

Language and Regional Variation

- Every language has a lot of variation, especially in the way it is spoken.
- If we just look at English, we find widespread variation in the way it is spoken in different countries such as Australia, Britain and the USA. We can also find a range of varieties in different parts of those countries.
- Linguistic geography

The standard language

- an **idealized** variety , because it has no specific region.
- It is widely **used in** the mass media and is taught in most schools regardless of the region
- The variety taught to those who want to learn **English as a second language**.
- Standard American English, Standard Australian English, Standard Canadian English

Accent and dialect

Accent

- Every language-user speaks with an accent.
- the description of aspects of **pronunciation** that identify where an individual speaker is from, regionally or socially.

Dialect

- used to describe features of **grammar and vocabulary** as well as aspects of pronunciation.

dialectology

- **Dialectology**= the study of dialects.
- Each dialect is **simply different** and none of them is better than any other.
- Some varieties do become more **prestigious**.
- The variety that develops as the standard language has usually been one socially prestigious dialect, originally connected with a political or cultural center (e.g. London for British English and Paris for French). Yet, there always continue to be other varieties of a language spoken in different regions.

Regional dialects

The existence of different regional dialects is widely recognized and often the source of some humor for those living in different regions.

- Going beyond stereotypes, those involved in the serious investigation of regional dialects have devoted a lot of survey research to the identification of consistent features of speech found in one geographical area compared to another.

Isoglosses and dialect boundaries

Isogloss:

- It is a line that represents a boundary between areas with regard to that one particular linguistic item.

For example:

that the vast majority of informants in one area say they carry things home from the store in a *paper bag* while the majority in another area say they use a *paper sack*, then it is usually possible to draw a line across a map separating the two areas, as shown on the accompanying illustration.

If a very similar distribution is found for another two items, such as a preference for *pail* to the north and *bucket* to the south, then another isogloss, probably overlapping the first, can be drawn on the map. When a number of isoglosses come together in this way, a more solid line, indicating a **dialect boundary**, can be drawn.

Dialect continuum

- **Dialect continuum:** one dialect or language variety merges into another.
- We can view regional variation as existing along a rather than as having sharp breaks from one region to the next.
- **For Example:**
- A very similar type of continuum can occur with related languages existing on either side of a political border. As you travel from Holland into Germany, you will find concentrations of Dutch speakers giving way to areas near the border where 'Dutch' may sound more like 'Deutsch' because the Dutch dialects and the German dialects are less clearly differentiated. Then, as you travel into Germany, greater concentrations of distinctly German speakers occur.

Dialect continuum

- **Bidialectal:** Speaking two dialects
- Speakers who move back and forth across this border area, using different varieties with some ease.
- Most of us grow up with some form of bidialectalism, speaking one dialect ‘in the street’ among family and friends, and having to learn another dialect ‘in school’

When we talk about people knowing two distinct languages, we describe them as **bilingual**.

Bilingualism

- **Bilingualism** : In many countries, regional variation can involve two (or more) quite distinct and different languages.
- **For example:**
- Canada is an officially bilingual country, with both French and English as official languages
- Individual bilingualism, however, doesn't have to be the result of political dominance by a group using a different language. It can simply be the result of having two parents who speak different languages. However, even in this type of bilingualism, one language tends eventually to become the dominant one, with the other in a subordinate role.

Diglossia

- **Diglossia:** Two distinct varieties of a language exists in some countries.
- In diglossia, there is a ‘low’ variety, acquired locally and used for everyday affairs, and a ‘high’ or special variety, learned in school and used for important matters.
- **For Example:**
- A type of diglossia exists in Arabic speaking countries where the **high** variety (Classical Arabic) is used in formal lectures, serious political events and especially in religious discussions. The **low** variety is the local version of the language, such as Egyptian Arabic or Lebanese Arabic.
- ❖ The low variety is called ‘**vernacular**’

Language planning

Government, legal and educational organizations in many countries have to plan which variety or varieties of the languages spoken in the country are to be used for official business.

Language planning

- **For Example:**
- In Israel, despite the fact that it was not the most widely used language among the population, Hebrew was chosen as the official government language.
- In India, the choice was Hindi, yet in many non-Hindi-speaking regions, there were riots against this decision.
- There were ‘National Language Wars’ in the Philippines before different groups could agree on the name of the national language (Filipino).

Language planning

The process of language planning may be seen in a better light when the full series of stages is implemented over a number of years.

- **For Example:**
- The adoption of Swahili as the national language of Tanzania in East Africa
- The educational, legal and government systems have gradually introduced Swahili as the **official language**

The process of developing a national language:

1- Selection

The process of 'selection' (choosing an official language)

2-Codification

'Codification', in which basic grammars, dictionaries and written models are used to establish the standard variety

3-Elaboration

'Elaboration' with the standard variety being developed for use in all aspects of social life, and the appearance of a body of literary work written in the standard

4-Implementation

'Implementation' is largely a matter of government attempts to encourage use of the standard

5-Acceptance

'Acceptance' is the final stage when a substantial majority of the population has come to use the standard and to think of it as the national language, playing a part in not only social, but also national identity.

Pidgine

- **Pidgine:**
- A **pidgin** is a variety of a language (e.g. English) that developed for some practical purpose, such as trading, among groups of people who had a lot of contact, but who did not know each other's languages
- The origin of the term 'pidgin' is thought to be from a Chinese version of the English word *business*.
- had no native speakers
- For example, in Papua New Guinea, a lot of official business is conducted in Tok Pisin.
- There are believed to be between six and twelve million people still using pidgin languages and between ten and seventeen million using descendants from pidgins called 'creoles'.

Creole

- When a pidgin develops beyond its role as a trade or contact language and becomes the first language of a social community, it is described as a **creole**.
- A creole develops as the first language of the children of pidgin speakers. Thus, unlike pidgins, creoles have large numbers of native speakers and are not restricted at all in their uses.
- Tok Pisin is now a creole.
- **For Example**
- Hawai'i Creole English
- A French creole is spoken by the majority of the population in Haiti
- English creoles are used in Jamaica and Sierra Leone.