

Language and the Speaker: Language change / Language and dialect - III

Language Conflict and Language Rights

Chapter 4

Spring 2018

Is language change good or bad?

- “Unless the present progress of change [is] arrested...there can be no doubt that, in another century, the dialect of the Americans will become utterly unintelligible to an Englishman...”
Captain Thomas Hamilton, **1833**
- “From every college in the country goes up the cry, ‘Our freshmen can't spell, can't punctuate.’ Every high school is in disrepair because its pupils are so ignorant of the merest rudiments.” C. H. Ward, **1917**
- “Recent graduates, including those with university degrees, seem to have no mastery of the language at all. They cannot construct a simple declarative sentence, either orally or in writing. They cannot spell common, everyday words. Punctuation is apparently no longer taught. Grammar is a complete mystery to almost all recent graduates.”
cited by J. Mersand, *Attitudes toward English Teaching*, **1961**
- “The common language is disappearing. It is slowly being crushed to death under the weight of verbal conglomerate, a pseudospeech at once both pretentious and feeble, that is created daily by millions of blunders and inaccuracies in grammar, syntax, idiom, metaphor, logic, and common sense.... In the history of modern English there is no period in which such victory over thought-in-speech has been so widespread. Nor in the past has the general idiom, on which we depend for our very understanding of vital matters, been so seriously distorted.”
A. Tibbets and C. Tibbets, *What's Happening to American English?*, **1978**

Attitudes towards change and difference – comment

I think the passion people have for language is both remarkable and dangerous. We cling so tightly to it and weave it so deeply into our identities that I think there are very few things as fundamental to humanity as language. It is beautiful in the way it transcends borders and can connect people, even those we traditionally view as speaking different languages. With that being said, it is also easy to see how it can divide us and why so much conflict arises from it. It is so personal that people will knit-pick over minor alterations or new words. Language is so personal that any attack, alteration, or oppression to it is taken as an attack on, alteration, or oppression of one's personal identity.

- Kathryn Watson

Types of change

- Lexical (word) change
- Sound change
- Grammar change

Lexical (word) change:

New words, new meanings, new spelling

The creation of new words

- 1940s: *ack-ack, atom bomb, bazooka*
- 1950s: *aerospace, alphanumeric, digitize, meter maid*
- 1960s: *area code, ASCII, biohazard, microwave oven*
- 1970s: *biofeedback, diskette, electronic mail*
- 1980s: *boom box, caller ID, channel surf, voice mail*
- 1990s: *digerati, netnanny, World Wide Web*
- 2000s: *blog, defriend, emoticon, tweet, wi-fi*

Lexical (word) change:

New words, new meanings, new spelling

Meanings of words can change over time:

wicked

Originally: an adjective and a synonym for *sinful*

Then: adjective meaning *fantastic* or *great*.

Now: adverb meaning *really*: *wicked cool* = *really cool*

gyrle (“girl”)

Borrowed into Early Middle English (around 1300) from Low German, meaning “a small child”. *gyrles* = “children”

100 years later, the meaning of *gyrle* had narrowed to refer only to females

Lexical (word) change:

New words, new meanings, new spelling

Changes from social media and instant messaging:

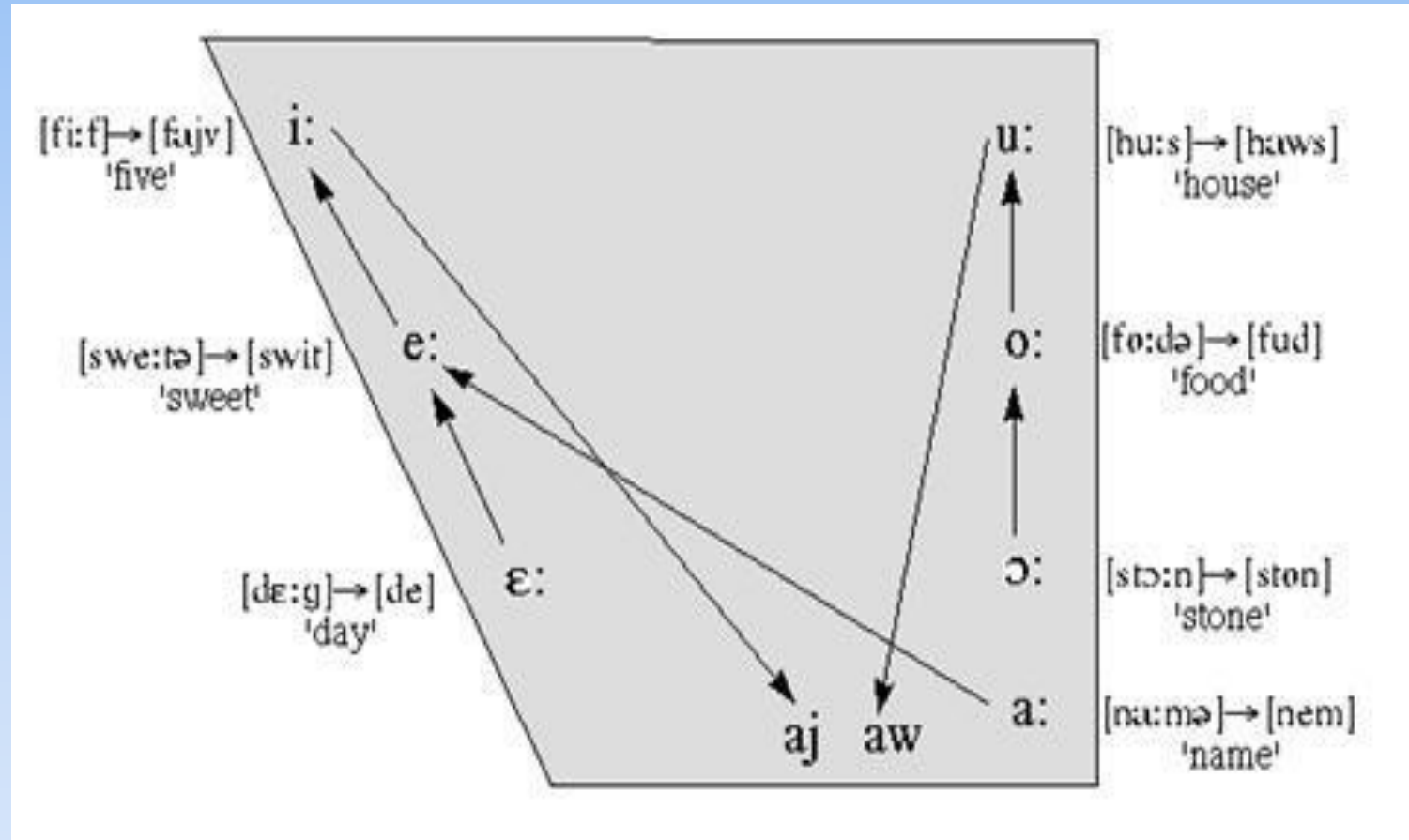
New spellings/abbreviations

ur	(you're)
thx	(thanks)
jk / jaykay	(joking)
rofl / roffle	(rolling on the floor laughing)

New words

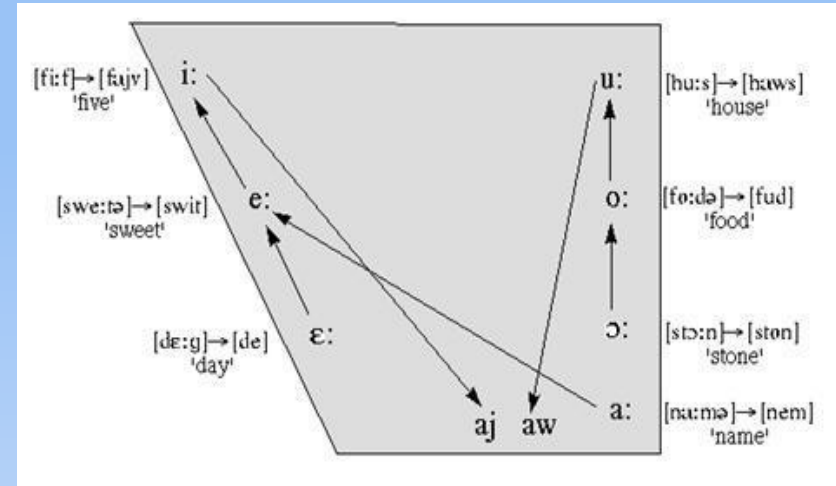
noob	(from newbie, someone inexperienced)
noobtard	(a stupid newbie)
pwn	(pronounced [pown], from own, to defeat)
leet	(from elite, really good at something)

Sound change



Vowel Shifts in 14th-16th c. English

Sound change



name was a two-syllable word, the first vowel was the same as the modern English word *cod*: [nɑ:mə] After vowel shift, it was one syllable, with the vowel [eɪ] as in *play*: [neɪm].

eke (preserved in *to eke out a living*) was a two-syllable word, the first vowel was the same as the Modern English *aid*: [ekə]. After the shift, it was one-syllable, with the vowel [iː]: [iːk].

rite had the same high vowel as Modern English *eat*: [ri:tə]. After the shift, it was one-syllable with the vowel [aɪ]: [raɪt].

Sound change – comments/questions

How do we know the shift happened without recordings of anybody speaking English then? Also, what could trigger such a big change?

- Eduardo Romero Gainza

➤ Shakespeare: Original pronunciation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPlpphT7n9s> [2:30 - 5:51]

Are there any other examples of shifts like this?

- Eduardo Romero Gainza

➤ Northern Cities Vowel Shift: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UoJ1-ZGb1w>

Grammar change

Modern English:

Does she write well?

Yes, she writes well.

Did they leave already?

Yes, they left already.

Shakespeare's Early Modern English:

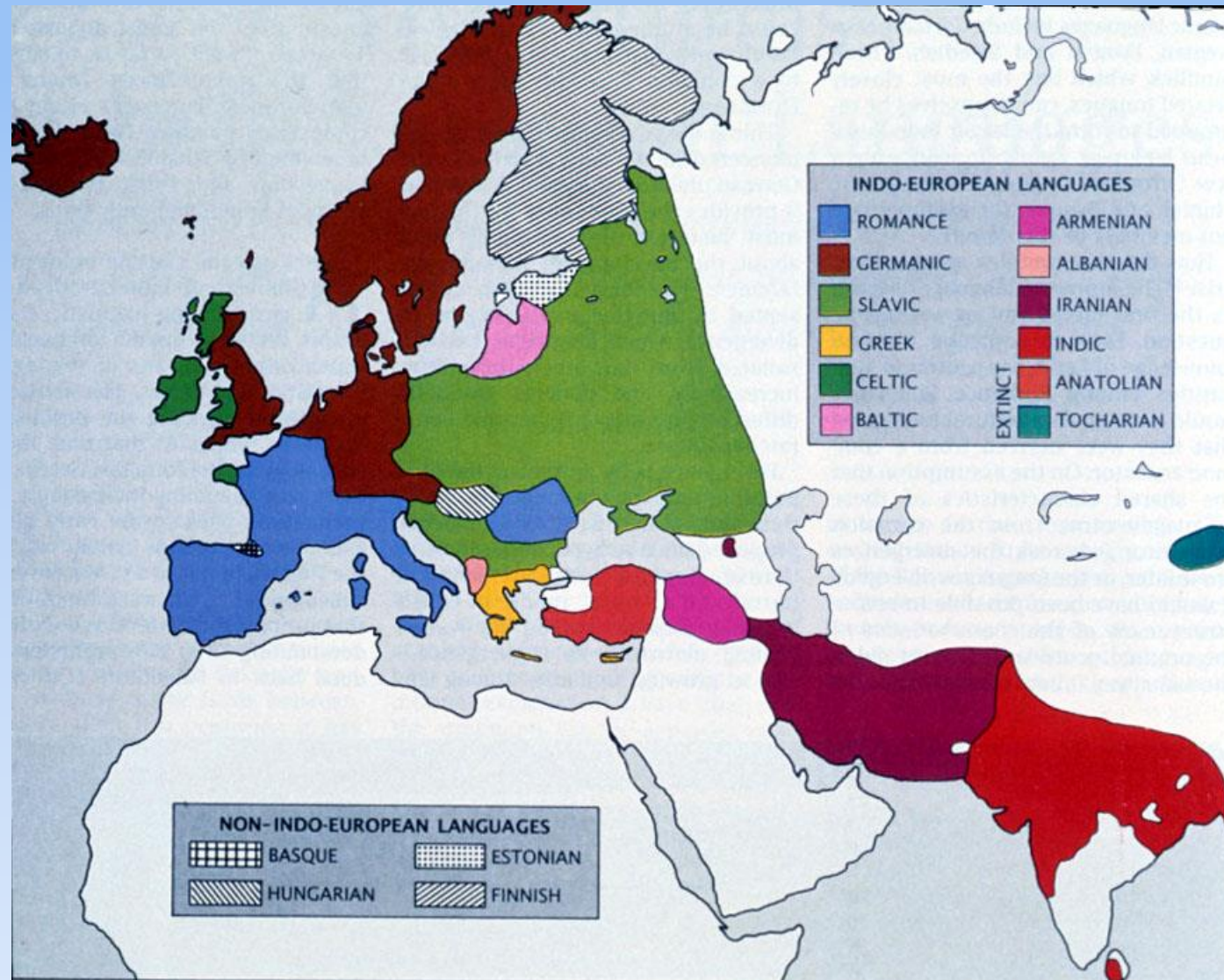
Writes she well?

Yes, she writes well.

Left they already?

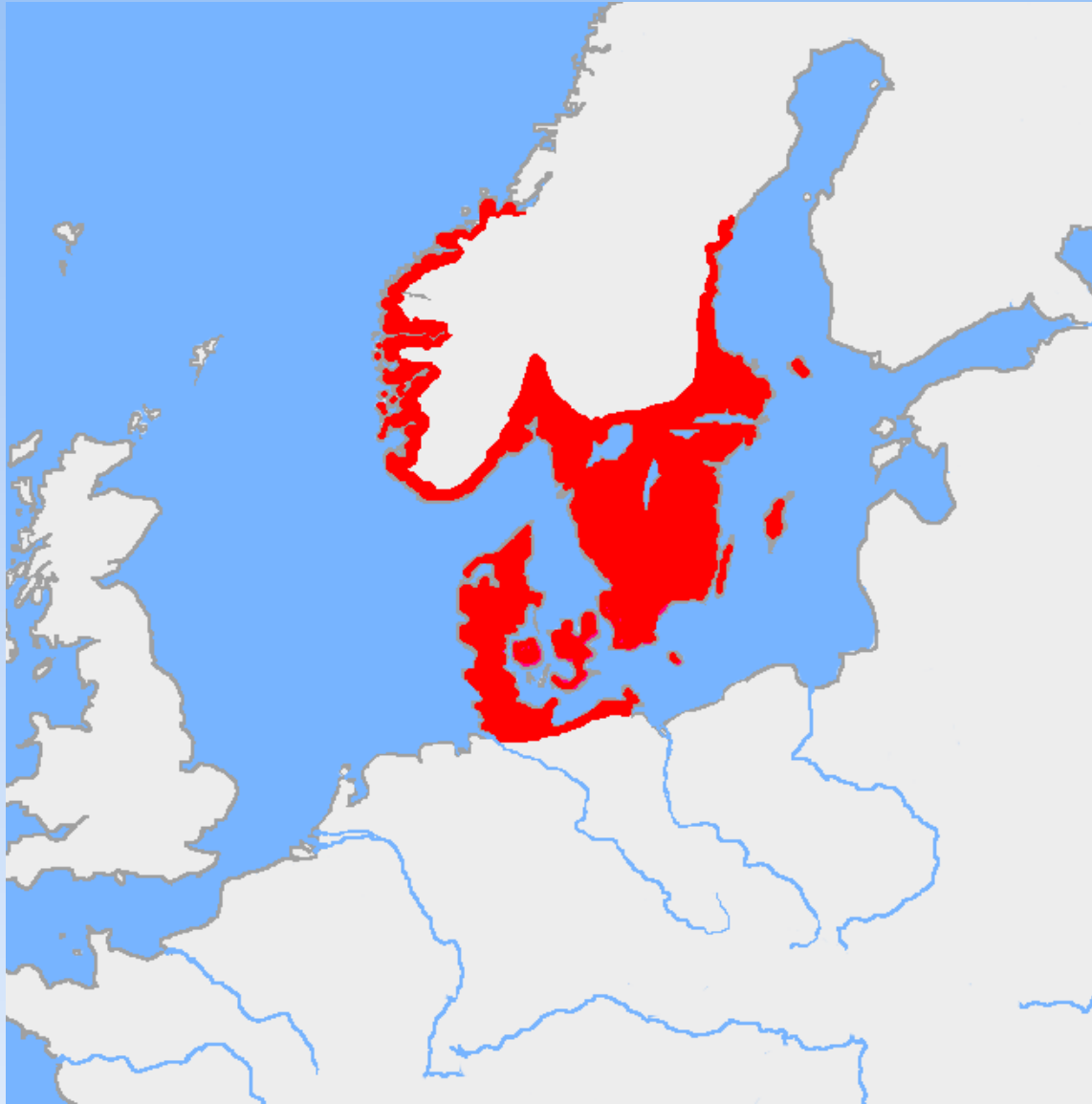
Yes, they left already.

The outcome of change: The rise of different languages



Indo-European Languages: From a single language 5000-6000 years ago

Source of Germanic Languages



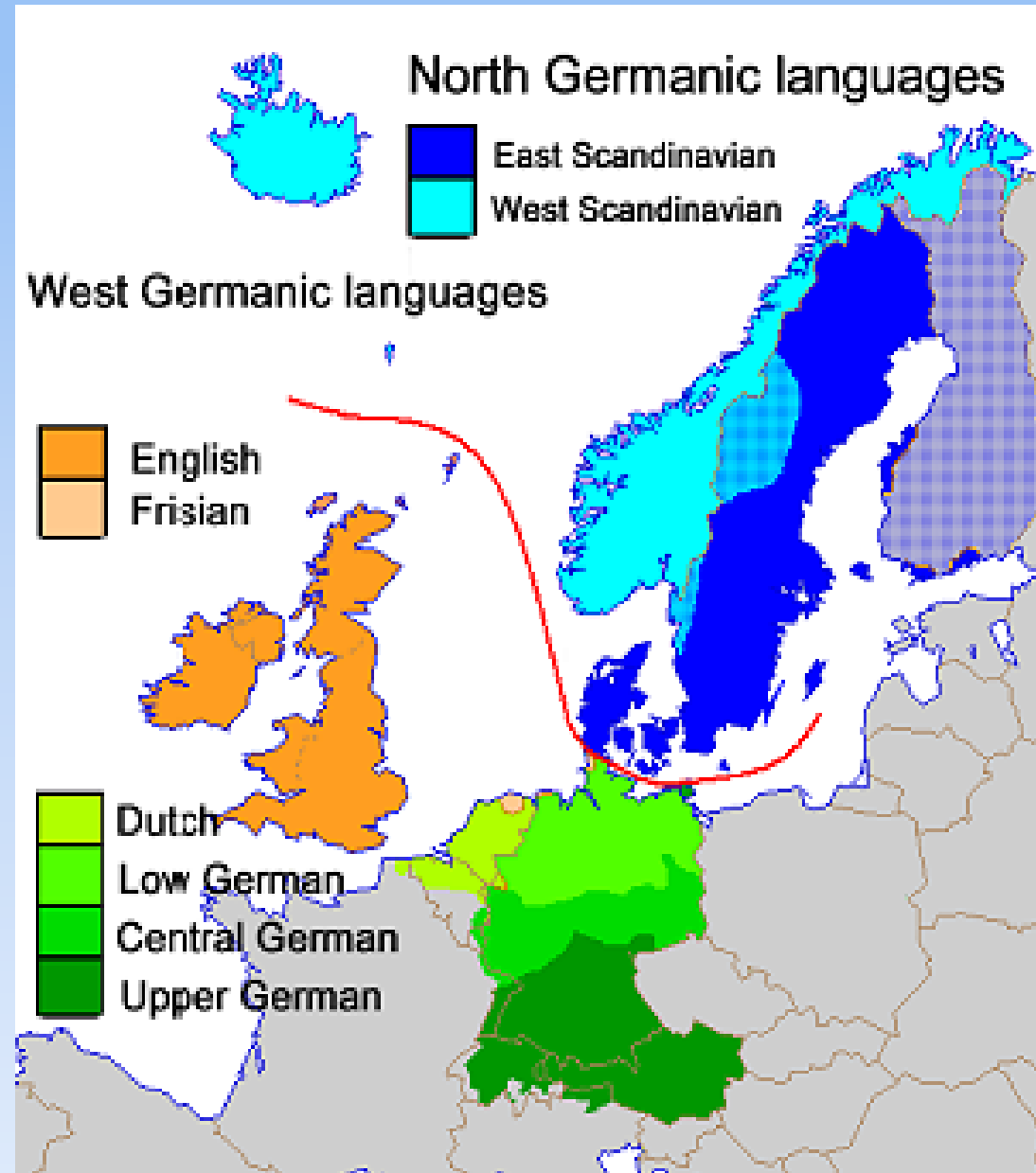
2500 years ago

Origin of Old English/Anglo-Saxon



1600 years ago

Germanic languages today



1000 Years of Change: The Lord's Prayer

Modern English:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.

Early Modern English (450 years ago – 16th century):

O oure father which arte in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Let thy kyngdom come. Thy wyll be fulfilled, as well in erth, as it ys in heven.

Middle English (700 years ago – 14th century):

Oure fadir that art in heuenes, halewid be thi name.

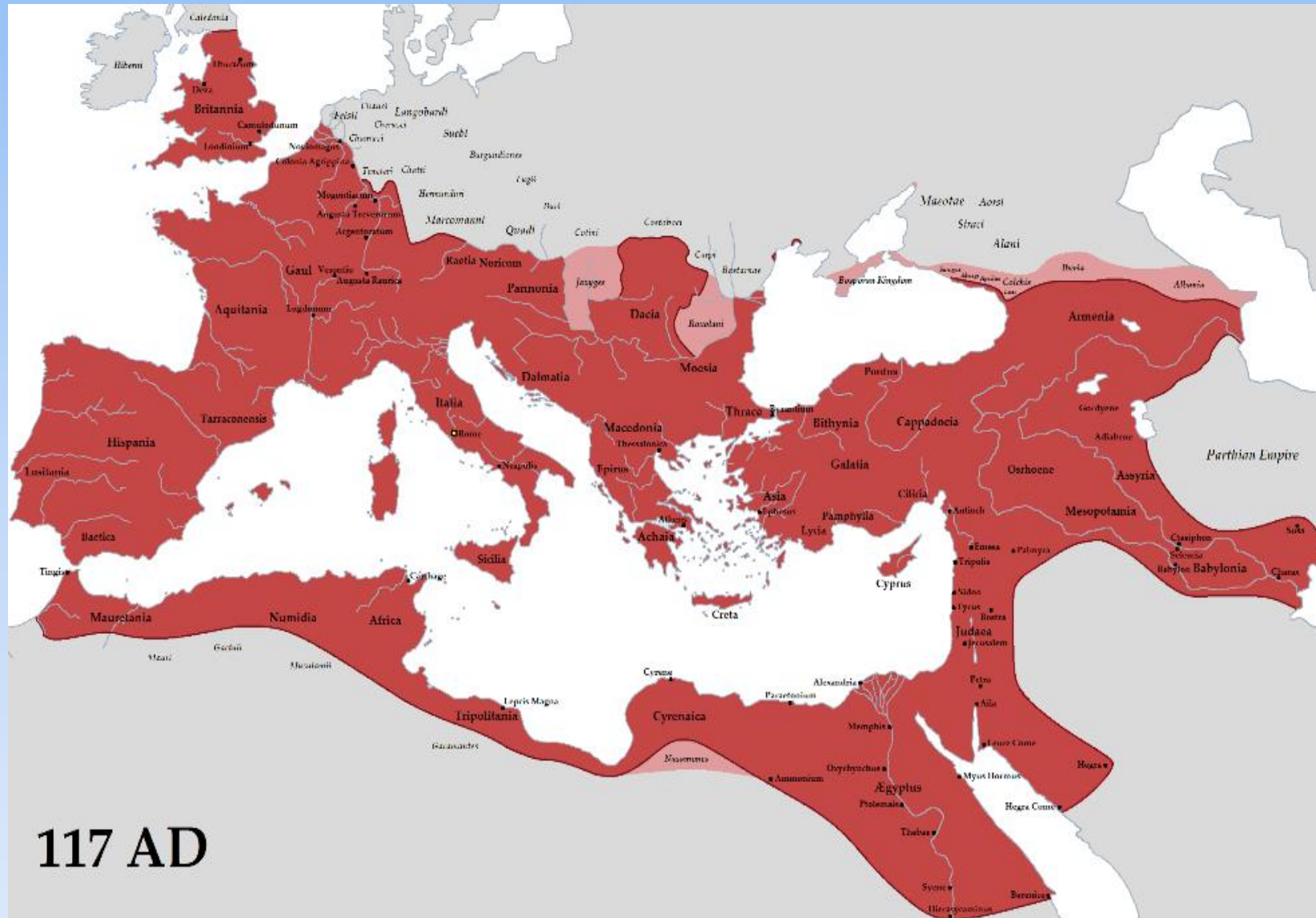
Thi kyngdoom come to, be thi wile don in erthe es in heuene.

Old English (1000 years ago – 11th century):

Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum;

Si þin nama gehalgod to becume þin rice gewurpe ðin willa on eorðan swa swa on heofonum.

Roman Empire



The extent of Latin (2000 years ago)

Romance Languages



Descended from Latin (became separate languages 1000 years ago)

The Lord's Prayer

Latin:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis sanctificetur Nomen Tuum;
father our who is in heaven sanctified name your

adveniat Regnum Tuum; fiat voluntas Tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra.
come kingdom your done will your as in heaven and in earth

The Lord's Prayer

Spanish:

Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos, santificado sea tu nombre.
Venga tu reino. Hágase tu voluntad, así en la tierra como en el cielo.

French:

Notre Père, qui es aux cieux, Que ton nom soit sanctifié,
Que ton règne vienne, Que ta volonté soit faite sur la terre comme au ciel.

Portuguese:

Pai nosso que estás nos céus, santificado seja o teu nome;
venha o teu reino, seja feita a tua vontade, assim na terra como no céu;

Italian:

Padre nostro che sei nei cieli, sia santificato il tuo Nome,
venga il tuo Regno, sia fatta la tua Volontà come in cielo così in terra.

Dialects, accents, varieties

Dialect, accent, variety

Accent: Distinct patterns of pronunciation that identify one groups of speakers as different from others: Southern Accent, Texas accent, Boston accent, New England accent, New York accent

Dialect: Includes lexical, phonological, and grammatical differentiation

Lexical: *bag vs. sack, soda vs. pop*

Phonological: *when, humor, admire*

Syntactic: *The house needs (to be) washed, The cat wants (to be) fed*
Anymore we stream videos on our phones instead watching TV.

Variety: A value-neutral term which does not implicitly value a “standard” over all others. Is “any particular kind of language which we wish, for some purpose, to consider as a single entity.” (Chambers & Trudgill 1998, p. 5)

Language vs dialect

How do we know when we've got a language?

Linguistically: languages are dialects that are “mutually intelligible”

But it's not always linguistic!

Politics plays a large role at times

Serbo-Croatian → Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian (post Yugoslavia)
Plus Montenegrin (after split with Serbia)
religious and ethnic divide

Hindi & Urdu are basically the same language (religious divide)

Max Weinreich sociolinguist, scholar of Yiddish (1945):

אַ שפּראַך איז אַ דיאַלעקט מיט אַן אַרמיי און פֿלאָט

a shprakh iz a dialekt mit an armey un flot

‘A language is a dialect with an army and navy.’

Language vs dialect

So-called dialects of Chinese and Arabic are in many cases distinct languages linguistically. Macrolanguages: “multiple, closely related individual languages that are deemed in some usage contexts to be a single language.” (*Ethnologue* <http://www.ethnologue.com/>)

1	Chinese [zho]	China	33	1,197
	Chinese, Gan [gan]	China	1	20.6
	Chinese, Hakka [hak]	China	13	30.1
	Chinese, Huizhou [czh]	China	1	4.60
	Chinese, Jinyu [cjy]	China	1	45.0
	Chinese, Mandarin [cmn]	China	13	848
	Chinese, Min Bei [mnp]	China	2	10.3
	Chinese, Min Dong [cdo]	China	6	9.12
	Chinese, Min Nan [nan]	China	10	46.6
	Chinese, Min Zhong [czo]	China	1	3.10
	Chinese, Pu-Xian [cpx]	China	3	2.56
	Chinese, Wu [wuu]	China	1	77.2
	Chinese, Xiang [hsn]	China	1	36.0
	Chinese, Yue [yue]	China	10	62.2

5	Arabic [ara]	Saudi Arabia	60	237
	Arabic, Algerian Spoken [arq]	Algeria	1	28.0
	Arabic, Chadian Spoken [shu]	Chad	4	1.14
	Arabic, Eastern Egyptian Bedawi Spoken [avl]	Egypt	4	1.69
	Arabic, Egyptian Spoken [arz]	Egypt	1	54.0
	Arabic, Gulf Spoken [afb]	Kuwait	9	2.34
	Arabic, Hijazi Spoken [acw]	Saudi Arabia	2	6.02
	Arabic, Libyan Spoken [ayl]	Libya	3	4.32
	Arabic, Mesopotamian Spoken [acm]	Iraq	4	15.1
	Arabic, Moroccan Spoken [ary]	Morocco	2	21.0
	Arabic, Najdi Spoken [ars]	Saudi Arabia	4	9.67
	Arabic, North Levantine Spoken [apc]	Syria	2	14.4
	Arabic, North Mesopotamian Spoken [ayp]	Iraq	3	6.30
	Arabic, Sa’idi Spoken [aec]	Egypt	1	19.0
	Arabic, Sanaani Spoken [ayn]	Yemen	1	7.60
	Arabic, South Levantine Spoken [ajp]	Jordan	3	6.20
	Arabic, Sudanese Spoken [apd]	Sudan	3	16.8
	Arabic, Ta’izzi-Adeni Spoken [acq]	Yemen	2	7.08
	Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb]	Tunisia	1	9.41

Standardization – comment

Certain dialects are “unlikely to be esteemed as standard varieties” because of the “lack of economic and political power held by their speakers”. It feeds into a cycle, doesn’t it: one in which positions or opportunities of economic and political power are withheld from speakers of these dialects because of their dialect/social status?

- Jeremy Martinez

Dialect Continua

Dialect continuum: There are no sharp dialect boundaries but gradual shifts

Geographical dialect continua: West Romance dialect continuum, West Germanic dialect continuum, Scandinavian dialect continuum. The Dutch and German spoken on either side of the border between the Netherlands and Germany are more like each other than like the languages spoken in the capitals of either country.

Heteronomy: A dialect is heteronomous to a language if it counts as a variety of that language. Southern American English is heteronomous with respect to Standard American English, but not British English.

North American dialect map: <http://aschmann.net/AmEng/#SmallMapCanada>

Jamaican English Social (Class) Dialect Continuum

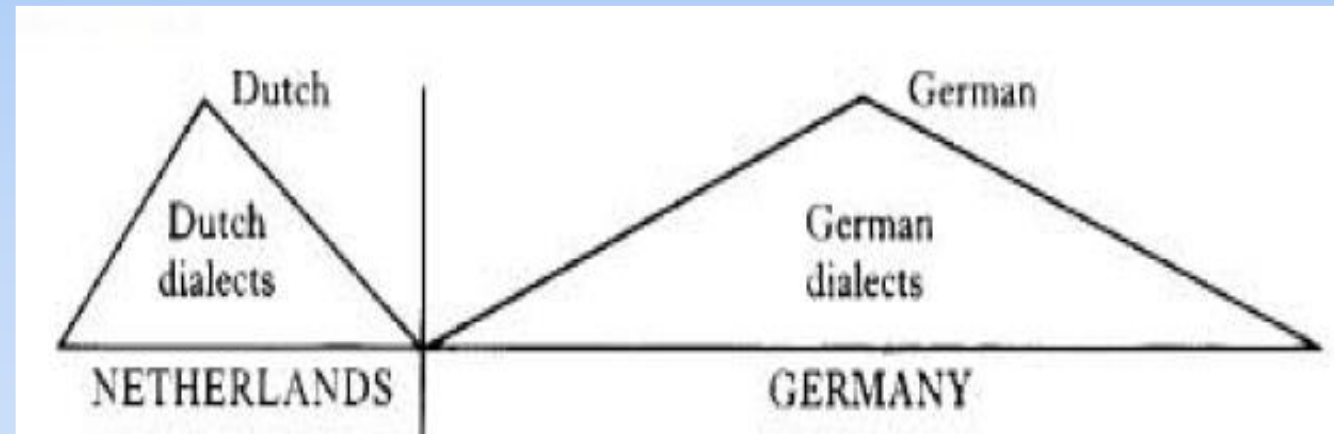
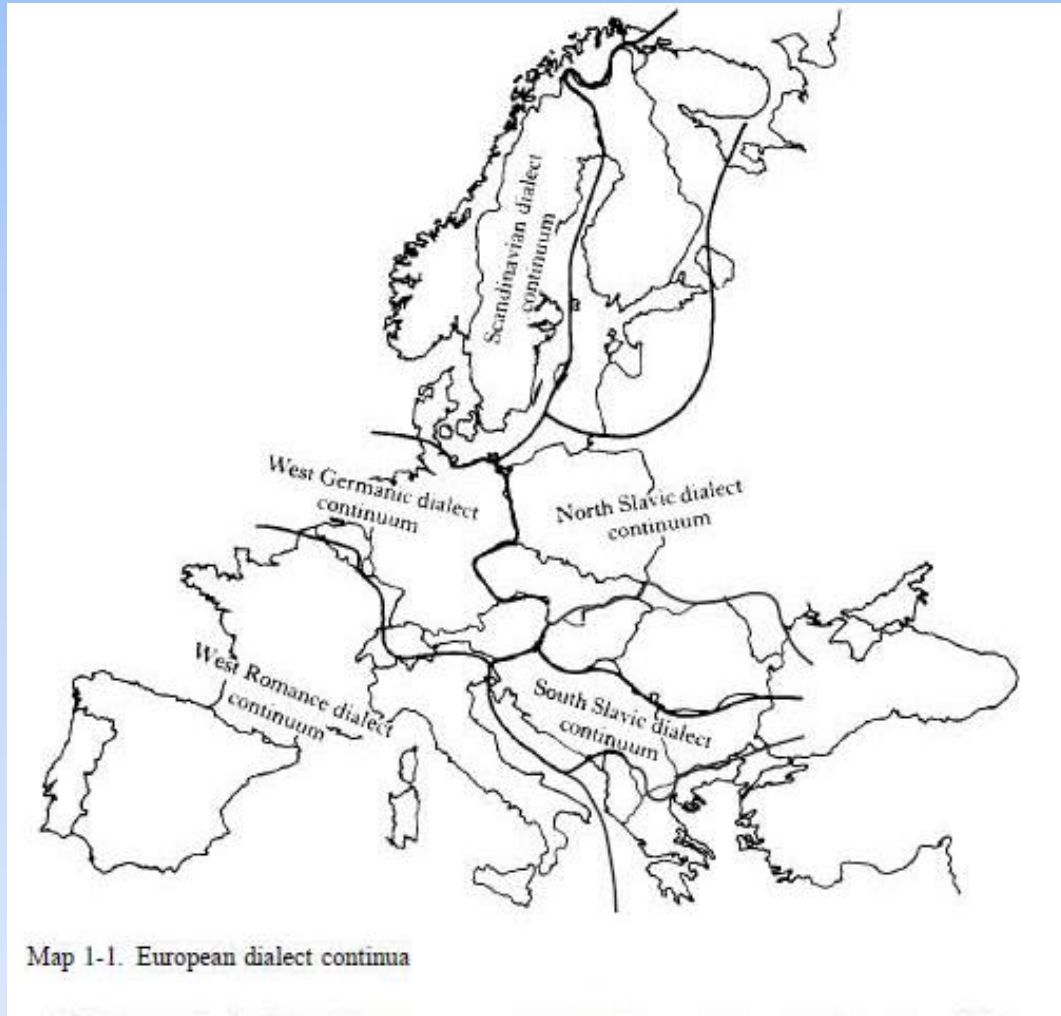
<i>It's my book</i>	<i>I didn't get any</i>	<i>Do you want to cut it?</i>
its mai buk	ai didnt get eni	du ju want tu k ^v t it
iz mai buk	ai didn get non	du ju wa:n tu kot it
iz mi buk	a din get non	ju wa:n kot it
a mi buk dat	a in get non	iz kot ju wa:n kot it
a fi mi buk dat	mi na bin get non	a kot ju wa:n fu kot it

Social (Class) Dialect – comment

Who has the right to decide when one language morphs from a dialect into another language? This seems like a question that only the speakers of the language could answer, so I do not understand which linguistic experts who sometimes seem to not actually speak the language get to categorize ethnic groups in such a way.

- Morgan Kaplan

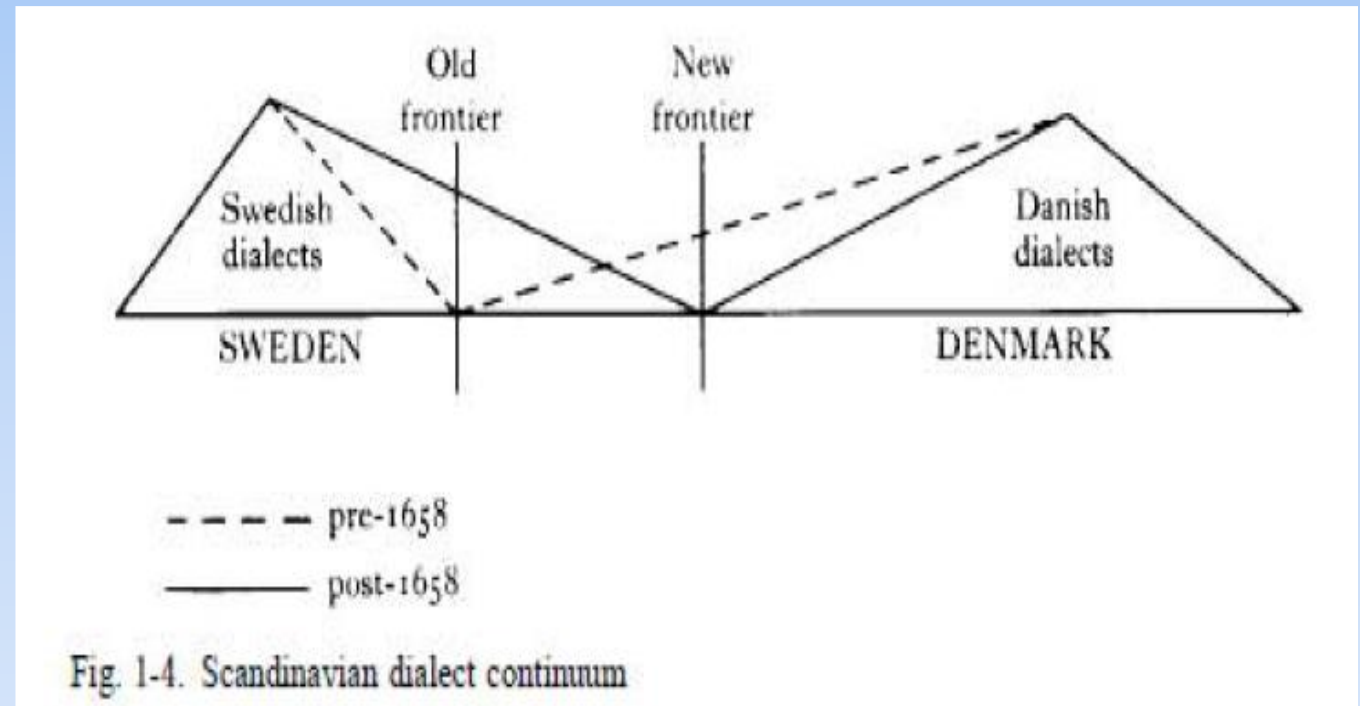
Autonomy and heteronomy: Dutch-German dialect continuum



Autonomy and heteronomy: Swedish-Danish dialect Continuum



Map 1-2. Sweden and Denmark, showing the southern region of Sweden which was formerly Danish territory



Dialect Continua – comment/question

Chambers-Trudgill piece was the portion that addressed the educational deficits brought about by the ambiguity of Jamaican Creole's status as a language. This, just like the dialect continua, is something completely new to me. My question, then, is how would the curriculum of those schools have to change in order to accommodate those children who are coming from what would then be considered a "semi-foreign" language?

- Kathryn Watson