



Sociolinguistics (Language Variation)

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Sociolinguistics Goals:

- Identify aspects of socioeconomic factors in language variation
- Identify aspects of gender and ethnicity as factors in language variation
- Describe how shifts in speech contexts cause changes in speaking styles
- List the reasons why “standard” national dialects are problematic propositions

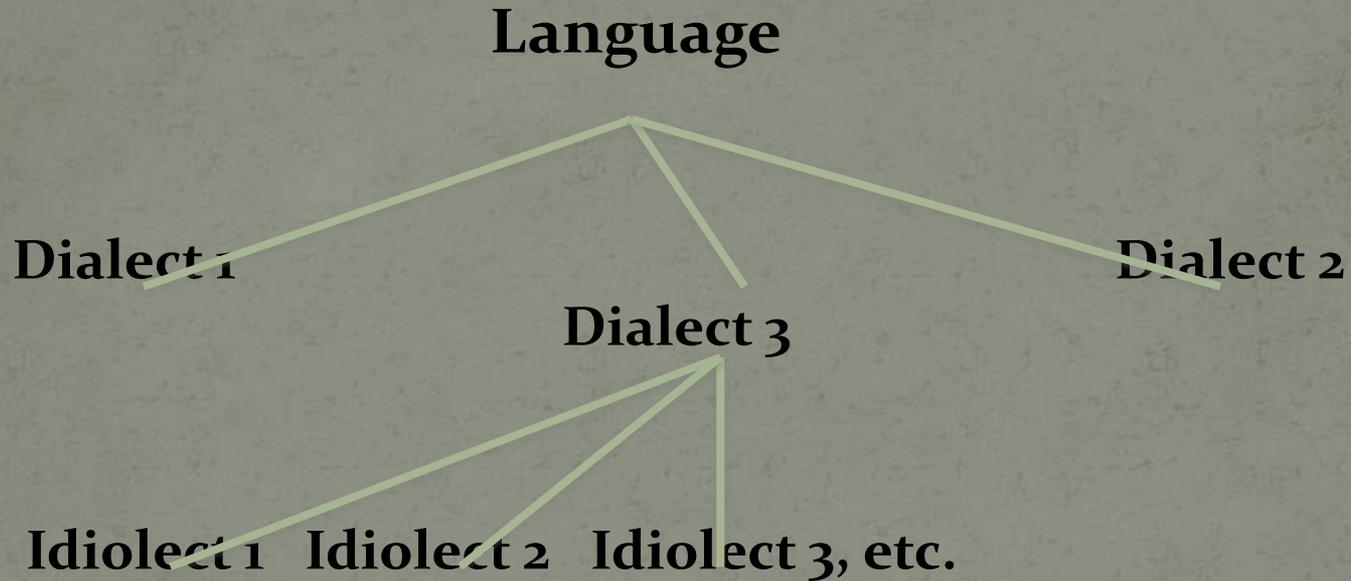
What is sociolinguistics?

- ***Sociolinguistics:*** The study of the interrelationships between language and social structure; centrally concerned with how language varies (at a single point in time) and changes (over time) according to how people in society use it.

Overview

- Language vs. dialect
- Language variation
 - variation in different subareas (phonology, syntax, etc.)
 - variation conditioned by different factors (region, socioeconomics, gender, age, etc.)
- Language and cultural identity, attitudes about language

Linguistic community



Dialects (linguist's definition)

- Mutually intelligible varieties; e.g. English spoken in Seattle, English spoken in London, UK
- Not dialects of same language: W. Germanic (English) spoken in Seattle and W. Germanic (Dutch) spoken in Amsterdam

Sources of confusion re dialect

- Politically distinct \neq linguistically distinct.
200+ countries vs. 6000+ languages
- ‘Chinese’: languages spoken in same country, mislabeled ‘dialects’
- Spoken in different countries, mislabeled ‘languages’:
(Czech, Slovak), (Serbian, Croatian),
(Norwegian, Swedish, Danish)

Difficulties with mutual intelligibility definition

1. There are degrees of mutual intelligibility: what is criterion: 100%? 90%? 50%
Birmingham, UK vs. Seattle, WA
2. Asymmetries in intelligibility: Danish speakers find it easier to understand Swedish than vice versa.

Different types of dialects

- "Standard" dialect: usually that used by political leaders, media, higher socioeconomic classes
- 'Standard' vs. prescriptively correct
- Some "standard" dialects of English
 - Standard American English (SAE)
 - Received Pronunciation (RP) (UK)

'Standard' vs. 'non-standard' varieties of American English

- **Deletion of voiced stops after nasals**

Standard

Comb

Sing

Land

[kɒʊm]

[sɪŋ]

[lænd]

Non-standard

[kɒʊm]

[sɪŋ]

[læn]

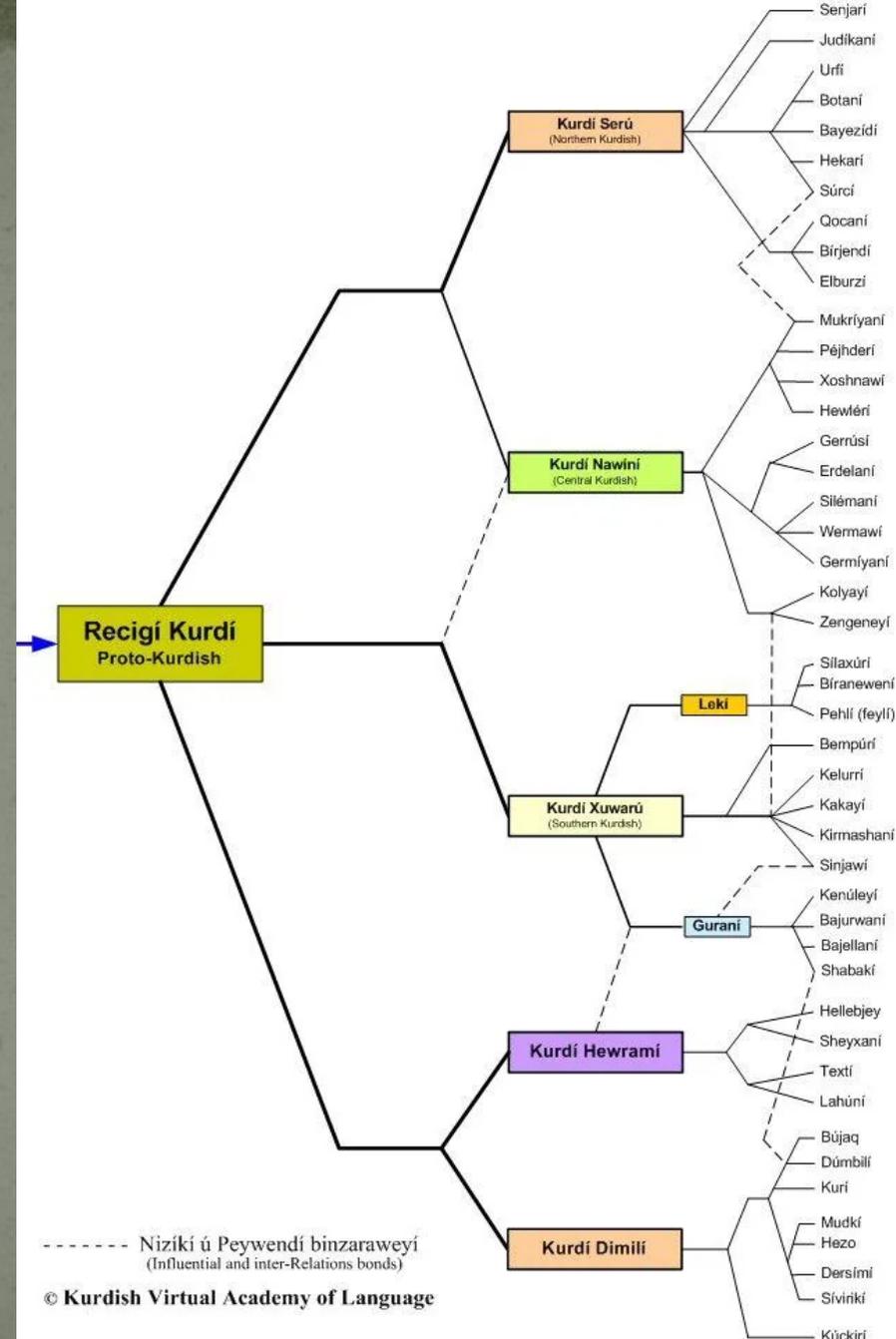
Language variation

Factors contributing to variation:

- Geography
- Socioeconomics
- Gender
- Age

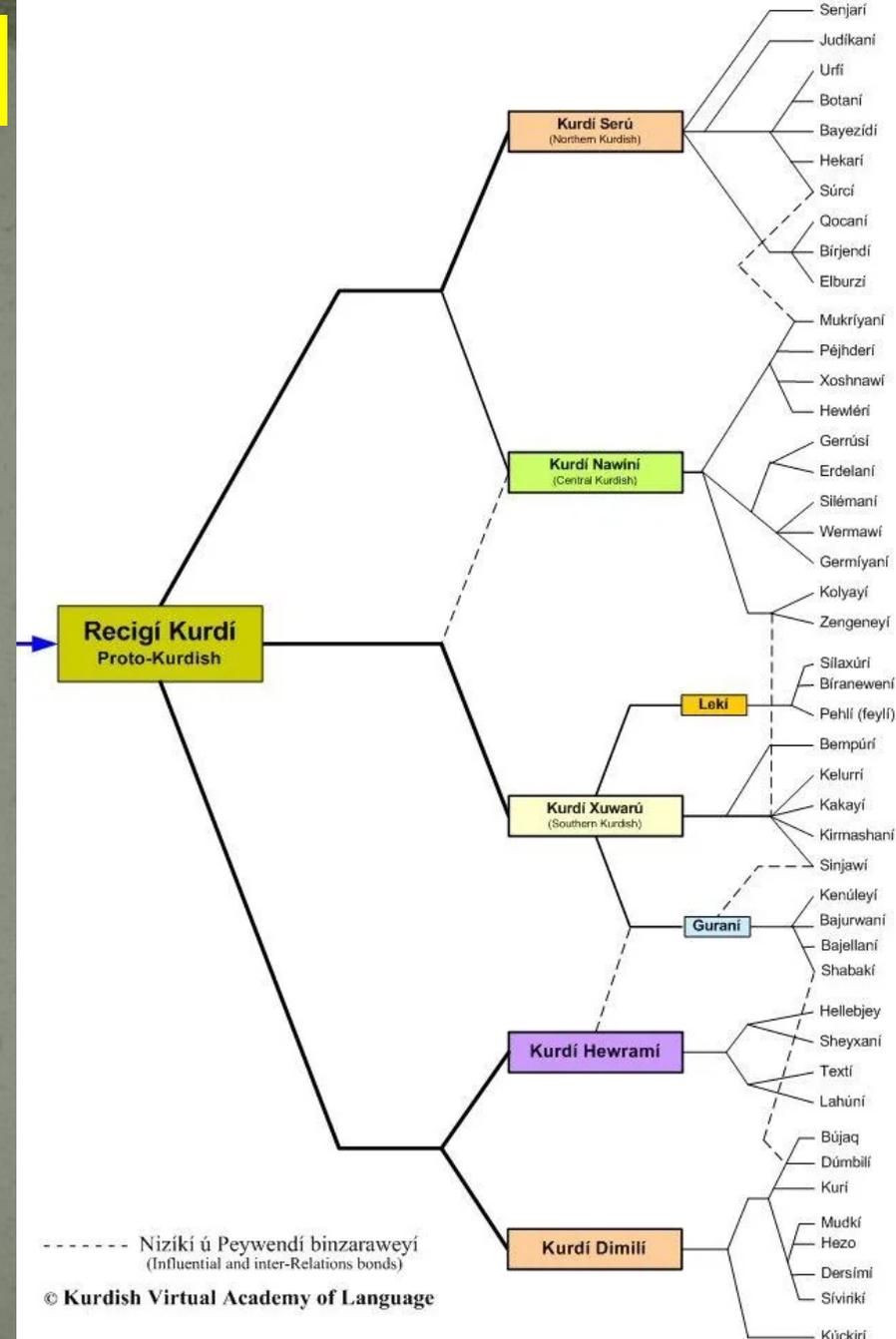
Kurdish Language

- ❑ Kurdish (Kurdî, کوردی) is a Northwestern Iranian language spoken by Kurds across Kurdistan, which spans Turkey, northern Iraq, northwest and northeast Iran, and Syria. It consists of several varieties forming a dialect continuum, with some being mutually unintelligible.
- ❑ There are about 45 million native Kurdish speakers, with the main dialects being Kurmanji, Sorani, and Southern Kurdish. Kurmanji is the most widely spoken, using the Hawar alphabet (Latin-based), while Sorani, the other major dialect, is written in a script derived from Arabic.



Kurdish Language

- ❑ In addition to Kurdish, some Kurds speak Gorani/Hawrami, a distinct group of Northwestern Iranian languages.
- ❑ The classification of Laki, a Southern Kurdish dialect, as either a separate language or a dialect is still debated, though it shows minimal differences from other Southern Kurdish dialects.
- ❑ Historically, Kurdish literature focused on poetry until the early 20th century, when more diverse forms of writing emerged. Kurmanji and Sorani are the two main written dialects, with Sorani also serving as one of Iraq's official languages, often referred to simply as "Kurdish" in political contexts.



Thank You!