

LANGUAGE VARIETIES STUDIES AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY BRANCH

1. Language varieties studies and cognate subjects.
 - Areal linguistics and studies of geographical areas. The notion of *linguistic area* (*Sprachbunde*).
 - Geolinguistics and studies of geographical distribution of languages.
 - Ties of regional linguistics with geography, ethnology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, historical and comparative linguistics.
2. Dialectology (Linguistic Geography).
3. Accentology.
4. Geographical identity and linguistic identity.
5. The problem of mutual intelligibility.

RECOMMENDED READING

Crystal, David. *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. – Cambridge : CUP, 1995. - P. – 24 – 26 (mutual intelligibility, dialectology); 32 – 33 (linguistic variable and area); 284, 286 – 287 (how many languages are spoken);

Hickey, Raymond. *Variety studies* // <https://www.uni-due.de/ELE/VarietiesOfEnglish.pdf> . – P. 2, 6-7.

KEY TERMS

areal linguistics;
dialectology;
geographical identity;
geographical linguistics;

linguistic area;
linguistic identity;
mutual intelligibility;
variety;

LECTURE NOTES

The study of language variation is an important part of sociolinguistics. It requires reference to social, cultural, geographical and linguistic factors. Languages vary from one region to another (in space), from one group to another (in society), and from one situation to another (in discourse). Languages also change historically (in time).

There are many ways of speaking, and each way of speaking is a *variety*.

Several branches of linguistics have developed to study regional variation of languages. *Areal linguistics* studies geographical regions which share linguistic properties. A *linguistic area* (*Sprachbunde*) is a geographically contiguous area, which is characterized by the existence of common linguistic features shared by genetically non-related language. Hence a Linguistic Area is marked by the “convergence” of linguistic features of various languages spoken in a particular region regardless of the fact that these languages may belong to different families . Apart from areal features, there are also those features that identify a micro-area (for instance, nasalisation, aspiration, gender agreement, etc.). For example, India represents a classic example of linguistic area as the languages of the mainland India belonging to four different language families i.e. Indo Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman share several linguistic traits among themselves.

The role of Areal Linguistics is to explain what is not explainable by “genetic” historical linguistics. It is not a substitute but complementary to historical linguistics. It is the “diffusion” that constitutes the body of the study to explain linguistic similarities across distinct language families.

Geolinguistics (geographical linguistics) studies geographical distribution of languages in the world with reference to their status (political, cultural, economic). *Linguistic geography*, also referred to as *dialectology*, deals primarily with the systematic study of regional dialects. However,

in recent years it has broadened the scope of influential factors and considers linguistic variation as a result of gender, age, ethnic, etc. differences.

The key issues discussed in dialectology include the following^

- dialects and their types;
- bidialectism;
- dialect continuum (dialect chain);
- standard vs no-standard variation in language;
- dialect vs accent, dialect vs language;
- mutual intelligibility etc.

Languages convey geographical information about their speakers, and geographical identity is one important and widely recognized feature of linguistic identity. *Geographical identity* is an individual or group's sense of attachment to the country, region, city, or village in which they live. It also concerns the key characteristics with which a particular country, region, city, or village is associated. *Linguistic identity* refers to the sense of belonging to a community as mediated through the symbolic resource of language, or to the varying ways in which we come to understand the relationship between our language and ourselves. These are closely related aspects of how we position ourselves in social context through language. Linguistic identity becomes central in globalization due to the fact that movement of people, ideas, products, and cultural forms across national boundaries intensifies contact among languages.

Mutual intelligibility is a criterion employed in linguistic analyses. It refers to the ability of speakers to understand each other. Mutually intelligible varieties of speech tend to be variants but mutually unintelligible ones tend to be different languages. It is worth mentioning that two languages can be mutually intelligible (German and Dutch) while the varieties of one language (Chinese dialects) can show a very low degree of mutual intelligibility.

The Balkan Linguistic Area.

Areal Feature: ‘+definite article after the noun’ in Albanian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Romanian;
‘- definite article after the noun’ in other historically-related languages (Italian).

