



SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS



MAIN AREAS DISCUSSED

1. What is Sociolinguistics?
2. Standard Language
3. Social dialects
4. Idiolect
5. Social markers
6. Prestige
7. Register and jargon
8. Slang
9. African American English
10. Vernacular language
11. The sounds of a vernacular

SOCIOLINGUISTICS

The study of language in relation to social factors, that is social class, educational level and type of education, age, sex, ethnic origin, etc. (Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics)

Sociolinguistics: The study of the relationship between language and society (George Yule)

At **micro level** sociolinguistics focuses on speech acts, conversation analysis, speech events, sequencing of utterances, and relate variation in the language.

At macro level sociolinguistics takes under consideration bilingual or multilingual communities, language planning, language attitudes, etc.

William Labov is often regarded as the founder of the study of sociolinguistics. He is especially noted for introducing the quantitative analysis of language variation and change, making the sociology of language into a scientific discipline.

STANDARD LANGUAGE

A **standard language** is a variety of **language** that is used by governments, in the media, in schools and for international communication.

1. A particular variety of a language that is regarded as the most correct, widely accepted , a neutral form of the language used by a population for public and formal purpose.
2. A variety of language standardized and promoted by some authority.
3. The language which has gone through the process of standardization is called standard language.

STANDARD VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

1. American English (Consisting of multiple dialects and register)
2. British English (dialects, sociolects)
3. Australian English
4. Indian English

LANGUAGE VARIETIES

- Variety is a term used for a specific form of a language, neutral to whether that form is dialect, accent, register, etc. and to its prestige level. (Standard language).
- Variety is said to be having any variation whether based on region, social class, field etc.

THINGS TO BE REMEMBERED FOR VARIETIES

- ❖ Variety is a broader term.
- ❖ Variety can be used for Standard language. i.e. Standard variety of language.
- ❖ Variety can be used for any dialect, sociolect, idiolect because after all every language form has its identification as a separate variety of that language.

1. Dialect

A dialect is the language used by the people of a specific area, class, district, or any group of people. The term involves the spelling, sounds, grammar and pronunciation used by a particular group of people and it distinguishes them from other people around them.

A variety of a language, spoken in one part of a country (regional dialect), or by people belonging to a particular social class (social dialect or SOCIOLECT), which is different in some words, grammar, and/or pronunciation from other forms of the same language.

Sometimes a dialect gains status and becomes the STANDARD VARIETY of a country.

DIFFERENT ENGLISH DIALECTS

- ❑ Cockney English is the accent or dialect of English traditionally spoken by working-class Londoners.
- ❑ Sussex-dialect is a dialect that was once spoken by those living in the historic country of Sussex in Southern England. Much of distinctive vocabulary of Sussex dialect has now died out, although a few words remain in common usage and some individual still speak with the traditional Sussex accent.

ACCENT

Simply the way someone pronounces words in a language.

You can speak British English in a American accent, but usually accents are dedicated to various dialects due to association of dialects with spoken language like Welsh English, Cockney English

Example

Pygmalion, an English Drama by G B Shaw revolves around a professor trying to make a Cockney speaking girl to speak like a Dutchess by changing her accent to extreme sophistication and standard English.

DIALECT RELATED TERMS

Sociolect: social dialect, a variety of a language that is strongly associated with one social group (e.g. working-class speech)

dialect boundary: a line representing a set of isoglosses, used to separate one dialect area from another

dialect continuum: the gradual merging of one regional variety of a language into another

dialectology: the study of dialects

dichotic listening: an experiment in which a listener hears two different sounds simultaneously, each through a different earphone

diglossia: a situation where there is a “high” or special variety of a language used in formal situations (e.g. Classical Arabic), and a “low” variety used locally and informally

IDIOLECT

The personal dialect of an individual speaker

The language system of an individual as expressed by the way he or she speaks or writes within the overall system of a particular language. In its widest sense, someone's idiolect includes their way of communicating; for example, their choice of utterances and the way they interpret the utterances made by others. In a narrower sense, an idiolect may include those features, either in speech or writing, which distinguish one individual from others, such as VOICE QUALITY, PITCH, and SPEECH RHYTHM.

SOCIAL MARKER

Social marker: a linguistic feature that marks the speaker as a member of a particular social Group.

or

sociolinguistic marker

a linguistic feature that marks a speaker as a member of a social group and to which social attitudes are attached, e.g. absence of postvocalic “r” in the speech of some New Yorkers (stigmatized) and some British speakers (RP).

REGISTER AND JARGON

REGISTER

Another influence on speech style that is tied to social identity derives from register.

A register is a conventional way of using language that is appropriate in a specific context, which may be identified as situational (e.g. in church), occupational (e.g. among lawyers) or topical (e.g. talking about language). We can recognize specific features that occur in the religious register (Ye shall be blessed by Him in times of tribulation), the legal register (The plaintiff is ready to take the witness stand) and even the linguistics register (In the morphology of this dialect there are fewer inflectional suffixes).

One of the defining features of a register is the use of **jargon**, which is special

jargon

speech or writing used by a group of people who belong to a particular trade, profession, or any other group bound together by mutual interest, e.g. *the jargon of law, medical jargon*.

A jargon has its own set of words and expressions, which may be incomprehensible to an outsider. The term jargon is typically not used by the group itself but by those unfamiliar with that particular type of language, and/or by those who dislike it.

Jargon is sometimes also used for the first (developmental) stage of a PIDGIN language, where there is a great deal of individual variation, a simple sound system, very short sentences and a restricted number of words.

SLANG

Casual, very informal speech, using expressive but informal words and expressions (**slang words/expressions**).

For some people, slang is equivalent to COLLOQUIAL SPEECH but for others, it means “undesirable speech”. Usually, “colloquial speech” refers to a speech variety used in informal situations with colleagues, friends or relatives, and “slang” is used for a very informal speech variety which often serves as an “in-group” language for a particular set of people such as teenagers, army recruits, pop groups, etc. Most slang is rather unstable as its words and expressions can change quite rapidly, for example:

AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH

also **AAE**, **African American Vernacular English (AAVE)**, **Black English (BE)**, **Black English Vernacular (BEV)**, **Ebonics**

a variety of English spoken by some African Americans, particularly those living in concentrated urban areas. There are conflicting views on the origin of African American English. Some claim that it is similar to varieties of English spoken by whites in the southern states (therefore, clearly a dialect of English), while others consider it to be a CREOLE, independently developed from Standard English and more deserving of the word LANGUAGE than that of DIALECT.

THANK YOU