Dante: *De vulgari eloquentia* (excerpts, English translation by Vivien Law, emphasis ours)

We call the vernacular the language *[vulgaris locutio]* which children get accustomed to from the people around them when they first begin to pick out words; or, to put it more concisely, *the vernacular is that which we receive without rules*, imitating those who bring us up. We also have a secondary form of speech *[locutio secundaria]*, which *the Romans call grammar*. The Greeks and some others also have this secondary form of speech, but not everyone. Few succeed in mastering it, because it is only after a long period of time and diligent study that we learn its rules. Of the two the vernacular is the more noble because it was the first language used by the human race, because the whole world uses it (albeit divided into different words and forms), and because it is *natural to us, whereas the other is artificial*. (I.i)

Since all our languages (apart from the one originally created for man by God) have been arbitrarily put together after the confusion... and since man is the most inconstant and changeable of creatures... *our languages have to vary across time and space, just like other human properties such as customs and clothing*... If the ancient Pavians were to come back to life, they would speak a language which is quite different from that currently in use in Pavia. *Nor is this any more surprising than it is to realise that a child has grown up*... The inventors of grammar were motivated by the consequences of *〈linguistic variation through time〉* for, after all, *grammar is simply the unalterable sameness of language at different times and places*. Since it has been regulated by the joint agreement of many people it cannot be subject to anyone’s arbitrary whim, and hence is immune to change. They therefore *invented it lest we should lose access... to the scholarly authorities and the glorious deeds of the past, on account of the fluctuating nature of speech, alterable by the will of the individual, or because of geographical and hence linguistic remoteness*. (I.ix)