

МЕДИЦИНА, ПЕДАГОГИКА И ТЕХНОЛОГИЯ: ТЕОРИЯ И ПРАКТИКА

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REGIONAL DIALECTOLOGY

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Abstract: Regional dialectology is the study of language variation across different geographical areas, focusing on differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. This field investigates how linguistic features develop within specific regions due to historical, social, and cultural influences. By employing methods such as dialect surveys, linguistic mapping, and sociolinguistic interviews, researchers identify patterns of regional speech and establish isoglosses—boundaries marking linguistic differences. Regional dialects not only reflect local identity but also evolve due to migration, globalization, and media influence. This study highlights the significance of dialectal diversity and its role in understanding linguistic change over time.

Key words: Dialectology, Dialect, Geographic distribution, Historical linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Phonological features, Lexical features, Mutual intelligibility, Diglossia, Pluricentrism, Isoglosses, Urban vs. rural speech

Introduction

Dialectology, derived from the Greek words *διάλεκτος* (dialektos, meaning "talk" or "dialect") and *-λογία* (-logia, meaning "study" or "science"), is the systematic study of dialects, which are subsets of languages. Initially regarded as a branch of historical linguistics in the 19th century, it is now often considered a subfield of sociolinguistics. The primary focus of dialectology is on linguistic variations that arise due to geographical distribution and the features associated with them. It explores

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aspects such as how two local dialects evolve from a common linguistic ancestor and studies both historical (diachronic) and contemporary (synchronic) changes in language.

Dialectologists examine grammatical, lexical, and phonological traits that correspond to specific regions. They analyze not only long-established communities but also migrant groups that introduce their languages into new linguistic environments, leading to language contact and change.

Some key topics in dialectology include **mutual intelligibility**, which concerns how well speakers of different dialects understand each other; **diglossia**, where two dialects serve distinct social functions; **dialect continua**, which involve a series of dialects with varying degrees of intelligibility; and **pluricentrism**, where a language has multiple standard varieties.

Early dialectology focused on producing **dialect maps**, marking linguistic boundaries (isoglosses) between dialect regions. However, the field later expanded to include social factors in linguistic variation. For example, the **Linguistic Atlas of the United States**, created in the 1930s, was one of the first studies to incorporate social aspects into dialect research.

Methods of data collection

Various techniques are used to gather information on regional dialects and select suitable participants for research. Initially, dialectologists sought out older speakers in rural areas to document the most traditional and least altered forms of dialects. However, with the rise of sociolinguistics, researchers have shifted their focus to younger urban speakers to study ongoing linguistic changes and innovations.

Early dialect studies often relied on **written questionnaires**, where informants self-reported dialectal features. This approach has regained popularity in recent years

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due to the ease of collecting data through online surveys, which allow researchers to reach a vast number of respondents at a low cost.

In the 20th century, **face-to-face interviews** became the dominant method for dialect research, using two main types of questionnaires:

- **Direct questionnaires**, which require specific responses to gather lexical and phonological data (e.g., asking participants to name objects or pronounce words).
- **Indirect questionnaires**, which collect information in a more open-ended way.

Mutual intelligibility

One common method for distinguishing between languages and dialects is mutual intelligibility—whether speakers of two linguistic varieties can understand each other. However, this criterion is not always reliable. For example, Spanish and Italian share similarities and are somewhat understandable to speakers of each language, but their differences in phonology, syntax, morphology, and vocabulary prevent them from being classified as dialects of the same language. Instead, both evolved separately from Latin, their common ancestral language.

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