians, it is also clear that they often do not understand them so well as they do other Swedes. For this reason, inter-Scandinavian mutual intelligibility can be less than perfect, and allowances do have to be made: speakers may speak more slowly, and omit certain words and pronunciations that they suspect may cause difficulties.

Mutual intelligibility may also not be equal in both directions. It is often said, for instance, that Danes understand Norwegians better than Norwegians understand Danes. (If this is true it may be because, as Scandinavians sometimes say, 'Norwegian is pronounced like Danish is spelt', while Danish pronunciation bears a rather more complex relationship to its own orthography. It may be due, alternatively or additionally, to more specifically linguistic factors.) Mutual intelligibility will also depend, it appears, on other factors such as listeners' degree of exposure to the other language, their degree of education and, interestingly enough, their willingness to understand. People, it seems, sometimes do not understand because, at some level of consciousness, they do not want to. A study carried out in Africa, for example, demonstrated that, while one ethnic group A claimed to be able to understand the language of another ethnic group B, ethnic group B claimed *not* to be able to understand language A. It then emerged that group A, a larger and more powerful group, wanted to incorporate group B's territory into their own on the grounds that they were really the same people and spoke the same language. Clearly, group B's failure to comprehend group A's language was part of their resistance to this attempted takeover.

1.2 Language, dialect and accent

It seems, then, that while the criterion of mutual intelligibility may have some relevance, it is not especially useful in helping us to decide what is and is not a language. In fact, our discussion of the Scandinavian languages and German suggests that (unless we want to change radically our everyday assumptions about what a language is) we have to recognise that, paradoxically enough, a 'language' is not a particularly linguistic notion at all. Linguistic features obviously come into it, but it is clear that we consider Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and German to be single languages for reasons that are as much political, geographical, historical, sociological and cultural as linguistic. It is of course relevant that all three Scandinavian languages have distinct, codified, standardised forms, with their own orthographies, grammar

books, and literatures; that they correspond to three separate nation states; and that their speakers consider that they speak different languages.

The term 'language', then, if from a linguistic point of view a relatively nontechnical term. If therefore we wish to be more rigorous in our use of descriptive labels we have to employ other terminology. One term we shall be using in this book is VARIETY. We shall use 'variety' as a neutral term to apply to any particular kind of language which we wish, for some purpose, to consider as a single entity. The term will be used in an ad hoc manner in order to be as specific as we wish for a particular purpose. We can, for example, refer to the variety 'Yorkshire English', but we can equally well refer to 'Leeds English' as a variety, or 'middle-class Leeds English' – and so on. More particular terms will be ACCENT and DIALECT. 'Accent' refers to the way in which a speaker pronounces, and therefore refers to a variety which is phonetically and/or phonologically different from other varieties. 'Dialect', on the other hand, refers to varieties which are grammatically (and perhaps lexically) as well as phonologically different from other varieties. If two speakers say, respectively, *I done it last night* and *I did it last night*, we can say that they are speaking different dialects.

The labels 'dialect' and 'accent', too, are used by linguists in an essentially ad hoc manner. This may be rather surprising to many people, since we are used to talking of accents and dialects as if they were well-defined, separate entities: 'a southern accent', 'the Somerset dialect'. Usually, however, this is actually not the case. Dialects and accents frequently merge into one another without any discrete break.

1.3 Geographical dialect continua

There are many parts of the world where, if we examine dialects spoken by people in rural areas, we find the following type of situation. If we travel from village to village, in a particular direction, we notice linguistic differences which distinguish one village from another. Sometimes these differences will be larger, sometimes smaller, but they will be CUMULATIVE. The further we get from our starting point, the larger the differences will become. The effect of this may therefore be, if the distance involved is large enough, that (if we arrange villages along our route in geographical order) while speakers from village A understand people from village B very well and those from village F quite well, they may understand village M speech only with considerable difficulty, and that of village Z not at all. Villagers from M, on the other hand, will probably understand village F speech quite well, and villagers from A and Z only with difficulty. In other words, dialects on the outer edges of the geographical area may not be mutually intelligible, but they will be linked by a chain of mutual intelligibility. At no point is there a complete break such that geographically adjacent dialects are not mutually intelligible, but the cumulative effect of the linguistic differences will be such that the greater the geographical separation, the greater the difficulty of comprehension.

Map 1-1. European dialect continua

This type of situation is known as a GEOGRAPHICAL DIALECT CONTINUUM. There are many such continua. In Europe, for example, the standard varieties of French, Italian, Catalan, Spanish and Portuguese are not really mutually intelligible. The rural dialects of these languages, however, form part of the West Romance dialect continuum which stretches from the coast of Portugal to the centre of Belgium (with speakers immediately on either side of the Portuguese–Spanish border, for instance, having no problems in understanding each other) and from there to the south of Italy, as shown in Map 1-1. Other European dialect continua include the West Germanic continuum, which includes all dialects of what are normally referred to as German, Dutch and Flemish (varieties spoken in Vienna and Ostend are not mutually intelligible, but they are linked by a chain of mutual intelligibility); the Scandinavian dialect continuum, comprising dialects of Norwegian, Swedish and Danish; the North Slavic dialect continuum, including Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech and Slovak; and the South Slavic continuum, which includes Slovenian, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian and Bulgarian.

The notion of the dialect continuum is perhaps a little difficult to grasp because, as has already been noted, we are used to thinking of linguistic varieties as discrete entities,