Why linguistics?

ROBERTA D'ALESSANDRO
UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

Utrecht University

UiL OTS
UTRECHT INSTITUTE
OF LINGUISTICS

erc
European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

Dialectology

- The study of dialects of one language
  - ❖ Jamaican English, Indian English, Scottish English, AE...

- For Romance: the study of 'minor' languages AS WELL AS the dialects of one language:
  - ❖ Balearic Catalan, Madrid Spanish,...
  - ❖ Occitan, Neapolitan, Rhaeto-Romance, Daco-Romanian, Istro-Romanian...

Dialectology

- The study of dialects of one language
  - ❖ Jamaican English, Indian English, Scottish English, AE…

- For Romance: the study of 'minor' languages AS WELL AS the dialects of one language:
  - ❖ **Balearic Catalan, Madrid Spanish**,…
  - ❖ **Occitan, Neapolitan, Rhaeto-Romance, Daco-Romanian, Istro-Romanian…**

Why study variation?

To answer this question we will look at:

- approaches to the study of language
- dialectology
- syntax and phonology: how they interact
- voice
- deixis
- person
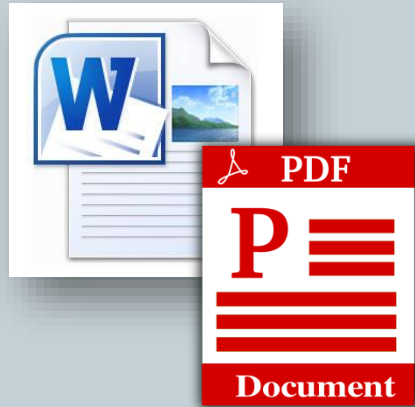
More questions than answers

If our brain is a computer…

…then what is language?

If our brain is a computer…
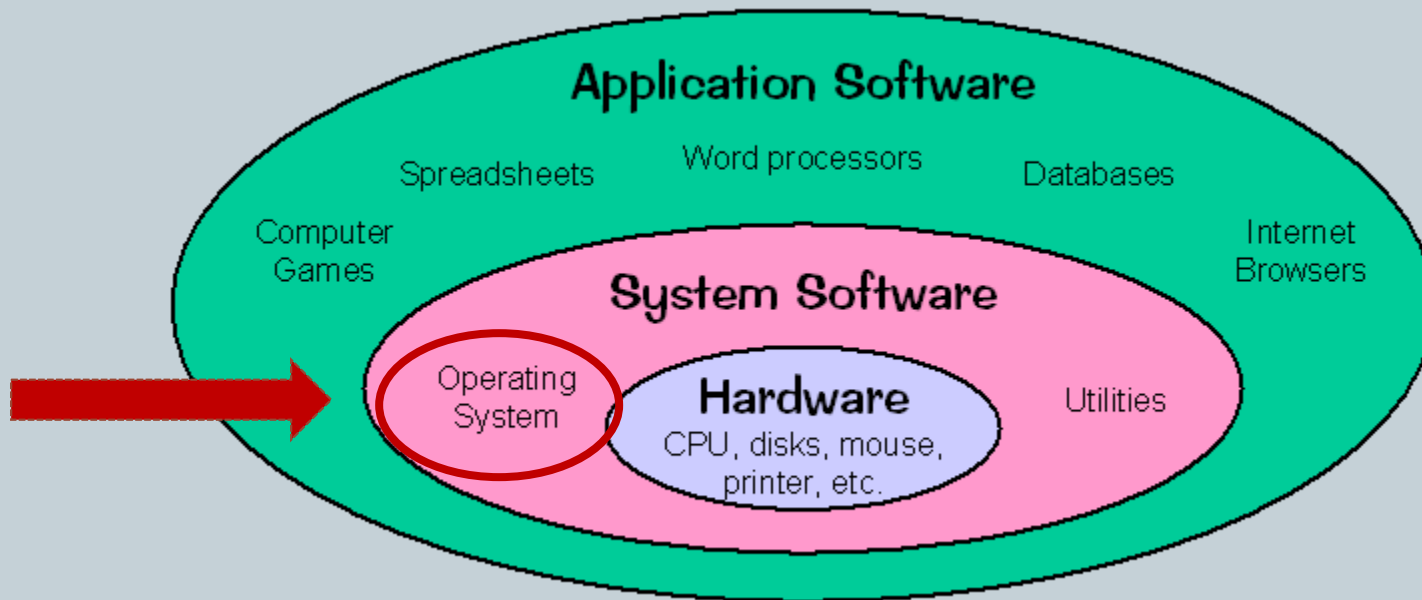
- Utterances are like .doc/.pdf/.xls… files

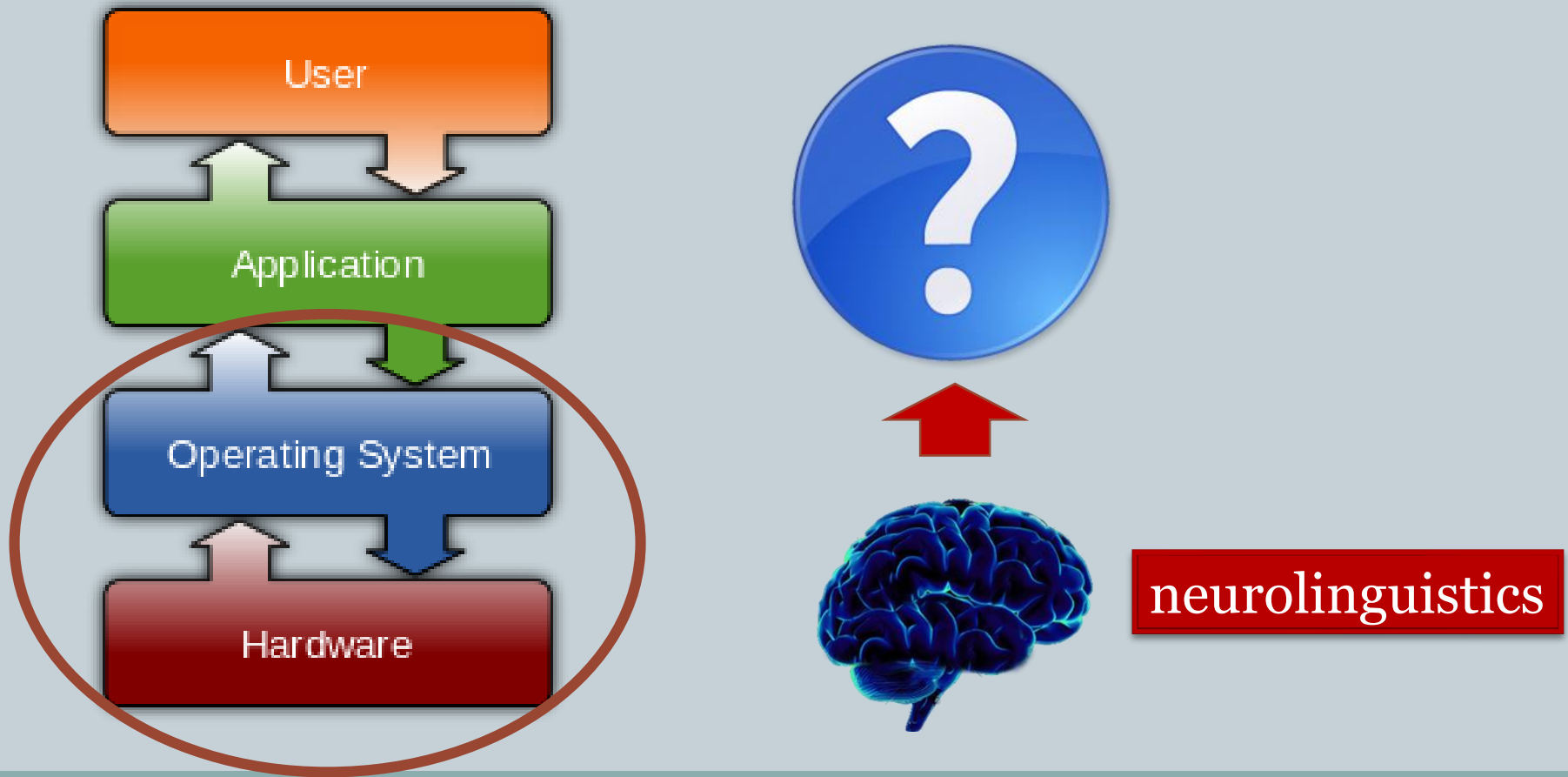- Languages are like programs (or apps)

So what is Language?

- **Language is the OS (or part of it)**
- It is what makes it possible for languages to run on the brain
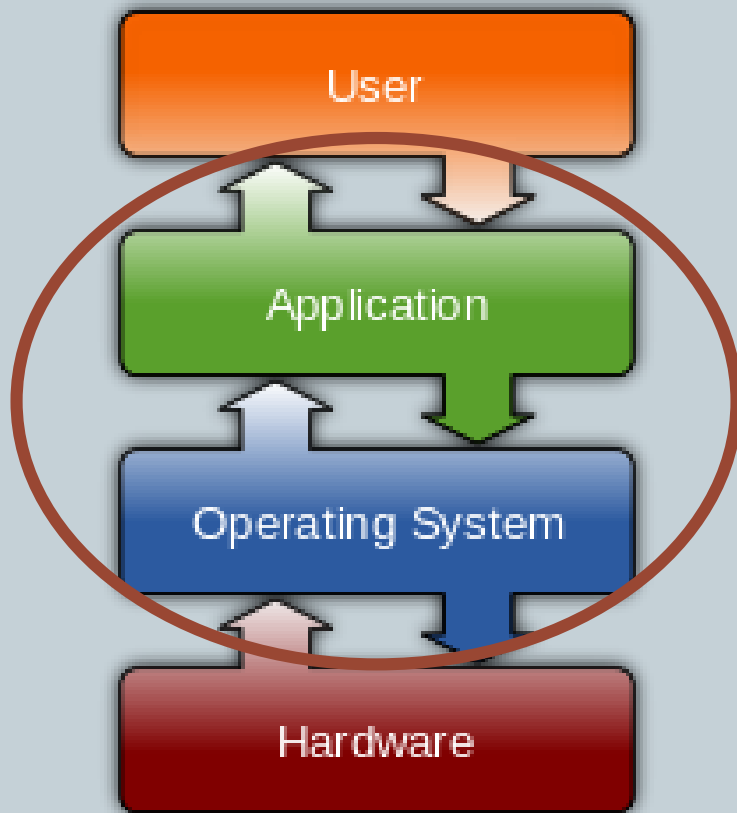
How do we look for it?

- The OS is **not** visible – we need to deduce it

neurolinguistics

How do we look for it?

- The OS is **not** visible – we need to deduce it

Theoretical linguists

How do we look for it?
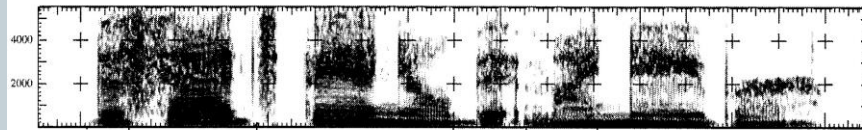
"The sad spaniel bit my neighbor"

User

Application

Operating System

Hardware

...
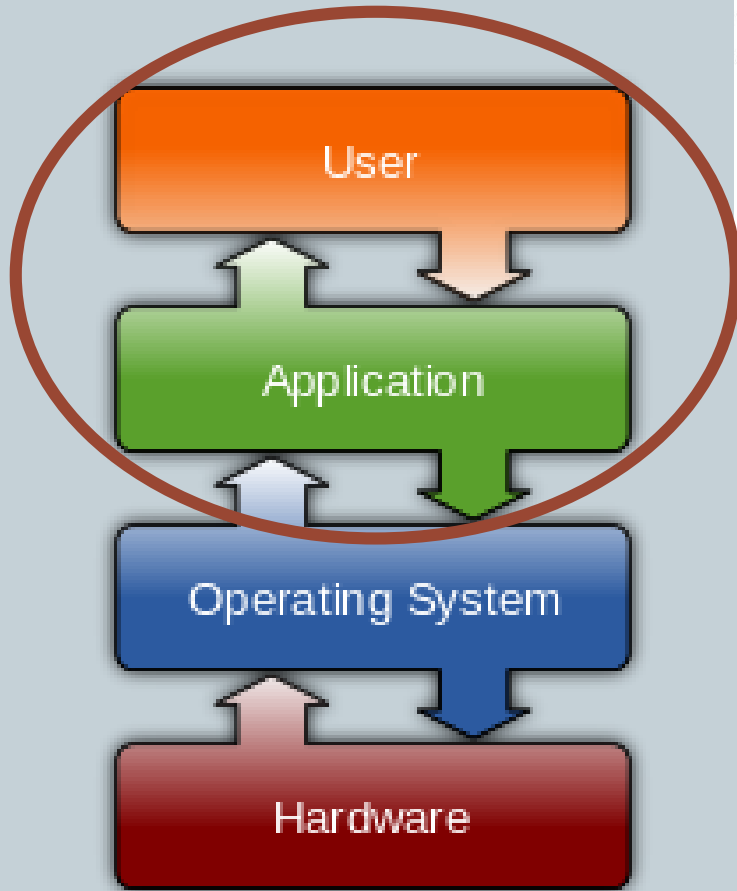
Usage-based, phonetics, psycholinguistics

?

How do we look for it?

How do we look for it?

- The OS is **not** visible – we need to deduce it
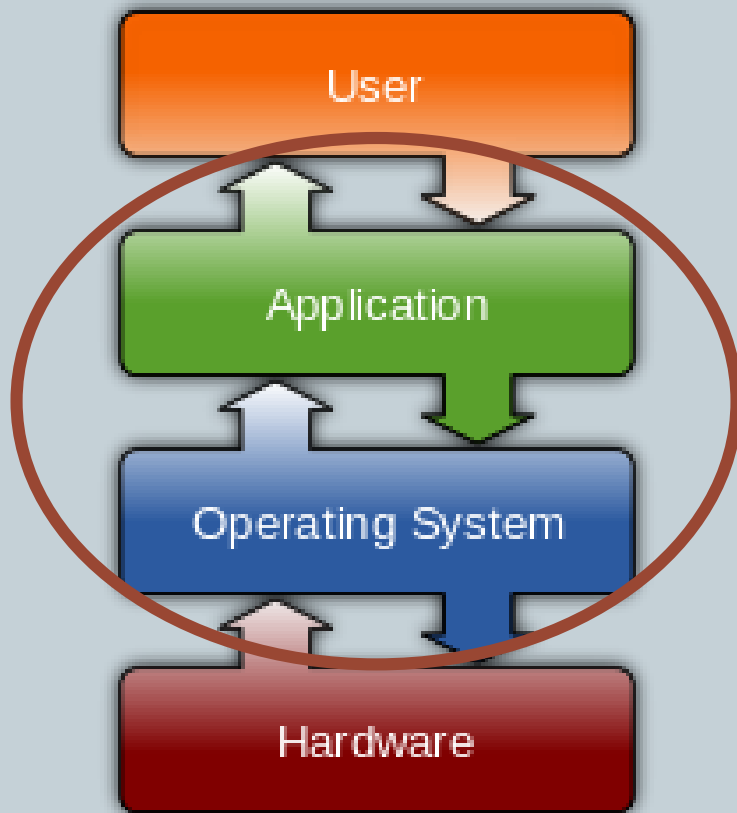
Theoretical linguists

PF – NS- LF

- Syntax
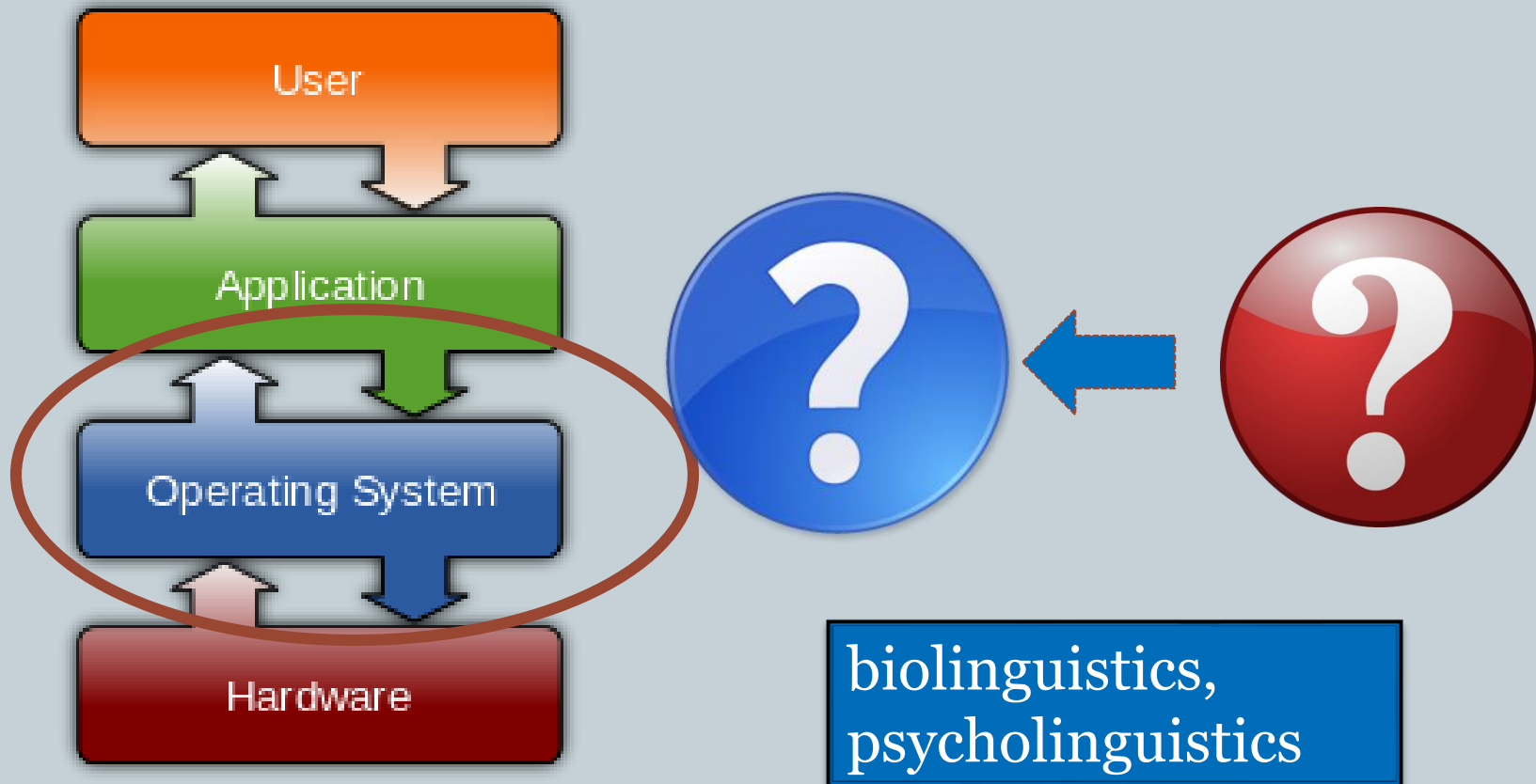- Phonological rules do not usually express syntactic information (we have prosody and morphology for that)

- Voice?
- Syntactic person?
- Can we express them phonologically? By means of a phonological RULE?

Phonological rules

- Phonological rules need a DOMAIN of application
- We know that the domain of application of phonological rules is NOT a syntactic phrase: NON ISOMORPHISM (Selkirk 1981, Nespor & Vogel 1986)
- No correspondence, two different «modules»

- A phonological RULE expressing syntactic information is very rare
- **Who cares**

Rafforzamento fonosintattico

- *Rafforzamento fonosintattico* (phono-syntactic doubling, RF) is a SANDHI rule applying to the initial consonant of Word 2 in a sequence W1 W2 if given conditions are met

W1   W2

1. CVC**V** CVCV   → CVCV **CC**VCV

    ↓   ↓

    stress   gemination

What do you do with it?

- Most of the time: nothing

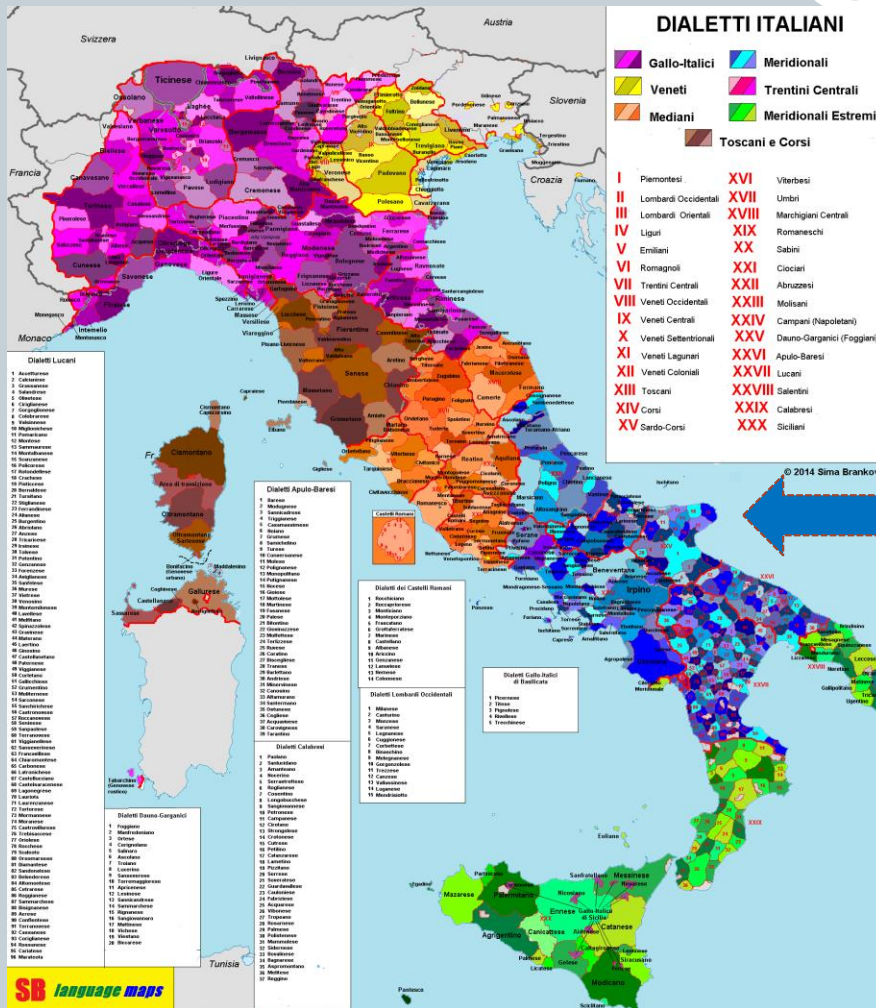 It is just a phonological rule applying in a given phonological context

In Upper Southern Italian Dialects (USIDs)

- Express mass/count
- Express gender
- Express person
- Express voice

USIDs

Languages, not dialects
«dialects of Italy»

Abruzzese-
Molisano
Pugliese
Neapolitan

- RF for mass-count

Neapolitan

2. a.'o fierrə   b. o'**ff**ierrə

  the iron –c.   the iron- m.

 'the iron bar'   'iron'(the metal)

3. a. 'o cafè   b. 'o **cc**afè

  the coffee   the coffee

  'the caffetteria'   ' coffee'

- RF for gender

Pugliese

4. a. i figghjə   b. i **ff**igghjə

    the children   the children

    'the sons'   'the daughters'

5. a. i kunzuprinə   b. i **kk**unzuprinə

    the cousins   the cousins

    'the male cousins'   'the female cousins'

Gender and mass/count

- We can blame it on the determiner

- Historically different determiners, or differently developing

- Is syntax really completely innocent here?

Person?

It gets better!

6.

	Airola (Central Campanian)		
a.	addʒə	'vistə/ve'nu:tə	H.pr.1sg seen/come
	a	'vistə/ve'nu:tə	H.pr.2sg seen/come
	a	**v'v**istə/**vv**e'nu:tə	H.pr.3sg seen/come
b.	ammu	'vistə/ve'nu:tə	H.pr.1pl seen/come
	atə	'fatt/ve'nu:tə	H.pr.2pl seen/come
	annə	'fatt/ve'nu:tə	H.pr.3pl seen/come

(Torcolacci 2014: 53)

Person

7.

	Albidona (Northern Calabrian)		
a.	dʒə	ɣa'βa:tə/βə'nu:tə	H.pr.1sg washed/come
	ɛ	ɣa'βa:tə/βə'nu:tə	H.pr.2sg washed/come
	ɛ	**gg**a'βa:tə/**bb**ə'nu:tə	H.pr.3sg washed/come
b.	mə	ɣa'βa:tə/βə'nu:tə	H.pr.1pl washed/come
	a'βəsə	ɣa'βa:tə/βə'nu:tə	H.pr.2pl washed/come
	nə	ɣa'βa:tə/βə'nu:tə	H.pr.3pl washed/come

[Manzini & Savoia (2005), II: 784]

Eastern Abruzzese

8. a. So vistə   b. So **vv**istə

    am seen   am seen

    'I have seen'.act   'I am seen'. Pass

9. a. Si rəspəttatə   b. Si **rr**əspəttatə

    are respected   are respected

    'you have respected'   'you are respected'

(Biberauer & D'Alessandro 2006, D'Alessandro & Scheer 2015)

10.

So vistə	(I) am seen	'I have seen'	BE
Si vistə	(you) are seen	'you have seen'	BE
A vistə	(he) has seen	's/he has seen'	HAVE
semə vistə	(we) are ... ave seen'		BE
setə vistə	(yo... ave seen'		BE
a vistə	(the... ave seen'		HAVE

Remember!

D'Alessandro & Roberts (2010)

1/2 BE
3 HAVE

Voice

Eastern Abruzzese

11.a. So vistə

   am seen

   'I have seen'.act

b. So **vv**istə

   am seen

   'I am seen'. Pass

12.a. Si rəspəttatə

   are respected

   'you have respected'

b. Si **rr**əspəttatə

   are respected

   'you are respected'

Voice

- 2 different auxiliaries?
 > Unlikely

13. So/ si > so/si **ss**əmbatəchə (I am/you are nice)

Compare:
14. nu waglionə **s**əmbatəchə
   a   guy   nice
  'A nice guy'
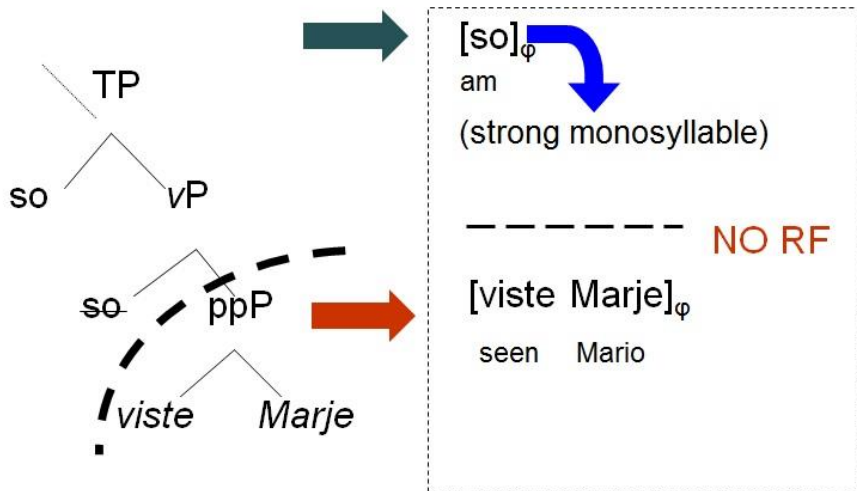
The phonological rule applies when it can

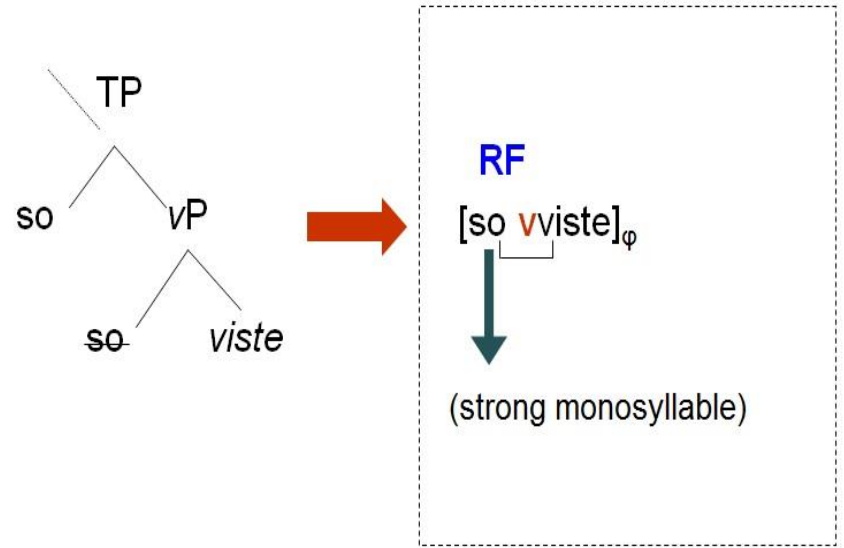# Voice

- Structural difference between active and passive

15.a   b.

- We MUST look for mapping rules, or we won't understand what this language is doing

- Reality is much more complex than we would expect

- Phonology and syntax are also interacting directly, sometimes

Person and deixis

- **Grammatical person** and **deixis**: are they the same thing?

- Is 1st person the same as **speaker**?

- Is 2nd person the same as **addressee**?

16. Tu /you

    2nd person/Addressee

Person and deixis in pronouns

- Personal deixis (i.e. reference to the participantsto a speech act) and person are usually considered to overlap in pronouns.

Benveniste (1966): le traitement du pronom personnel «je»: il y a deux «je», «deux instances conjuguées »: l'une est une instance formelle, «linguistique», l'autre est une instance «personnelle», une présence. Ce dernier «je» relève d'un prédicat de réalité. Il «signifie la personne qui énonce la présente instance de discours contenant je».

PLG I, p. 252.

- 1st person : [+ speaker]

- 2nd person: [+ addressee]

- 3rd person: [- speaker; - addressee]

3rd person is actually the ABSENCE of person

3 rd person = no person

i. **Third person pronouns do not refer to a speech act participant.**

ii. Third person pronouns need to be introduced: they either require a discourse antecedent or an ostensive act.

iii. Third person referents depend on the linguistic context, not on the utterance context. Thus they are anaphoric, not indexical.

iv. Once introduced, the referent of a third person pronoun can remain constant, independently of which interlocutor is using it.

v. Third person pronouns can refer to both sentient and non-sentient individuals.   Gruber (2013: 47)

3rd person = no person?

- Personal pronouns in USIDs

17. Custù, cussù, cullù   (Eastern Abruzzese)
    he   he   he
    `He next to me, he next to you, he far from both´
18. Chistè, chissè, chillè
    she   she   she
    'She next to me, she next to you, she far from both´

Spanish demonstratives

- Same as Spanish?

19. éste, ése, aquéll
    ésta, ésa, áquélla …   Pronouns

20. este, ese, aquell
    esta, esa, aquella….   Adjectives

Catalan demonstratives

- Same as Catalan?

21. aquest, aqueix, aquell...
22. açò, això, allò...

- Demonstratives

23. Questə, quessə, quellə

    this,   that   that

´This close to me, that close to you, that far from both´

24. Custù, cussù, cullù

These pronouns are NOT demonstratives: they are **personal pronouns** with deixis

- Adverbs

25. Accuscì, (assoscì), alluscì

   this way, that way, that way

'The way I am doing it, the way you're doing it, the way they do it'

- no person but a deictic/ locative feature

DEIXIS and PERSON are two different things

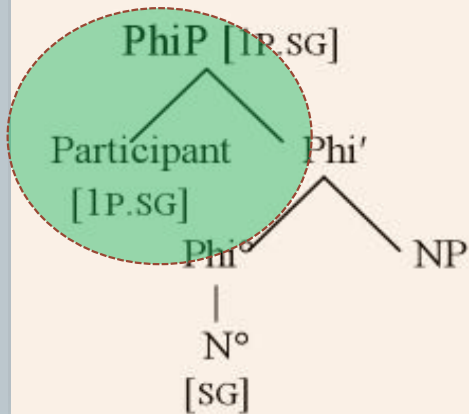→ how do we account for the structure of pronouns?

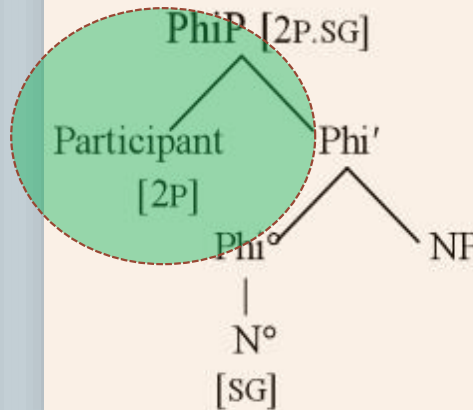(intuition, then formalization)

Pronouns

- The inner structure of pronouns
- Pronouns have structure (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999, Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002, Harley & Ritter 2002, Van Koppen 2012...)

26.

(Van Koppen 2012: 148)

- How is this different from «no person» next to the addressee?

27.

~~participant~~
locative

PhiP [2P.SG]
    ~~Participant~~   Phi'
    [2P]   Phi°   NP
                   |
                   N°
                  [SG]
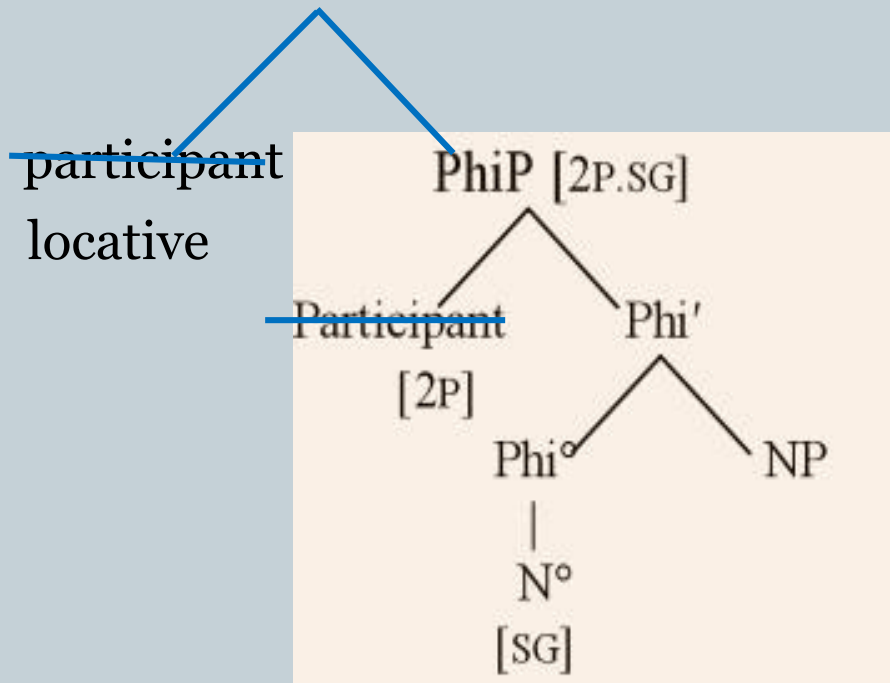
Possessives
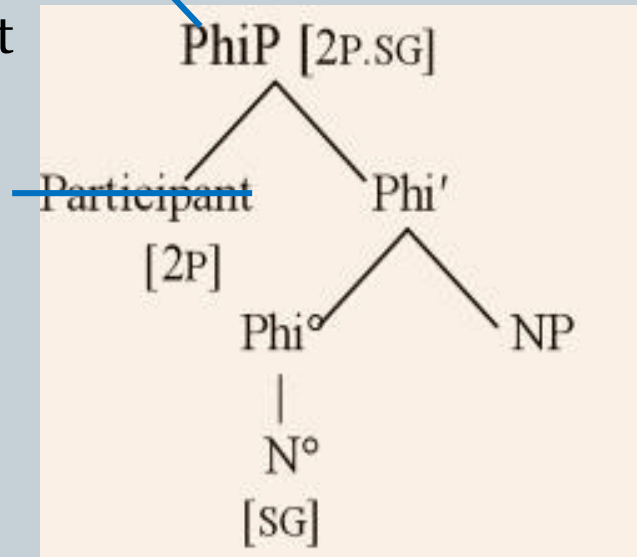
- What is this locative?

- What about possessives then?

28. (il) mio, tuo, suo...
    (el) meu, teu, seu,...
    mine, yours, hers...

[3 rd person + deictic]?

Interpretation

participant
locative

PhiP [2P.SG]

Participant
[2P]

Phi′

Phi°
|
N°
[SG]

NP

LF

Compositionality

Deixis & person

- USIDs express DEIXIS more frequently than the rest of Romance.

- They also express PERSON more frequently than the rest of Romance.

- Recall: auxiliaries!

29.

So vistə	(I) am seen	'I have seen'	BE
Si vistə	(you) are seen	'you have seen'	BE
A vistə	(he) has seen	's/he has seen'	HAVE
semə vistə	(we) are seen	'we have seen'	BE
setə vistə	(you.pl) are seen	'you have seen'	BE
a vistə	(they) have seen	'they have seen'	HAVE

s- : participant   -o: person/1
s- : participant   -i: person/2

OPEN QUESTION:

WHY WOULD THEY DO THAT?
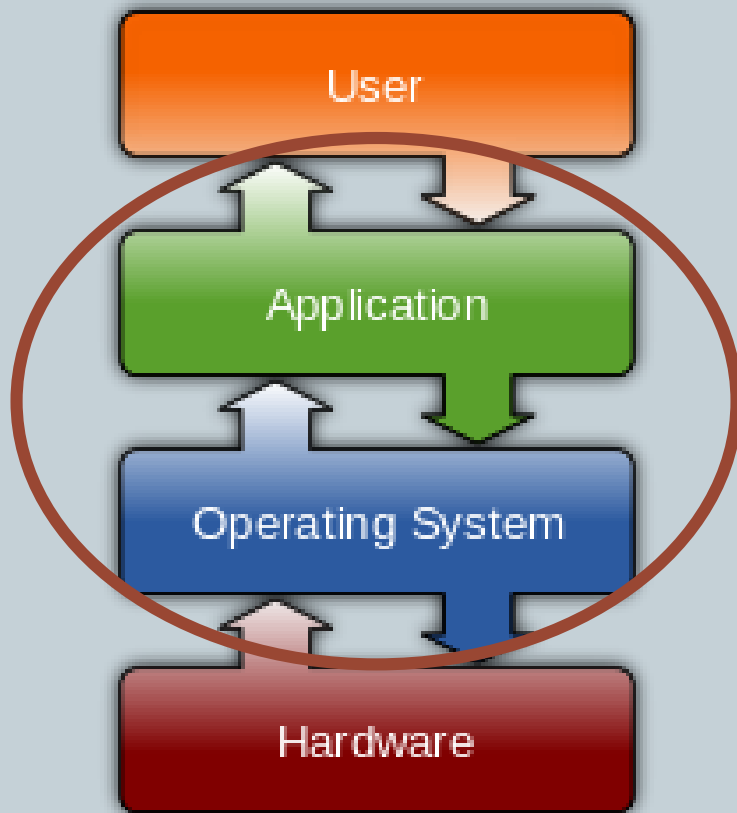
Language is imperfect

Language is NOT economical

(perhaps not meant for communication?)

Minimal effort? Not really ☺

How do we look for it?

- The OS is **not** visible – we need to deduce it

Theoretical linguists

What have we learnt?

- Theory-internally: Syntax and phonology are much more intertwined than we think.

- Deixis and grammatical person are two separate things.

- Are they part of FL? Not sure. They could be part of the lexicon; they could be innate concepts.

- Animal languages have deixis (some); they LACK grammatical person

- **No chimp could ever speak Abruzzese**

The end

Thank you!

Mulțumesc!

Grazie!

V'arəngrazijə!

Questions and references:
r.dalessandro@uu.nl