Standard Languages and Language Standards

Gramley, WS 2008-09

Introduction
How can we differentiate between language and dialect?

Popular concepts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>langage</td>
<td>Sprache</td>
<td>language</td>
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<tr>
<td>dialecte</td>
<td>Dialekt</td>
<td>dialect</td>
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<tr>
<td>patois</td>
<td>Mundart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>size</td>
<td>a language is larger than a dialect</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a language contains all its dialects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prestige</td>
<td>a language has greater prestige than a dialect</td>
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<tr>
<td>use in writing</td>
<td>dialects are not written, at least not in formal prose</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>if a &quot;language&quot; is not written, it's a dialect</td>
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</table>
Standard languages

result from deliberate measures taken, as we will see in the presentation by Matteo Mosso and Jonathan Oropeza
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The Process of Standardization

Matteo Mosso
and
Jonathan Oropeza
Selection

A particular variety of language has to be selected in order to be developed into a standard. It could be an existing variety or an amalgam of various varieties.
Acceptance

The variety has to be accepted by the relevant population as *the variety* of the community, usually as the public written variety.

In this process class and power play a key role.
Elaboration (of function)

The new variety has to spread into ever more domains of use including those concerning bureaucracy, government, etc. The use of a language in education, religion and state institutions is fundamental to its spread in the community.
Codification

Grammar books and dictionaries serve to fix what the correct use of *the variety* is.
Important factors in standardization process

- Military domination
- Economic opportunity
- Urbanization, industrialization
- Language planning
- Social and cultural status
Standard Spanish in Mexico

• **Selection-acceptance**: military imposition of a previously existing standard language. But indigenous languages are still spoken nowadays.

• **Elaboration of functions**: Spanish began to be used in public life, in the bureaucracy, etc. Nevertheless, many governmental documents and even the national anthem have been translated into indigenous languages.

• **Codification**: the academy which regulates the Spanish language is “La Real Academia de la Lengua española”. In the case of the indigenous languages is the “Insituto National de las Lenguas Indigenas”.

Standard Italian in Italy

• **Selection**: when Italy became a politic unity in 1861, the dialect of “fiorentino letterario” of Italian was chosen as the language of the new-born nation. This was the variety used by Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio.

• **Codification**: publication of the first Italian dictionary in 1612 and foundation of the Accademia della Crusca in Florence (1582-3), the official legislative body of the Italian language.

• **Elaboration of functions**: standard Italian replaced dialects in public life and bureaucracy.

• **Acceptance**: standard Italian was imposed by the institutions of public life and was also spread by the media.
Standard and General English

Local dialect 1

Local dialect 2

Local dialect 3

Local dialect 4

General English

St E
Sociolinguistics dimensions of language

- The sociology of language focuses on the language’s effect on the society and covers external questions such as language planning and language policy.

- Sociolinguistics examines the language of various groups and focuses on the society’s effects on the language, for examples how variation in pronunciation, grammar, lexis or pragmatics correlates with such groups.
Power and solidarity

• Both the external and the internal perspectives involve the central dimensions of social power and social solidarity.
• Solidarity is perhaps more prominent than power, yet the relationships between the various groups of speakers are governed by the relative power of the groups.
• It is the relatively more powerful groups who are the source of overt norms.
• In the case of group resistance to the language of power we find, for example, slang (primarily a phenomenon of solidarity).

(end of presentation by Mosso and Oropeza)
What is the unusual character of standard languages which Hudson points out?

- lack of diversity
- negative evaluation of all departure from the norm

When is a particular variety a language?
When is a particular variety a language?

- size
  - No
- prestige
  - If prestige, then yes
- mutual intelligibility
  - No

See case of Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian: Varieties with different standards are different languages. Note: the existence of a standard may be a political question: is there a state to go along with the language?

See the case of Plattdeutsch and Schwytzerdütsch: No mutual intelligibility. How do you see them as far as separateness of language is concerned?

See the role of motivation: A Croatian may not want to understand a Serbian. Or: may not be accustomed to understanding one.
The family tree model

A family tree is intended to show relative divergence from a common source. It may reflect closeness of varieties, but need not since varieties may converge as well. The weakness of this model is that it does not take language contact and the influence of other varieties into consideration.

The conclusion

"... the concept 'language X' has no part to play in sociolinguistics – nor, for exactly the same reasons, can it have any place in linguistics." (Hudson: 37)
Homework:

Read the selection from Graddol, Leith, and Swann.

Be prepared to elaborate on factors that were influential in the move toward standardization in English. Distinguish

- demographic
- economic
- educational
- technical
- religious
- political
- attitudinal factors.