مستغانـــــــم في:08/02/2026

قسم اللغة الانجليزية

الرقم:006/ ج م/2023

Extrait de Procès Verbal du Conseil Scientifique du Département de Langue Anglaise 03/02/2026

Lors de sa réunion du 03 février 2026, le CSD a validé les deux rapports signés **Favorable** après l'expertise du polycopié de cours de Dre Benyoucef Radia

Les experts désignés sont :

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Intitulé: **A Course in Sociolinguistics**

Mostaganem Le 08/02/2026

Présidente du CSD

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MOSTAGANEM

A Course in Sociolinguistics

For First-Year Master's Students of Science of language

BY DR. BENYOUCEF RADIA

Academic Year: 2025-2026

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Course Outline

1. Course Description

This course introduces students to the scientific study of the relationship between language and society, exploring how linguistic variation reflects and constructs social meanings, identities, and structures. Drawing extensively on foundational and contemporary sociolinguistic scholarship, the course guides students through the study of variation across social context, region, class, gender, and age, and examines multilingual communities, code-switching, and language ideologies.

The course develops both theoretical knowledge and practical analytical skills, enabling students to understand sociolinguistic patterns, collect and analyze language data, and critically engage with issues such as linguistic inequality, language planning, and identity construction.

2. Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

Knowledge Objectives

1. Define core sociolinguistic concepts and distinguish sociolinguistics from related fields.
2. Explain how linguistic variation occurs across multiple structural levels (phonological, lexical, grammatical, and code-level).
3. Describe and analyze major social dimensions influencing language use (solidarity, status, formality, and function).
4. Identify patterns of language variation across regions, social classes, genders, and age groups.
5. Explain multilingual repertoires, code-switching, language ideologies, and language policy.

Skill Objectives

6. Apply sociolinguistic frameworks to analyze real data and speech samples.
7. Conduct small-scale field observations and describe linguistic patterns systematically.

8. Critically differentiate between age-grading and language change in progress.
9. Interpret sociolinguistic graphs, tables, and case studies (e.g., New York City /r/-pronunciation, [h]-dropping, Hemnesberget case).
10. Communicate sociolinguistic insights clearly in academic writing and oral presentations.

3. Mode of Evaluation

Assessment Component	Weight	Description
Mid-Term Test	20%	Covers foundational concepts (Sessions 1–4).
Research Assignment	25%	A 6-8 page sociolinguistic analysis (regional, social, or gender variation).
Group Presentation	15%	Case study (dialect mapping, code-switching, or social dialect analysis).
Final Exam	30%	Cumulative written exam on theory and analytical application.
Participation	10%	Attendance, contribution to discussions, and in-class tasks.

Introduction

This course reader has been meticulously developed to support first-year Master's students enrolled in the Science of Language program undertaking the Sociolinguistics module. Drawing on over five years of instructional experience, this reader provides an academically rigorous framework that introduces students to the systematic study of language variation in social contexts. Each session of 90 minutes is structured to build progressively from foundational concepts to advanced sociolinguistic analysis, facilitating the development of specialized knowledge and analytical skills necessary for research and professional applications in the field.

Lecture 1 introduces the fundamental premise of sociolinguistics as the interdisciplinary study of the relationship between language and society. It covers the core question of why individuals speak differently across social contexts and what these variations reveal about social structures and relationships. The lecture introduces linguistic variation across multiple levels—phonological, lexical, grammatical, and higher-order language systems—and elaborates on the four-component framework comprising participants, setting, topic, and communicative function. Students are acquainted with the concept of linguistic repertoires and multilingual competence as complex and context-dependent knowledge systems.

Lecture 2 emphasizes the social dimensions that organize linguistic variation. The solidarity-social distance spectrum is examined in detail, illustrating how intimacy and emotional closeness license informal, creative linguistic forms, whereas social distance aligns with formal standardized language. The status dimension is analyzed to reveal how hierarchical relationships influence address forms, politeness strategies, register, and conversational dominance. The formal-informal continuum is also explored, demonstrating how institutional and situational expectations condition language use.

Lecture 3 deepens the focus on multilingual and multidialectal communities, presenting empirical case studies of language choice and code-switching in sociolinguistically complex environments. Topics include the strategic deployment of languages and varieties to negotiate identity, power, and social goals. The lecture also introduces theoretical frameworks for explaining language ideologies and the role of agency in navigating linguistic norms.

Lecture 4 addresses regional and dialectal variation within and across nations, focusing on dialect boundaries, isoglosses, and dialect chains. Students study examples of intra-national variation that shape linguistic identities and social stratification. The lecture contextualizes regional diversity in relation to historical, cultural, and social factors.

Lecture 5 explores sociolinguistic methodologies and research ethics, guiding students through data collection, transcription, and analysis techniques relevant to social language studies. Ethical considerations in working with speech communities and multimodal data sources are emphasized.

Subsequent sessions build on these foundations, integrating discussions of language policy, language planning, and contemporary sociolinguistic issues such as language and race, gender, social class, and indigenous language revitalization. The course culminates with student presentations and applied projects designed to develop empirical research and critical engagement with sociolinguistic scholarship.

This course reader is intended not only as an academic resource but as a comprehensive guide that encourages critical inquiry and scholarly excellence. By engaging rigorously with each lecture's material, students will gain a profound understanding of the complex social functions of language in diverse contexts.

Foundations of Sociolinguistics

This two-session lecture introduces foundational concepts in sociolinguistics for Master's level students. The core premise is that we speak differently in different social contexts, and this variation is systematic and meaningful. Session One establishes the foundation by explaining what sociolinguistics is, demonstrating how linguistic variation occurs across multiple levels (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and language systems), and introducing the four-component framework that organizes social factors: participants, setting, topic, and function. The session also presents the concept of linguistic repertoires—the organized sets of varieties speakers have internalized—and emphasizes that multilingual competence represents sophisticated linguistic knowledge, not deficiency. Session Two deepens the analysis through four social dimensions that explain linguistic choices: solidarity-social distance (relationship intimacy), status (hierarchical positioning), formality (institutional context), and referential-affective function (information versus emotion). The session then examines how multilingual communities like Hemnesberget and Sauris strategically deploy their languages according to social patterns, addresses code-switching as a sophisticated practice, and explains how sociolinguistic analysis moves from observation to theoretical explanation. Throughout, the lecture emphasizes speaker agency, language ideologies, and the complexity of language use in real social contexts.

SESSION 1: LANGUAGE VARIATION IN SOCIAL CONTEXT (90 minutes)

1.1 Introduction: What is Sociolinguistics? (15 minutes)

Core Definition

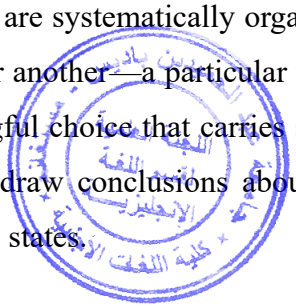
Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society. Sociolinguists investigate why we speak differently in different social contexts and what social meanings our linguistic choices convey. The discipline recognizes that language use provides far more than just informational content—it reveals and constructs social relationships, identities, and meanings within communities.

The Central Question

Why do we speak differently in different social contexts, and what does our linguistic variation tell us about society, relationships, and ourselves?

Key Insight

Linguistic variation is not random. Our choices about how to speak are systematically organized according to social factors. When we select one linguistic form over another—a particular word, pronunciation, or grammatical structure—we are making a meaningful choice that carries social information. Listeners and readers pick up on these choices and draw conclusions about our relationships, social status, education, regional origin, and emotional states.



Why This Matters

Examining how people use language in real social contexts provides a window into both language structure and social organization. A single utterance simultaneously accomplishes multiple social work: it conveys information, expresses emotion, signals group membership, and positions the speaker in a social hierarchy.

Distinction from Related Fields

1. **Linguistics** traditionally focuses on language structure in abstract isolation, asking "How does language work as a system?"
2. **Sociology** focuses on social structures and relationships, asking "How does society organize?"
3. **Sociolinguistics** focuses on the interface between these two domains, asking "How does language use reveal and construct social relationships?"

1.2 Linguistic Variation Across Multiple Levels (20 minutes)

Fundamental Observation

Language variation does not occur in just one domain. Speakers vary across multiple linguistic levels simultaneously: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and even entire languages or dialects. Understanding sociolinguistic variation requires attention to all these levels.

Example 1: A Young Person's Linguistic Choices

Consider a teenager named Ray who has just arrived home late from school:

Conversation with his mother

1. Ray: "Hi mum. Yeah, that bastard Sootbucket kept us in again."
2. Mother: "Nana's here."
3. Ray: "Oh sorry. Where is she?"

Notice what happens when Ray learns his grandmother is present: he immediately adjusts his language. The word "bastard" disappears from his vocabulary. His tone becomes more formal.

Same day, later encounter with school principal

1. Ray: "Good afternoon, sir."
2. Principal: "What are you doing here at this time?"
3. Ray: "Mr Sutton kept us in, sir."

To the principal, Ray uses polite, formal language. He employs the respect term "sir" (twice), calls his teacher "Mr Sutton" rather than using derogatory nicknames, and maintains formal address throughout.

The Linguistic Pattern

Ray's linguistic choices vary across multiple levels:

1. **Vocabulary:** "bastard Sootbucket" vs. "Mr Sutton"
2. **Register/Style:** Casual and intimate vs. formal and respectful
3. **Address forms:** "mum" vs. "sir"
4. **Emotional expression:** Unfiltered frustration vs. controlled politeness

Why This Variation Matters

Ray demonstrates awareness that social context determines linguistic appropriateness. His grandmother and the school principal are different people in his life with different relationships to

him and different social statuses. He has internalized a set of rules about which linguistic forms are appropriate in which contexts.

Phonological Variation

Variation also occurs at the level of sound. Consider two speakers discussing a car:

Speaker 1 (Sam, coal miner): "You seen our 'enry's new 'ouse yet? It's in 'alton you know."

Speaker 2 (Jim, Member of Parliament): "I have indeed. I could hardly miss it Sam. Your Henry now owns the biggest house in Halton."

Sam "drops his aitches"—he doesn't pronounce the /h/ sound at the beginning of words ("'enry" for "Henry," "'ouse" for "house," "'alton" for "Halton"). Jim pronounces these sounds clearly. This phonological variation is socially meaningful: it signals different educational and occupational backgrounds, despite their shared regional origins.

Grammatical and Syntactic Variation

Different grammatical structures carry different social meanings. Compare these two ways of giving instructions:

Formal version: "Refuse should be deposited in the receptacle provided."

Informal version: "Put your rubbish in the bin, Jilly."

The formal version uses a passive construction ("should be deposited"), avoiding mention of who must do the action. It employs formal, low-frequency vocabulary ("refuse," "receptacle"). The informal version uses a direct imperative ("Put"), employs everyday vocabulary ("rubbish," "bin"), and addresses the recipient by nickname. Both convey the same directive message, but their social meanings differ dramatically. The formal version would sound bizarre if your mother said it to you at home—you might assume she was being sarcastic or joking. The informal version is what you would expect in an intimate family context.

Macro-Level Variation: Dialects and Languages

The most extensive linguistic variation involves different dialects or entirely different languages. Consider the village of Hemnesberget in northern Norway:

The residents use two distinct varieties of Norwegian:

1. **Ranamål** (the local dialect, literally "Rana language")—characterized by specific phonological features (like the palatal nasal sound [ŋ]), distinct vocabulary (e.g., "ho" for "she" vs. "hun" in standard Norwegian), and unique grammatical forms (e.g., "hæstan" vs. "hestene" for "horses").

2. **Bokmål** (literally "book language," the standard dialect)—the language of education, government, media, and formal institutions.

These are not merely different accents or vocabularies—they differ systematically at every linguistic level.

The Concept of "Variety"

To encompass variation at all these levels—phonological, lexical, grammatical, and macro-level—sociolinguists use the term **variety** (sometimes also called "code"). A variety is any set of linguistic forms that patterns according to social factors. This umbrella term is linguistically neutral and covers accents, styles, dialects, and entire languages used for socially contrastive purposes.

Summary Table: Types of Linguistic Variation

Level	**Example**	**Type**
Phonological	Dropping /h/ sounds	Pronunciation variation
Lexical	"bastard Sootbucket" vs. "Mr Sutton"	Vocabulary choices
Morphosyntactic	Passive vs. imperative structures	Grammar and sentence structure
Macro-level	Ranamål vs. Bokmål	Entire dialect or language systems

1.3 The Four-Component Sociolinguistic Framework (30 minutes)

The Core Framework

Sociolinguists have identified four fundamental social components that systematically influence linguistic choice. Understanding these components allows us to predict and explain why speakers select particular linguistic forms in particular situations.

Component 1: The Participants – Who Is Speaking and to Whom?

The relationships between speakers significantly influence linguistic choice. Consider Margaret, a businesswoman who moves through multiple social contexts during a typical day:

1. **With her business partner Mike:** "Goodbye Margaret" / "Goodbye Mike"
2. **With her secretary Jill:** "See you tomorrow" / "Bye Jill"
3. **With the caretaker Andy:** "Bye Mrs Walker" / "Goodbye Andy"
4. **With her daughter Jenny at home:** "Hi mum"
5. **With her mother:** "Hello dear, have a good day?"
6. **With her husband David:** "You're late again!"
7. **With a stranger (flower club president):** "Good evening, is that Mrs Billington?"
8. **With her friend:** "Hello Meg, sut wyt ti?" (How are you in Welsh)

The Pattern

Margaret is called by different names in each context: "Margaret," "Jilly," "Mrs Walker," "mum," "dear," nothing specific from her husband, "Mrs Billington," and "Meg." Each name reflects the social relationship between Margaret and her interlocutor.

The Social Dimensions

The intimate names ("Meg," "dear," "mum") are used by people with whom Margaret has close, ongoing relationships. More formal names ("Mrs Billington," "Mrs Walker") are used by strangers or in professional contexts. First names ("Margaret," "Mike," "Jill," "Andy," "Jenny") indicate

collegial or friendly relationships. The address form used in each context is not arbitrary—it reflects the speaker's understanding of their relationship with Margaret.

Key Insight

High-solidarity relationships (intimate, frequent interaction, shared group membership) license more informal, creative, and colloquial language. Low-solidarity relationships (strangers, minimal prior interaction) invoke more formal, standardized linguistic choices.

Component 2: The Setting or Social Context – Where Is Communication Occurring?

The physical and institutional setting in which communication takes place carries expectations about appropriate language use.

The Hemnesberget Example

In the Norwegian village of Hemnesberget, residents use Ranamål and Bokmål in predictable patterns based on setting:

- **Home, family contexts, informal neighborhood interactions:** Ranamål
- **Schools and classrooms:** Bokmål
- **Churches and religious services:** Bokmål
- **Government offices and official business:** Bokmål
- **Media (radio, television):** Bokmål
- **Interaction with outsiders and visitors**

A local resident who used Bokmål to buy petrol at a local garage would be considered "stuck up" or "putting on airs." Using the standard dialect in an informal, village-internal transaction violates local norms about appropriate language use for that setting. Conversely, using Ranamål in a school classroom would be inappropriate—Bokmål is the language of education in this community.

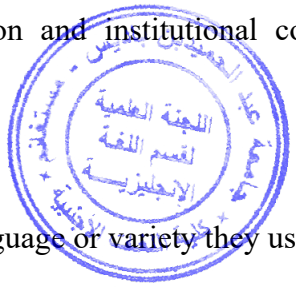
The Institutional Dimension

Settings carry institutional structures that shape linguistic norms. Schools have formal procedures, record-keeping requirements, and authority structures that invoke standardized language.

Churches have ritualized services and formal procedures. Home settings are informal and private. These institutional features are not incidental to language choice; they actively shape what counts as "appropriate" linguistic behavior.

Key Insight

Setting is not merely a backdrop to communication. It is a structured social space that carries built-in expectations about linguistic appropriateness. Physical location and institutional context activate associated linguistic norms.



Component 3: The Topic – What Is Being Discussed?

Interestingly, what people are talking about can influence which language or variety they use.

The University Students in Hemnesberget

An important discovery emerged from research by sociolinguists Blom and Gumperz who studied Hemnesberget in the late 1960s. University students from the village used Ranamål when they returned home during vacations and socialized with family and friends, just like everyone else in the community. However, when these same students began discussing national politics, something curious happened: they unconsciously switched to Bokmål.

This is particularly striking because they were in the informal village setting, talking with other students they knew well. Yet the topic itself—national politics—triggered a shift to the standard dialect.

Why?

The students associated "national politics" with discourse that happens outside the village, in educated urban contexts, using formal language. The topic itself activated their sense of which linguistic variety was appropriate. Even though they were physically in the village with intimate peers, the topic created a mental frame that invoked Bokmål as the "right" language for discussing that subject matter.

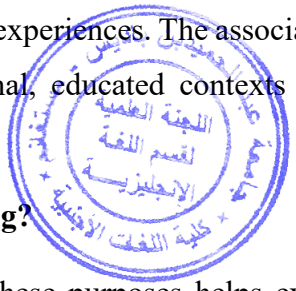
Cross-Cultural Example

University students in countries like Tanzania, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea often find it easier to discuss academic subjects using English (if that is the language of higher education) rather

than in their native languages. The topic—academic content—is associated with English in their educational experience, even if they are fluent in their native language and might otherwise prefer it.

Key Insight

Topics can activate entire linguistic registers. Certain topics are associated with certain languages or varieties in speakers' minds, based on their educational and social experiences. The associations are learned through experience: topics that are discussed in formal, educated contexts using standard languages become associated with those varieties.



Component 4: The Function – Why Is Communication Occurring?

Language serves multiple simultaneous purposes. Understanding these purposes helps explain linguistic choices.

Referential Function

Language conveys objective information. A weather forecast—"The high will be 15 degrees Celsius, with rain expected in the afternoon"—primarily serves a referential function. The speaker is attempting to communicate factual information to the listener.

Affective Function

Language expresses emotions, attitudes, relationships, and solidarity. A neighbor's comment—"Have you noticed how nice the weather has been?"—spoken over a fence on a weekend, serves primarily an affective function. The content (weather) is not new information; the same comment might be made every weekend. The function is to express goodwill toward the neighbor and maintain social connection.

Multifunctional Communication

Most utterances simultaneously serve both functions, but in different proportions.

Ray's complaint to his mother illustrates this: "Yeah, that bastard Sootbucket kept us in again."

Referential content: A teacher named Sutton kept the class in after school. This is why Ray is late.

Affective content

Ray is frustrated, angry, or resentful. His choice of the word "bastard" and the derogatory nickname "Sootbucket" conveys his emotional stance. The phrase "kept us in again" suggests this is a repeated injustice. The utterance serves relational functions: establishing shared understanding with his mother (she knows who he's talking about), seeking sympathy, managing his social identity as a put-upon student.

Professional Example

A doctor's examination of a patient contains both referential and affective content. The referential dimension includes symptoms, diagnosis, and medical recommendations. The affective dimension includes reassurance, emotional validation, and rapport-building. A doctor might ask, "Have you been experiencing any chest pain?" (referential) while simultaneously using a warm tone and maintaining eye contact (affective). The emotional competence of healthcare providers is linguistically enacted.

Key Insight

Language is multifunctional. Sociolinguistic analysis cannot reduce an utterance to its propositional content; it must account for the complex bundle of communicative purposes an utterance accomplishes—information transfer, emotion expression, relationship management, and identity positioning.

1.4 Linguistic Repertoires: The Organized Language System (15 minutes)

Definition

A **linguistic repertoire** is the organized set of varieties a speaker has internalized through exposure and use within specific communities. It is not merely the collection of languages or dialects a speaker can produce; it is the contextualized knowledge of which forms are appropriate when and with whom.

The Repertoire Concept

Most people do not use all their linguistic knowledge equally in all contexts. Instead, they have learned through experience which varieties are appropriate in which contexts. This internalized

knowledge—the organized set of varieties and their contextual appropriateness—constitutes their linguistic repertoire.

Example: Margaret's Monolingual Repertoire

Margaret, despite living in a predominantly monolingual English-speaking community, has a rich linguistic repertoire. Within English, she commands:

- **Formal, professional register:** Used with business partners and in official contexts
- **Familiar, collegial register:** Used with office staff
- **Intimate, family register:** Used with family members
- **Formal, deferential register:** Used with strangers or in formal institutions

Her repertoire includes knowledge of which linguistic forms are appropriate in each context—not because she consciously thinks through rules, but because she has been exposed to these different contexts repeatedly.

Example: A Multilingual Repertoire

A Malaysian woman's linguistic repertoire might include:

- Two varieties of English (formal and colloquial)
- Two or more dialects of Chinese
- Standard Bahasa Malay
- Bazaar Malay (a colloquial variety)
- Internal stylistic variation within these

Like Margaret, she chooses the appropriate variety from this linguistic repertoire based on social factors: who she is speaking with, where, about what, and for what purpose.

How Repertoires Are Acquired

Most linguistic repertoire acquisition is implicit and gradual. People build their repertoires through **extensive exposure and a process of osmosis**—by hearing different varieties in use in the communities they live in.

A child growing up in a multilingual household naturally acquires multiple varieties through exposure. A migrant moving to a new country gradually learns the linguistic varieties appropriate in different contexts in that country. A person moving from one job to another learns the professional register appropriate in their new workplace. Most of this learning happens without explicit instruction or conscious effort.

More Formal Varieties

Some varieties—particularly distinctive written varieties (formal letters, academic writing, legal documents)—may involve more conscious learning. These formal varieties might be taught explicitly in schools or acquired through formal instruction. However, most spoken varieties in a person's repertoire are acquired implicitly.

Critical Reframing

Importantly, this conceptualization of linguistic repertoires rejects **deficit-based models** of bilingualism or multilingualism. In older sociolinguistic and educational thinking, people who spoke multiple languages were sometimes viewed as having "incomplete" knowledge of each language or as being "semilingual" (deficient in all their languages).

The repertoire concept reframes this: multilingual speakers are not incomplete speakers of multiple systems. They are sophisticated linguistic actors with context-sensitive knowledge. They have internalized sophisticated norms about when each variety is appropriate and have developed the ability to deploy these varieties appropriately.

Professional Competence

A multilingual professional who switches between languages in different meetings, writes in multiple languages for different audiences, and reads technical material in different languages is not displaying linguistic deficiency. Rather, they are displaying high-level sociolinguistic competence—the ability to select and deploy appropriate linguistic varieties for different communicative contexts.

1.5 Session 1 Summary and Transition (10 minutes)

Key Takeaways from Session 1

- **Sociolinguistics addresses a fundamental observation:** We speak differently in different social contexts, and this variation is systematic and socially meaningful.
- **Variation occurs across multiple linguistic levels:** Phonology (sounds), lexicon (vocabulary), morphosyntax (grammar), and macro-level systems (entire dialects or languages).
- **The Four-Component Framework provides systematic analysis**
    - **Participants:** The relationships and social identities of people communicating
    - **Setting:** The physical and institutional context of communication
    - **Topic:** What is being discussed
    - **Function:** Why communication is occurring (information transfer, emotion expression, relationship maintenance)
- **Linguistic repertoires are organized, context-sensitive systems** that speakers have internalized through exposure to multiple social contexts in their communities.
- **Multilingual and multidialectal competence represents sophisticated linguistic knowledge**, not linguistic deficiency.

Bridge to Session 2

Session 1 has identified **what varies** and **how it is organized** using the four-component framework. Session 2 will introduce **dimensions of analysis** that systematize our understanding of social factors—four key dimensions that help explain why particular social factors lead to particular linguistic choices.

We will also examine **multilingual communities** where these choices involve entirely different languages and explore how speakers strategically deploy their linguistic systems to accomplish social goals.

Before Session 2

Consider reflecting on:

- One interaction you participated in or witnessed this week where you noticed linguistic variation
- Which of the four components (participants, setting, topic, function) seemed most influential in triggering that variation
- Your own linguistic repertoire: what varieties do you use, in what contexts, and how did you acquire them?

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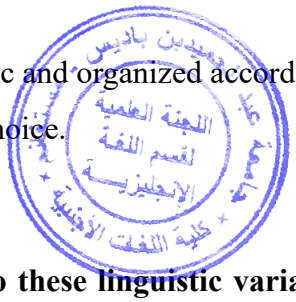
SESSION 2: SOCIAL DIMENSIONS AND MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITIES (90 minutes)

2.1 Review and Transition (10 minutes)

Quick Recall Activity

Session 1 established the foundation: language variation is systematic and organized according to social factors. We identified four components that shape linguistic choice.



Focus

Session 2 moves deeper by asking: **On what social dimensions do these linguistic variations cluster?** In other words, when we observe speakers making different linguistic choices, those choices tend to cluster along certain patterns. We can identify these patterns as distinct **dimensions of analysis** that help us understand and predict linguistic behavior.

We will explore:

- **Four key dimensions** that systematize the social factors influencing language choice
- **Multilingual communities** where these dimensions operate across different languages and dialects
- **How speakers strategically deploy their linguistic systems** to accomplish social goals
- **How to move from observation to explanation** in sociolinguistic analysis

2.2 The Solidarity-Social Distance Dimension (20 minutes)

Definition

The **solidarity-social distance scale** captures how well interlocutors know each other and the emotional intensity of their relationship. This dimension ranges from high solidarity (intimate, frequent interaction, shared group membership) to low solidarity (strangers, minimal prior interaction, distant relationships).

Linguistic Manifestations

High solidarity relationships typically license more informal, colloquial, and creative language. Speakers using high-solidarity language might use nicknames, endearments, inside jokes, shared slang, and creative linguistic play. Low solidarity relationships typically invoke more formal, standardized, and conservative linguistic choices. Speakers might use titles, formal address, careful articulation, and standardized vocabulary.

Example 1: Address Forms and Solidarity

Margaret's address forms in Session 1 illustrate the solidarity-social distance dimension:

- **"Meg"** (used by close friend): High solidarity
- **"Margaret"** (used by colleagues): Medium solidarity
- **"Mrs Billington"** (used by stranger/flower club president): Low solidarity
- **"dear"** (used by affectionate mother): High solidarity
- **"Jilly"** (informal variant used by her)
- **"Mrs Walker"** (formal address by caretaker): Low to medium solidarity

The key pattern: more intimate relationships correlate with more informal, creative, and affectionate address forms. Distant relationships correlate with formal, standardized address forms.

Example 2: Linguistic Creativity and Solidarity

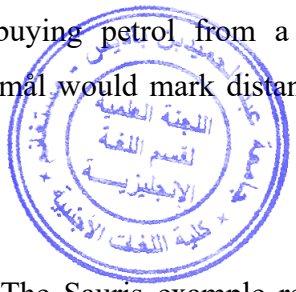
In high-solidarity relationships, speakers often create language together. Long-term friends develop shared slang, private jokes encoded in language, and inside references. Family members create nicknames and affectionate diminutives. These creative linguistic forms actually reinforce the solidarity—they mark relationship membership and would be inappropriate or incomprehensible outside the relationship.

In low-solidarity contexts, such linguistic creativity would be inappropriate. Formal language is more standardized and less creatively elaborated because the interaction is typically more constrained and less emotionally invested.

Example 3: Multilingual Solidarity Markers

Multilingual speakers often use language choice itself as a solidarity marker. Using a minority language or a community's local variety can index solidarity with that community. A person choosing to use the community's local dialect rather than the standard language is often marking their membership and solidarity with the local in-group.

In Hemnesberget, using Ranamål (rather than Bokmål) when buying petrol from a local shopkeeper marks solidarity with the local community. Using Bokmål would mark distance or positioning as an outsider.



Critical Observation: Strategic Deployment

Importantly, speakers are not passively subject to these patterns. The Sauris example reveals strategic agency: when an angry woman rebuked her husband in German (the intimate, home language) in the pub (a public, semi-formal space), she was strategically deploying the solidarity dimension to accomplish social work.

German is normally reserved for intimate, family contexts. By using it publicly, she:

- Isolated her husband from his friends (they don't typically speak German in the pub)
- Emphasized the personal, intimate nature of the complaint (this is a family matter)
- Marked the seriousness of her complaint (she was moving into intimate register for a serious purpose)

She deliberately violated normal sociolinguistic norms to create a powerful social effect. This demonstrates that speakers have agency within sociolinguistic constraints—they can strategically manipulate linguistic norms to accomplish their communicative goals.

Key Insights

- The solidarity-social distance dimension organizes linguistic choices along a spectrum from intimate to distant
- Intimate relationships license informal, creative, emotionally expressive language
- Distant relationships invoke formal, standardized, conservative language

- Speakers can strategically deploy language choices to construct, contest, or emphasize particular relationship qualities
- Language choices both reflect and reinforce relationship qualities

2.3 The Status Dimension (18 minutes)

Definition:

The **status scale** captures relative hierarchical positioning between speakers. This dimension ranges from high status (superior in a hierarchy, greater power, higher authority) to low status (subordinate in a hierarchy, less power, lower authority).

Linguistic Manifestations:

Linguistic systems encode social hierarchy through multiple mechanisms:

1. **Address forms:** Use of titles, formal last names, or deferential terms
2. **Deference markers:** Politeness strategies, hedging, indirectness
3. **Register and vocabulary:** Formal vs. colloquial vocabulary, technical vs. everyday language
4. **Syntax:** Direct imperatives vs. indirect requests, passive vs. active voice
5. **Turn-taking patterns:** Who interrupts whom, who speaks more, who controls topic shifts

Historical Systems: T/V Distinctions

Many languages grammaticalize status distinctions through pronoun systems:

6. **French:** tu (informal, equal, low status) vs. vous (formal, superior, or multiple addressees)
7. **Spanish:** tú (informal, equal) vs. usted (formal, superior)
8. **German:** du (informal, equal) vs. Sie (formal, superior)
9. **Italian:** tu (informal) vs. lei (formal)

These systems (called "T/V distinctions" because of the Latin-derived terminology) grammatically encode status relationships. The choice between pronouns isn't neutral—it signals awareness of status positioning.

English Strategy: Status Without Grammatical Marking

English has largely lost grammatical status marking (English speakers don't distinguish formal vs. informal "you" anymore). However, English accomplishes status differentiation through other mechanisms:

Strategy 1: Address Forms

10. **"Sir/Madam":** Formal, deferential, used toward superiors or in formal contexts
11. **"Mr./Ms. [Last Name]":** Formal, neutral status positioning
12. **First names:** Informal, egalitarian, assumes relationship
13. **Nicknames/Endearments:** Intimate, informal, marks in-group membership
14. **Title + Last Name:** Professional, marks authority (Dr. Lee, Professor Smith)
15. **No address form:** Can mark either extreme informality or extreme distance

Ray's use of "sir" when addressing the school principal exemplifies deference toward higher status. The principal has institutional authority over Ray, and the address form linguistically marks this hierarchy.

Strategy 2: Register and Vocabulary

Higher-status contexts typically invoke more formal vocabulary. Compare:

16. **High-status context:** "I appreciate your consideration of this proposal. I would like to schedule a meeting at your earliest convenience."
17. **Low-status context:** "Thanks for thinking about this. Let me know when you want to meet."

The first example uses formal vocabulary (appreciate, consideration, proposal, schedule, earliest convenience), complete sentences, and polite indirectness. The second uses everyday vocabulary and more direct phrasing.

Strategy 3: Performative Deference

Subordinates often use linguistic strategies that mark deference:

18. **Hedging:** "I might be wrong, but..." "Perhaps we could consider..." "It seems to me..."
19. **Indirectness:** "I wonder if you might consider..." rather than "Do this"
20. **Politeness markers:** "Please," "Would you mind," "If it's not too much trouble"
21. **Self-deprecation:** Minimizing one's own contribution or competence

Strategy 4: Turn-Taking and Interruption

Research on professional interactions shows that higher-status speakers tend to:

22. Interrupt more frequently
23. Take longer turns
24. Control topic shifts
25. Be interrupted less frequently

These patterns emerge even in contexts where all participants have equal knowledge. Status differences, once established linguistically, tend to be reinforced through turn-taking patterns.

Example: Margaret and Her Employees

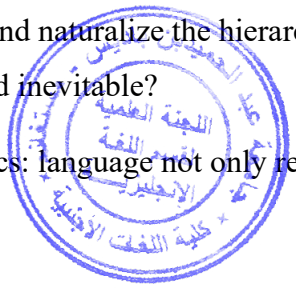
Margaret calls her secretary and caretaker by their first names ("Jill," "Andy") but they address her as "Mrs Walker"—a formal address form that marks her higher status. Margaret also likely initiates interactions, controls their duration, and directs their activity. These patterns of address, deference, and turn-taking linguistically enact the hierarchical relationship between employer and employees.

Critical Reflection: Construction of Status

An important question for advanced students: Are status-marking linguistic forms merely reflective of pre-existing hierarchies, or do they actively construct and legitimize status differences?

When workers habitually use deferential language toward managers, formal address forms, and deferent politeness strategies, does this linguistic practice reinforce and naturalize the hierarchical relationship? Does the language make the hierarchy seem natural and inevitable?

This question opens toward ideological dimensions of sociolinguistics: language not only reflects social structures but can actively maintain and legitimize them.



Key Insights

26. The status dimension organizes linguistic choices according to relative hierarchical positioning
27. Status differences are encoded through address forms, deference markers, register, vocabulary, and turn-taking patterns
28. Some languages grammaticalize status (T/V distinctions); English accomplishes it through other mechanisms
29. Higher-status speakers typically use more direct, commanding language; lower-status speakers use more deferential, indirect language
30. Linguistic patterns both reflect and reinforce status hierarchies

2.4 The Formality Dimension (18 minutes)

Definition

The **formality scale** reflects the degree of ritualization, consequence, and standardization in an interaction. Formal contexts invoke standardized, careful, planned linguistic behavior. Informal contexts license relaxed, spontaneous, creative language.

Crucially: Formality is not purely a matter of individual choice. It is **institutionally structured**. A job interview, a court proceeding, or a religious service invokes formality regardless of how friendly the individual participants might be.

Linguistic Markers of Formality

Phonological markers

31. **Formal:** Careful articulation, full pronunciation of all sounds
32. **Informal:** Casual reduction, dropping sounds, abbreviated forms ("'bout" for "about," "'cause" for "because")

Lexical markers

33. **Formal:** Low-frequency vocabulary, often of Latinate or Germanic origin ("commence," "utilize," "facilitate")
34. **Informal:** High-frequency, everyday vocabulary ("start," "use," "help")

Morphosyntactic markers

1. **Formal:** Complete sentences, passive voice, embedded subordination ("The decision was made by the committee after careful consideration of all proposals")
2. **Informal:** Fragments, active voice, coordination ("We decided it")

Prosodic markers

1. **Formal:** Slower speech rate, clear stress marking, few contractions
2. **Informal:** Faster speech rate, reduced stress marking, frequent contractions and ellipsis

Hemnesberget Example: Formality and Setting

Hemnesberget residents use Bokmål in formally ritualized, institutionally structured settings:

3. **Schools and classrooms:** Educational formality
4. **Churches and religious services:** Religious formality
5. **Government offices:** Official formality

6. **Media:** Broadcast formality

They use Ranamål in informal, private, face-to-face contexts:

7. **Homes:** Private informality

8. **Neighborhood interactions:** Social informality

9. **Local shops:** Community informality

Important Insight: The formality evoked by institutional setting overrides personal relationships. Even if a student feels comfortable with their teacher, the school setting invokes formality. Even if a parishioner knows the pastor well, church services are formally ritualized. Personal relationships and institutional formality can pull in different directions, but institutional formality is often dominant.

Formality in Written Communication

Written communication typically invokes more formality than speech. A formal written notice (Example 5 from the chapter) illustrates extreme formality:

"Refuse should be deposited in the receptacle provided."

This uses:

10. Passive voice ("should be deposited")

11. Formal vocabulary ("refuse," "receptacle," "provided")

12. Avoidance of personal pronouns (no mention of "you" or "your")

13. No indication of who must perform the action

14. Complete, carefully constructed sentences

Compare to informal speech: "Put your rubbish in the bin, Jilly."

The formal written notice sounds impersonal and bureaucratic—intentionally so. It depersonalizes the directive, making it seem like an objective rule rather than a command from a specific person to another person.

Formality and Appropriateness

If your mother said the formal version to you at home, you would likely find it odd. You might assume she was being sarcastic or humorous, or that something was seriously wrong. The formality would be inappropriate for the context (informal home setting, intimate relationship), and its inappropriateness would be socially marked.

Conversely, if a formal notice used the informal version, it would be considered unprofessional and too familiar.

Key Insights

15. The formality dimension is not purely individual; it is institutionally structured
16. Formal contexts invoke standardized, careful linguistic behavior
17. Informality can be achieved through relaxation of formality markers: casual speech, reduced articulation, everyday vocabulary, fragments
18. Written communication typically invokes more formality than speech
19. Formality is appropriate to context; inappropriate formality (or informality) is socially marked
20. Institutional formality can override personal relationships

2.5 The Referential-Affective Function Scale (16 minutes)

Definition

Language simultaneously serves multiple functions. **Referential functions** convey objective information; **affective functions** express emotions, attitudes, relationships, and interpersonal positioning. Most utterances blend both functions, but in different proportions.

Referential Function

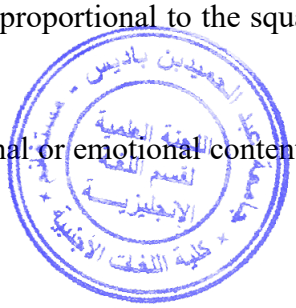
Language serving primarily referential functions aims to communicate factual information, convey propositions, and exchange content. Examples:

21. Weather forecasts: "The high will be 15 degrees Celsius, with rain expected in the afternoon"

22. Directions: "The train station is three blocks north of here"

23. Instructions: "Mix two cups of flour with one cup of sugar"

24. Scientific explanations: "The gravitational field is inversely proportional to the square of distance"



These utterances prioritize information transfer and minimize personal or emotional content. The listener's primary concern is receiving accurate information.

Affective Function

Language serving primarily affective functions aims to express emotions, attitudes, build relationships, and convey interpersonal positioning. Examples:

25. Gossip: "Can you believe what she said? I was absolutely shocked!"

26. Greetings: "Hello! How wonderful to see you!"

27. Endearments: "I love you so much"

28. Casual chat: "Lovely weather we're having!"

These utterances prioritize emotional expression, relationship maintenance, and interpersonal connection. The information content is often minimal or predictable.

Multifunctional Communication

Most real utterances serve both functions simultaneously. The key is understanding the proportion and which function dominates.

Ray's Complaint

Ray's utterance to his mother—"Yeah, that bastard Sootbucket kept us in again"—illustrates complex multifunctionality:

Referential content

29. A teacher named Sutton kept the class in after school

30. This is the reason Ray is late home

31. This has happened before ("again")

Affective content

1. Ray is frustrated and angry

2. He is expressing his emotional response to the teacher

3. He is asserting solidarity with his mother (we're on the same team against the teacher)

4. He is managing his social identity as a put-upon student

5. He is seeking sympathy and perhaps validation of his grievance

A purely referential version would be: "Mr Sutton kept us in after school." This conveys the same factual information but eliminates the affective content. By using "bastard," "Sootbucket," and "again," Ray dramatically increases the affective content. He transforms a simple factual statement into an emotional expression and solidarity-building utterance.

Professional Communication

Healthcare providers' communication illustrates affective work beneath referential content:

A doctor might ask, "Have you been experiencing any chest pain?" (referential question) while simultaneously:

1. Using a warm, concerned tone (affective)

2. Maintaining appropriate eye contact (affective)

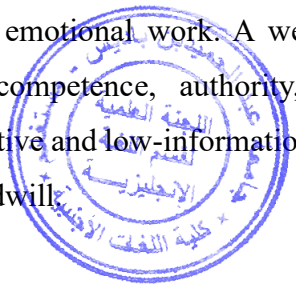
3. Listening carefully to the patient's response (affective)

4. Validating the patient's experience (affective)

The referential content (collecting symptom information) is necessary for diagnosis, but the affective dimensions (reassurance, validation, empathy) are equally important for patient outcomes. The emotional competence of healthcare providers is linguistically enacted.

Why This Distinction Matters

Sociolinguistic analysis cannot reduce language to its propositional content. An utterance that appears to be "just information" always also does relational and emotional work. A weather forecast appears purely referential, but it can also convey competence, authority, and professionalism. Casual chat between neighbors appears purely affective and low-information, but it maintains community bonds, signals inclusion, and expresses goodwill.



Specialized Registers

Different professional and social contexts allocate different emphasis to referential and affective functions:

1. **Scientific communication:** Prioritizes referential function, minimizes affective expression
2. **Literary communication:** Often prioritizes affective function, even when conveying information
3. **Intimate communication:** Heavily weighted toward affective function
4. **Professional communication:** Balances both, but the proportion varies by profession
5. **Legal communication:** Prioritizes referential precision, minimizes affective content

Key Insights

6. Language serves both referential (informational) and affective (emotional, relational) functions
7. Most utterances blend both functions, but in different proportions
8. The proportion varies according to context, relationship, and communicative purpose
9. Sociolinguistic analysis must attend to both dimensions; information content alone doesn't capture an utterance's full meaning

10. Emotional and relational competence is linguistically enacted

2.6 Multilingual Communities and Strategic Code Selection (20 minutes)

Definition

A **multilingual speech community** is a social group where speakers routinely use multiple distinct languages or dialects, and language choice is systematically organized according to social factors. In multilingual communities, speakers maintain distinct linguistic systems and deploy them according to contexts.

Contrasting Multilingual Communities

Different multilingual communities organize their linguistic resources differently. Understanding these patterns illustrates how the dimensions we've discussed apply across different languages and dialects.

Case Study 1: Hemnesberget, Norway

Historical Context

Hemnesberget is a village in northern Norway that became famous in sociolinguistic research in the late 1960s when researchers Blom and Gumperz studied the villagers' language use in detail. The village maintained two distinct Norwegian varieties in systematic distribution.

The Linguistic System

Ranamål (local dialect)

11. Phonologically distinctive: includes the palatal nasal [ŋ] not present in standard Norwegian
12. Lexically distinctive: "ho" for "she" (vs. "hun" in standard), "mænn" for "but" (vs. "men" in standard)
13. Morphologically distinctive: "hæstan" for "horses" (vs. "hestene" in standard)

Bokmål (standard dialect)

14. The nationally standardized variety
15. Used in education, government, media

16. Associated with education, formality, national context

Distribution Pattern

Ranamål is used for:

17. Family conversation
18. Interaction with friends
19. Neighborhood shopping and casual transactions
20. Local service providers
21. Informal social contexts

Bokmål is used for:

22. Schools and education
23. Churches and religious services
24. Government offices and official business
25. Radio and television
26. Interaction with outsiders and visitors to the village

Critical Social Norms

A striking finding: a local resident who used Bokmål to buy petrol at a local garage would be regarded as "stuck up" or "putting on airs." This norm shows that the community has strong social sanctions about appropriate code choice. Using the standard dialect in an informal, local transaction violates community norms about authenticity and solidarity.

Topic as a Code-Switching Trigger

Most remarkably, university students from Hemnesberget who returned home during vacations would use Ranamål when socializing with family and friends, like everyone else. But when these same students began discussing national politics—still in the village, with other students they knew well—they unconsciously switched to Bokmål.

This demonstrates that topic can trigger code switches independent of other social factors. The students associated "national politics" with extra-village discourse, educated discussion, and formality. Even though they were physically in the village with peers they knew well, the topic itself activated Bokmål as the appropriate code.

Sociolinguistic Explanation

The Hemnesberget pattern reflects:

27. **Historical factors:** Ranamål is the traditional local language; Bokmål was imposed through state education and administration
28. **Institutional factors:** Schools, government, media all used Bokmål, making it the language of formal institutions
29. **Ideology:** Language ideology associates Bokmål with education, modernity, and national identity
30. **Indexicality:** Bokmål indexes education, which indexes authority, which indexes appropriateness in formal contexts

The speakers have internalized these associations through experience. When certain contextual features are activated (formality, education, outsiders, national topics), Bokmål becomes the appropriate code.

Case Study 2: Sauris, Italy

Historical and Geographic Context

Sauris is a mountain village in northeastern Italy. Before 1866, it was part of the Austrian Empire. In the late 1960s, researcher Denison documented that village adults were trilingual, using three distinct language systems in systematic distribution.

The Linguistic System

German (local dialect):

31. Used in homes, family contexts
32. Used with neighbors and fellow villagers

33. Signaled local in-group membership and solidarity

Friulian (regional language):

1. Used with people from surrounding areas outside the village
2. Used by young men particularly to each other in the pub
3. Had become a language of friendship and solidarity among the younger generation, who had attended secondary school together in a nearby town
4. Signaled regional identity

Italian (national language)

1. Used with people from beyond the region
2. Language of reading and writing (literacy language)
3. Language of church and school
4. Language of official and formal communication

Distribution Pattern

Unlike Hemnesberget, which has a binary choice (Ranamål or Bokmål), Sauris involved three-way language choice:

1. **German:** Home, intimacy, family, village solidarity
2. **Friulian:** Regional solidarity, peer solidarity, social connection
3. **Italian:** Official, formal, regional/national interaction, education, literacy

Strategic Deployment

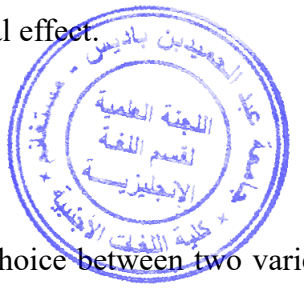
A revealing anecdote illustrates speakers' agency: an angry woman used German (the intimate, home language) in the pub (a semi-public, male-dominated space) to berate her husband for going to the pub instead of attending to their dairy and cheese-making. Her choice was strategic:

4. **Isolating effect:** German is not typically used in the pub. By switching to German, she isolated her husband from his friends, who don't routinely speak German in that setting

5. **Seriousness marker:** Using the home language in public marked the complaint as serious

6. **Boundary marking:** It emphasized the distinction between home/family responsibilities and pub socializing

This example demonstrates that speakers are not passively subject to sociolinguistic norms. They can strategically violate or manipulate norms to accomplish social goals. The woman deliberately violated the expected code for that context to create a powerful social effect.



Comparative Insights

Comparing Hemnesberget and Sauris reveals:

7. **Binary vs. multilingual systems:** Hemnesberget involves choice between two varieties; Sauris involves three

8. **Stability vs. change:** Hemnesberget maintained stable patterns; Sauris showed language shift (younger people increasingly using Friulian and Italian)

9. **Distribution logic:** Both follow the principle that code choice reflects social factors—participants, setting, formality, function

10. **Ideology:** Both reflect language ideologies about which language/dialect indexes which social meanings

11. **Agency:** Both communities show that speakers can strategically deploy codes to accomplish social goals

Key Insights

12. Multilingual communities maintain organized repertoires of distinct linguistic systems

13. Code choice is systematically organized according to social factors: participants, setting, topic, formality, function

14. Different contexts have different distributions: some multilingual communities are binary (two-way choice), others have more options

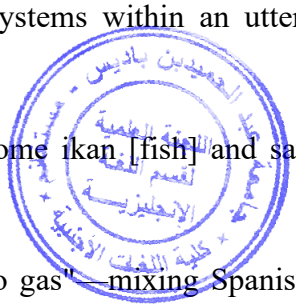
15. Ideology matters: communities have beliefs about what each language/dialect indexes

16. Speakers have agency: they can strategically deploy codes to accomplish communicative goals, even violating norms when strategically appropriate

2.7 Code-Switching and Multilingual Competence (14 minutes)

Definition

Code-switching refers to alternating between distinct linguistic systems within an utterance, exchange, or interaction. Examples include:



17. A Malaysian speaker: "I went to the market and bought some ikan [fish] and sayuran [vegetables]"—English with embedded Malay words

18. A Spanish-English bilingual: "Voy al store porque no tengo gas"—mixing Spanish and English

Types of Code-Switching

Intra-sentential code-switching: Alternating within a single sentence or clause:

1. "I went to the store and bought some ikan and sayuran"

2. Structure: English main clause with Malay embedded words

Inter-sentential code-switching: Alternating at sentence or turn boundaries:

3. "I'm going to the store. Voy a ir al mercado también."

4. Structure: Complete English sentence, then complete Spanish sentence

Code selection: Choosing one code for an extended segment (like the Hemnesberget residents choosing Bokmål for an entire conversation about politics)

Why These Distinctions Matter

Intra-sentential code-switching and inter-sentential code-switching may involve different cognitive processes:

1. **Inter-sentential code-switching** might primarily reflect situational code selection—deciding which language is appropriate for the context

2. **Intra-sentential code-switching** might involve more complex bilingual speech processing, creative linguistic play, or conscious identity performance

Multilingual Linguistic Competence

The multilingual speaker's ability to seamlessly code-switch or select appropriate codes reflects sophisticated **sociolinguistic competence**, not linguistic deficiency. To competently code-switch or code-select, speakers must have internalized:

1. **Social meanings:** Understanding what each code indexes and signals socially
2. **Linguistic features:** Mastery of the phonological, morphosyntactic, and lexical features of each system
3. **Constraints on mixing:** Knowledge that intra-sentential code-switching follows structural principles; it's not random mixing
4. **Social consequences:** Understanding the social effects of different choices
5. **Contextual appropriateness:** Judgment about which code is appropriate in which contexts

Why Multilingual Speakers Code-Switch

Multilingual speakers may code-switch for multiple reasons:

1. **Conceptual reasons:** The concept or term is more naturally or precisely expressed in one language
2. **Identity performance:** Code-switching performs bilingual identity and marks membership in a multilingual community
3. **Solidarity marking:** Code-switching to a community's minority language can express solidarity with that community
4. **Emphasis or creativity:** Code-switching can emphasize a point or create a particular communicative effect
5. **Vocabulary access:** Sometimes a word or phrase is more accessible in one language (especially for less-common concepts)

6. **Audience adaptation:** Code-switching can address different audience members who have different linguistic competencies

Professional Applications

Multilingual professionals frequently code-switch:

1. A lawyer code-switches between legal English and the client's native language in consultations
2. A medical interpreter code-switches between medical terminology in one language and colloquial expression in another
3. A teacher code-switches to make technical concepts accessible to students with limited proficiency in the language of instruction

This code-switching displays high-level communicative competence, not communicative failure.

Challenging Deficit Models

Historically, multilingualism was sometimes viewed negatively, with people being described as "semilingual" (having incomplete knowledge of all their languages) or as suffering from "linguistic confusion." This deficit-based view has been thoroughly challenged by sociolinguistic research.

Contemporary understanding recognizes that multilingual speakers have organized repertoires of distinct systems and sophisticated knowledge about contextual appropriateness. A multilingual speaker who doesn't use all their languages equally in all contexts isn't confused—they have appropriate, context-sensitive knowledge.

Key Insights

4. Code-switching demonstrates sophisticated sociolinguistic and multilingual competence
5. Different types of code-switching (intra-sentential vs. inter-sentential) may involve different cognitive and social processes
6. Code-switching serves multiple social and communicative purposes
7. Multilingual competence is not linguistic deficiency; it's a sophisticated system of organized linguistic knowledge

8. Professional and educational contexts increasingly require code-switching competence

2.8 From Description to Explanation: Toward Sociolinguistic Theory (12 minutes)

The Sociolinguistic Method

Sociolinguists aim not merely to describe linguistic variation but to explain why it occurs. This requires a methodological progression from observation through analysis to explanation.

Three Methodological Steps

Step 1: Identify the Linguistic Variation

What linguistic forms are being used? What are the alternatives? At what levels does variation occur?

In Hemnesberget: What are the phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic differences between Ranamål and Bokmål?

Answer: Ranamål includes [ŋ], uses "ho" for "she," uses "hæstan" for "horses." Bokmål uses different forms in each case.

Step 2: Identify the Social Patterns

What social factors correlate with which linguistic forms? When do speakers use Ranamål? When do they use Bokmål?

In Hemnesberget: Ranamål appears in informal, face-to-face, village-internal interactions. Bokmål appears in formal, institutional, outsider-involving contexts.

Step 3: Develop Explanations

Why do these social factors lead to these linguistic choices? What mechanisms explain the pattern?

Important Caution: Correlation ≠ Causation

Finding that Hemnesberget residents use Bokmål in formal institutional contexts does not automatically explain *why* formality triggers Bokmål rather than Ranamål. Multiple explanatory frameworks could account for the same pattern.

Potential Explanatory Frameworks

1. Historical Explanation

Schools and government offices historically adopted Bokmål as an official language. Through repeated institutional use over many decades, Bokmål became the expected language in these contexts. The pattern is historically contingent—if institutions had adopted Ranamål, different patterns might have emerged.

2. Ideological Explanation

Language ideology—community members' beliefs about the meanings of languages—associates Bokmål with education, modernity, and national identity. These associations are not natural or inevitable; they are socially constructed through historical processes. The pattern reflects shared community beliefs about what each language means.

3. Indexicality Explanation

Bokmål indexes "education" (because educated people use it, because education institutions use it). "Education" indexes "authority" (educated people are typically authorities). "Authority" indexes "appropriateness in institutional contexts." This chain of indexical associations explains why Bokmål becomes appropriate in formal institutional settings.

4. Identity Positioning Explanation

Using Bokmål in institutional contexts allows speakers to position themselves as educated, modern, and appropriately participating in official discourse. This is identity work—by code-selecting to Bokmål, speakers are performing an educated, modern identity.

5. Social Practice Explanation

The pattern is reproduced through repeated social practice. Each time speakers encounter and use Bokmål in institutional contexts, the association becomes more habitualized and naturalized. Over time, using Bokmål in institutional contexts seems natural and inevitable, even though it was historically contingent.

Integration of Explanations

These explanatory frameworks need not contradict each other. All five might operate simultaneously:

9. **Historically**, institutions adopted Bokmål

10. **Ideologically**, communities developed beliefs about what Bokmål means

11. **Indexically**, Bokmål became associated with education and authority

12. **Identitarily**, speakers use it to position themselves as educated

13. **Socially**, repeated practice habitualized the pattern

Why This Matters for Advanced Students

For Master's level study, understanding that multiple theoretical frameworks can generate different explanations of the same pattern is crucial. It means:

14. **Sociolinguistic explanation is not mechanical.** You can't observe patterns and mechanically derive explanations.

15. **Theoretical frameworks matter.** Different theoretical assumptions (historical, ideological, interactional, cognitive) generate different explanations.

16. **Methodological transparency is essential.** Researchers should be explicit about which theoretical framework they're using and why.

17. **Multiple perspectives are valuable.** Rather than seeking the single correct explanation, we can understand how different frameworks illuminate different aspects of sociolinguistic phenomena.

18. **Language ideologies are crucial.** Communities' beliefs about language aren't neutral; they shape linguistic behavior and patterns.

Key Insights

19. Sociolinguistic explanation requires movement from observation through pattern identification to theoretical explanation

20. Correlation between social factors and linguistic choices requires theoretical explanation, not automatic inference

21. Multiple explanatory frameworks can account for the same pattern

22. Different frameworks highlight different causal mechanisms: historical, ideological, indexical, interactional, social

23. Researchers must be methodologically transparent about their theoretical assumptions

2.9 Session 2 Synthesis and Forward-Looking Questions (10 minutes)

Summary of the Four Dimensions

The four dimensions provide a systematic framework for analyzing sociolinguistic phenomena:

Dimension	**Scale**	**Key Features**	**Example**
Solidarity-Social Distance	High (intimate) → Low (distant)	Informal, creative language ↔ Formal, standardized language	"Meg" vs. "Mrs Billington"
Status	High → Low	Commanding, direct language ↔ Deferential, indirect language	"Do it" vs. "Would you consider..."
Formality	High (institutional) → Low (informal)	Standardized, careful language ↔ Relaxed, creative language	Formal passive sentences ↔ Fragments
Function (Referential-Affective)	Referential (info-heavy) → Affective (emotion-heavy)	Objective information ↔ Emotional expression	Weather forecast ↔ Gossip

Key Principles

1. **Multilevel organization:** Linguistic variation is organized across multiple levels (phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic, macro-level)

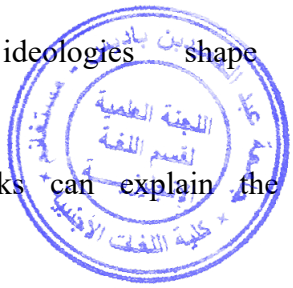
2. **Multifactorial determination:** Linguistic choices are typically influenced by multiple factors (participants, setting, topic, function) operating simultaneously

3. **Dimensional clustering:** Linguistic variations cluster along identifiable social dimensions

4. **Strategic agency:** Speakers have agency—they can manipulate sociolinguistic norms to accomplish communicative goals

5. **Ideological underpinnings:** Community language ideologies shape what languages/varieties index and mean

6. **Theoretical multiplicity:** Multiple theoretical frameworks can explain the same sociolinguistic patterns



Forward-Looking Questions for Subsequent Modules

As we continue studying sociolinguistics, we will investigate:

1. Language and Identity

1. How do sociolinguistic patterns intersect with identity categories like gender, age, ethnicity, class, and sexuality?

2. How do speakers use language to construct and perform multiple aspects of identity?

3. How does language variation relate to social inequality?

2. Language Change and Variation Over Time

1. Why do languages change? What social factors drive linguistic change?

2. Do young speakers systematically differ from older speakers? How does apparent time become real time?

3. Can we predict which linguistic changes will succeed in communities?

3. Language and Power

1. Who has the authority to define which linguistic forms are "correct" or "appropriate"?

2. How do sociolinguistic norms relate to social inequality and power?

3. What is standard language ideology, and how does it affect speakers' linguistic practices?

4. Language Policy and Planning

1. If we understand sociolinguistic patterns, how can we design language policies that respect community practices?
2. How can sociolinguistic knowledge address social inequalities related to language?
3. What are the consequences of language standardization and planning efforts?

5. Digital Communication and New Media

1. How do digital technologies (texting, social media, online gaming, virtual worlds) alter the relationship between social context and language choice?
2. Do new media create new linguistic varieties?
3. What are the sociolinguistic features of digital communication?

Closing Reflection

Sociolinguistics began with a simple observation: we speak differently in different social contexts, and this variation is systematic. Through this two-session lecture, we have developed frameworks to describe, analyze, and explain linguistic variation.

The real work of sociolinguistics, however, extends beyond academic analysis. It involves asking critical questions:

4. Why do these patterns persist?
5. Whose interests do they serve?
6. How might they change?
7. How can we use sociolinguistic knowledge to support social justice and equity?

These questions—which move beyond description toward critique and intervention—will guide our continued exploration of how language, society, and identity interweave.

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Regional and Social Language Variation: A Two-Session Lecture

Introduction

This two-session lecture provides an in-depth exploration of how language varies across regional and social dimensions within single-language communities. Unlike our previous foundational lecture on multilingual contexts, this course focuses on **monolingual speech communities where variation still occurs extensively**—revealing that speakers use different linguistic forms based on where they come from geographically and where they fit in the social hierarchy. The lecture demonstrates that linguistic variation is not limited to speakers of different languages; even within a single language like English or French, speakers employ dramatically different pronunciations, vocabularies, and grammatical structures that signal both their regional origins and their social status or class. Session One examines **regional variation**—how English speakers from different countries, regions, and cities use distinct varieties, and introduces key concepts like isoglosses (boundary lines between linguistic features), dialect chains, and the distinction between accent and dialect. Session Two focuses on **social variation**, demonstrating how social class, education, and professional status systematically correlate with linguistic choices, and examining how these patterns operate in different social contexts. Through examples ranging from international English varieties to caste dialects in India and Javanese to urban social class variation in cities like New York and Norwich, this lecture illustrates that language is an index of both geographic and social identity—and that prestige, standardization, and power shape which linguistic forms are valued in society.

SESSION 1 REGIONAL VARIATION IN LANGUAGE (90 minutes)

1.1 Introduction to Language as Identity Marker (10 minutes)

The Observable Phenomenon

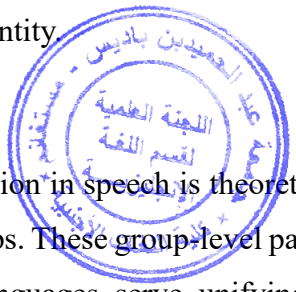
The moment someone speaks, listeners begin making judgments about them—even before the speaker says anything explicitly about themselves. From a brief telephone conversation, we can often determine:

1. Whether the speaker is a child or adult
2. The speaker's gender

3. Their regional origin or accent

4. Their approximate educational or socioeconomic background

This immediate inference is possible because **language carries social information**. The way people speak is not arbitrary; it systematically reflects their geographic origins and social positioning. Language serves a crucial social function: it signals group membership, marks boundaries between different communities, and constructs social identity.



The Principle of Patterned Variation

While no two people speak exactly identically, and individual variation in speech is theoretically infinite, certain linguistic features cluster systematically among groups. These group-level patterns differentiate communities from one another. Just as different languages serve unifying and separating functions for their speakers, so do regional and social speech characteristics within languages. Pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary differences become socially meaningful precisely because they mark group boundaries.

Two Dimensions of Variation

Language variation within communities operates along two major dimensions:

1. **Regional variation** Different pronunciations, vocabularies, and grammatical patterns associated with geographic regions

2. **Social variation** Different linguistic patterns associated with social status, class, education, and professional background

This session focuses on **regional variation**—how people from different places speak differently.

1.2 International Varieties of English (15 minutes)

The Scope of English

English is spoken as a first language in multiple countries, each developing distinctive regional varieties. These varieties show differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

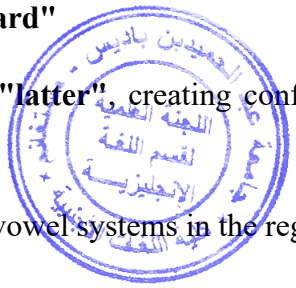
Pronunciation Differences

The classic example involves consonants and vowels that diverge across regions. To British ears:

1. A New Zealander's **"dad"** sounds like British **"dead"**
2. New Zealand **"bad"** sounds like British **"bed"**
3. New Zealand **"six"** sounds like British **"sucks"**

Americans experience similar confusion with British speakers:

4. American **"god"** sounds to British speakers like British **"guard"**
5. American **"ladder"** is pronounced identically to American **"latter"**, creating confusion for British speakers expecting to hear a difference



These pronunciation differences are systematic and reflect different vowel systems in the regional varieties.

Vocabulary Differences

International English varieties diverge in vocabulary for the same referents:

Concept	**British**	**Australian**	**New Zealand**	**American**
Single parent	single parent	sole parent	solo parent	—
Traffic light	traffic light	—	—	traffic light
Gumboots	Wellington boots (wellies)	—	gumboots (gummies)	—
Swimming costume	—	—	togs	—

South Africans use the term **"robot"** for British **"traffic light."** Vocabulary differences become particularly important when considering which regional form is perceived as standard or prestigious in each country.

Grammatical Differences

Different English varieties also exhibit grammatical variations:

Feature	US English	British English	Notes
do/have	"Do you have...?"	"Have you got...?"	American form now spreading to Britain
gotten/got	"She has gotten used to it"	"She's got used to it"	American perfect tense differs
past tense	"He dove in"	"He dived in"	American past tense differs; New Zealand shows generation shift, with younger people using "dove"
present perfect	"Did you eat?"	"Have you eaten?"	Different tense marking for recent events

These grammatical differences show that international English varieties differ not just at the level of pronunciation or vocabulary, but in fundamental grammatical structures.

Important Recognition

None of these varieties is linguistically superior to any other. They are simply different. However, **prestige is not linguistically determined**; it is socially determined. Different varieties have different status in their home regions. In New Zealand, for example, US forms are often regarded as innovative and modern, while British forms may be considered more traditional.

1.3 Intra-National Regional Variation (20 minutes)

The Geordie Example

Regional variation exists not just between countries but within them. Consider this exchange between two Geordies (people from Tyneside in northeastern England):

Rob "This wheel's completely disjaskit."

Alan "I might could get it changed."

Rob "You couldn't do nothing of the sort. It needs dumped."

This brief conversation contains multiple distinctive features:

6. **Double modal** "might could"—grammatically unusual, typical of Tyneside and some parts of the southern USA
7. **Passive construction** "needs dumped"—also used in Scotland
8. **Distinctive vocabulary** "disjaskit" (worn out, ruined)
9. **Distinctive intonation patterns** Geordie speech is recognizable particularly by its distinctive melody and stress patterns

These speakers are not just using different accents; they are employing distinct dialects with grammatical and lexical differences.

Regional Variation Develops Over Time

British and American English show far more regional variation than varieties that developed more recently, like New Zealand or Australian English. Dialectologists can distinguish regional varieties for nearly every English county (Yorkshire, Lancashire, Northumberland, Somerset, Cornwall) and many towns and cities.

Named Dialects

Some British dialects have become so distinctive that they have acquired names:

10. **Scouse** (Liverpool)
11. **Cockney** (London)

12. **Geordie** (Tyneside/Newcastle)

These named dialects signal how significant the varieties are in distinguishing groups from one another.

Cockney Dialect Examples

The Cockney dialect of London is particularly distinctive:

Phonological features

13. Glottal stop [ʔ] replaces [t] between vowels: "bi[ʔ]er" for "bitter," "bu[ʔ]er" for "butter"

Rhyming slang

14. "apples and pears" = stairs
15. "lean and lurch" = church
16. "trouble and strife" = wife (somewhat sexist)
17. "cows and kisses" = the missus (girlfriend/wife)

American Regional Variation

The United States exhibits significant regional variation. Dialectologists identify three main divisions:

18. **Northern**
19. **Midland**
20. **Southern**

Within these broad regions, further distinctions can be made. Boston dialect differs from New York City dialect, which differs from Brooklynese (within New York). The Linguistic Atlas Projects document pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary features distinguishing different US dialects.

Rural Appalachian Examples

In rural Appalachia, distinctive features include:

- **Pronunciations** "acrosst" (across), "clifft" (cliff)

- **Verb prefixes** "a-fishin'" (going fishing), "a-comin'" (coming)
- **Diverse terminology** The word for dragonfly varies dramatically: "darning needle," "mosquito hawk," "spindle," "snake feeder," "snake doctor," "snake waiter"—but "darning needle" is used only in New York, while New York has also developed variants "dining needle" and "diamond needle"

Isoglosses and Dialect Boundaries

When mapping regional variation across a large area, dialectologists draw **isoglosses**—boundary lines marking where particular linguistic features shift. When multiple isoglosses cluster together, they often create thicker boundary lines on maps, delineating regions where speech is distinctively different.

However, isoglosses don't always align perfectly. Vocabulary boundaries don't always coincide with pronunciation boundaries. Areas using particular vocabulary don't all use the same words for other objects. This overlap creates complexity in defining regions—a key insight about the fuzzy nature of linguistic boundaries.

Newer Varieties Show Less Regional Variation

In countries like Australia and New Zealand, where English was introduced more recently, there is noticeably less regional variation. High levels of internal communication and relatively small populations may have inhibited the development of marked regional differences. This suggests that regional variation requires **time to develop**—it accumulates through generations of community isolation and independent linguistic development.

1.4 Dialect Chains and Cross-Continental Variation (15 minutes)

The Problem of Boundaries

Although maps of European or Indian languages suggest tidy linguistic compartmentalization, reality is messier. Languages and dialects don't have clean, sharply defined boundaries. Instead, varieties **blend into one another** continuously across geographic space.

Miriam's Experience (Example 5 from chapter)

Consider the experience of Miriam, a student fluent in both French and Italian who traveled across France toward Italy:

- In **Paris** She understood French well; her Parisian accent was admired
- In **Dijon and Lyon** She understood the provincial French, though different from Paris
- **Moving south from Paris** French became progressively harder to follow
- **Near Chambéry** (at the France-Italy border): She struggled: "Was it Italian French or French Italian?" She understood neither perfectly, though she could make herself understood
- **Northern Italy (Turin, Milan)** Very different from the Italian she had learned
- **Approaching Rome** She gradually comprehended more
- **In Rome** Finally found linguistic congruence with the Italian she had learned

Miriam's experience illustrates that **linguistic change is gradual**. From one village or town to the next, change is minimal. But cumulatively across a large geographic area, change accumulates into mutually unintelligible varieties. The varieties form a **continuum**—gradual change across space.

Dialect Chains Across Europe

Europe contains multiple dialect chains where varieties blend continuously:

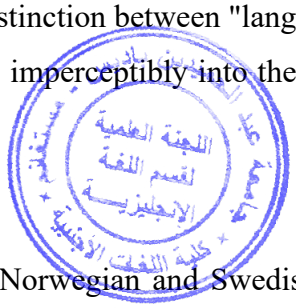
- **German chain** Connects dialects from Switzerland through Austria and Germany to the Netherlands and Belgium, eventually connecting to Dutch and Flemish
    - Speakers in adjacent regions understand each other relatively easily
    - But speakers from distant regions (Switzerland to Netherlands) may have difficulty
- **Romance language chain** Connects Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, French, and Italian
    - The same pattern of gradual change across space
- **Scandinavian chain** Connects Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish
    - Interestingly, speakers of Swedish and Norwegian in adjacent regions can communicate more easily than fellow-Swedes from northern and southern Sweden

- This demonstrates that linguistic similarity depends on proximity, not on official language boundaries

- **Indian and Chinese chains** Similar dialect chains exist throughout these regions

The Arbitrariness of Language vs. Dialect

These dialect chains illustrate the fundamental arbitrariness of the distinction between "language" and "dialect." Linguistic features overlap; usage in one area merges imperceptibly into the next. How do we determine where one language ends and another begins?



Intelligibility is unreliable:

- Most Norwegians claim they can understand Swedish, yet Norwegian and Swedish are described as distinct languages

- Chinese speakers who know only Cantonese cannot understand Mandarin speakers, yet both are described as "dialects" of Chinese

The Sociolinguistic Definition

Rather than defining languages purely by linguistic features, sociolinguists propose a **social and political definition**: A **language** is a collection of dialects that are usually linguistically similar and are used by different social groups who **choose to say they are speakers of one language** that functions to unite and represent them to other groups.

This definition is profoundly sociolinguistic rather than purely linguistic:

- It includes the linguistically very different Chinese dialects as "one language" because Chinese speakers define them as such for political and social purposes

- It separates the linguistically similar Scandinavian varieties into distinct languages because of political boundaries and national identity

Key Insight: The boundary between "language" and "dialect" is not determined by linguistic criteria alone but by social, political, and identity factors.

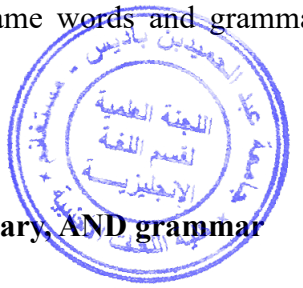
1.5 Regional Accents vs. Regional Dialects (10 minutes)

Distinguishing Accent and Dialect

An important distinction exists between **accent** and **dialect**:

Regional accent

- Refers specifically to **pronunciation differences**
- Speakers of different regional accents might use identical vocabulary and grammar
- Example: A Londoner and a Glaswegian might use the same words and grammatical structures but pronounce them differently



Regional dialect

- Refers to **systematic differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, AND grammar**
- The Geordie example demonstrates a dialect because it involves grammatical differences ("might could," "needs dumped"), vocabulary ("disjaskit"), and pronunciation

The Relationship Between Accent and Dialect

All dialects involve distinctive accents (pronunciation differences). However, an accent change doesn't necessarily mean a dialect change. You can have accent variation without dialect variation. The presence of vocabulary and grammar differences alongside pronunciation differences marks a shift from "different accent" to "different dialect."

Important Note

The distinction between accent and dialect can be analytically useful, but in practice, they're often interconnected. When mapping regional variation, we typically observe both simultaneously—distinctive pronunciation patterns together with distinctive vocabulary and grammatical patterns.

1.6 Session 1 Summary and Transition (10 minutes)

Key Concepts from Session 1

- **International varieties of English** differ in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, and none is inherently superior—prestige is socially determined
- **Intra-national regional variation** exists within countries, creating distinctive regional dialects with recognizable names in some cases

- **Isoglosses** mark dialect boundaries, but they don't align perfectly, creating fuzzy regional identities
- **Dialect chains** demonstrate that linguistic varieties blend continuously across geographic space; boundaries are gradual rather than sharp
- **The language-dialect distinction** is socially and politically determined, not purely linguistically determined
- **Regional accents** refer to pronunciation differences, while **regional dialects** involve systematic differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar

Preview of Session 2

Session 1 has examined how language varies across **geographic regions**. Session 2 shifts focus to **social dimensions**—how language varies according to speakers' social status, class, education, and professional background. Rather than asking "Where are you from?" we will ask "What is your social position?" And we will discover that linguistic variation patterns according to social hierarchy as systematically as it patterns according to geographic location.

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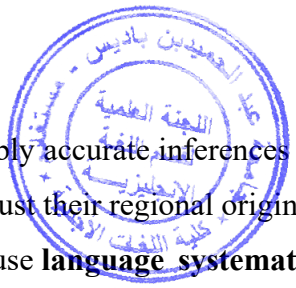
SESSION 2 SOCIAL VARIATION IN LANGUAGE (90 minutes)

2.1 Introduction Language Signals Social Identity (10 minutes)



The Observable Phenomenon

From a brief telephone interaction, listeners can often make reasonably accurate inferences about a speaker's educational background and socioeconomic status—not just their regional origin. This capacity to read social information from speech is possible because **language systematically reflects social structure**.

People in different social positions speak differently. Bank managers do not speak like office cleaners; lawyers do not speak like the people they defend. These differences are not coincidental. They reflect and reinforce social hierarchies and are learned through participation in different social groups.

Social Class and Status

Social class is used as shorthand for differences between people associated with:

- Differences in social prestige
- Differences in wealth
- Differences in education

Status refers to the deference or respect people give someone—or don't give them. In Western society, status generally derives from material resources people command, though other sources exist (e.g., family background, professional expertise).

The Consistent Finding

Social dialect research in many different countries has revealed a **consistent relationship between social class and language patterns**: People from different social classes speak differently. The relationship is patterned and predictable.

2.2 Vocabulary as a Social Marker (12 minutes)

The Obvious Dimension

Vocabulary differences between social groups are probably the most obvious and easily identifiable social dialect differences, though they are in many ways the least illuminating from a sociolinguistic perspective.

"U" vs. "Non-U" Vocabulary in England

In the 1950s, many pairs of words were identified in English that allegedly distinguished upper-class English speakers ("U speakers") from everyone else ("non-U speakers"):

U (Upper-Class)	**Non-U**
sitting room	lounge
lavatory	toilet
writing paper	notepaper
bag	handbag
sofa	settee
relations	relatives

The Nancy Mitford novel *The Pursuit of Love* provided illustrations of these distinctions in dialogue.

Important Caveat

These vocabulary distinctions are problematic as a basis for social class analysis. If such distinctions exist at all, they operate on a categorical basis (you either use the U term or you don't), much like caste-based vocabulary distinctions. However, the problem is that:

21. **No empirical research** backs up most of these claimed distinctions
22. **U terms spread** beyond the upper-class boundary, forcing the upper class to adopt new terms
23. By the 1970s, the list had changed—different vocabulary was being used to mark class distinctions
24. **The barriers between groups are not insurmountable** in societies like Britain or the USA, where social mobility is possible

The Fluidity Problem

Vocabulary can indicate social class, but vocabulary clues are superficial. They conceal the complexity and relative fluidity of social class membership in Western societies. People can move up or down the social ladder. This potential mobility is mirrored more accurately in other aspects of speech—particularly **pronunciation**.

The Insight

While vocabulary differences exist and are noticed by speakers, they are less systematically patterned than pronunciation patterns. For systematic sociolinguistic analysis, we must look at pronunciation variation.

2.3 Pronunciation Variation by Social Class (20 minutes)

The Fundamental Pattern

Different social groups use standard and vernacular pronunciations at different rates. The relationship is remarkably consistent: **The higher a person's social class, the more standard forms they use; the lower the social class, the more vernacular forms they use.**

The [h]-dropping Example

One of the most famous studies examined the variable pronunciation of /h/ in words like "house" and "heaven."

The Study

Researcher Usha Pragji compared two Edwardian speakers from Wellington, New Zealand:

25. **Marjorie Lee** Lived in a "large hideous Edwardian mansion"; father was a lawyer; mother was an early female university student; attended private school then had a governess
    1. **Result** Did not omit a single [h]
26. **George Davis** Lived in a small house with four family members; mother was a solo parent; family was "absolutely poverty-stricken"; took palings off the fence for firewood
    1. **Result** Dropped 83% of the [h]s in his interview

The Pattern Across Social Groups

When comparing five different social groups in West Yorkshire and Norwich, England, the pattern emerged consistently:

27. **Highest social group** Drops the least number of [h]s
28. **Lowest social group** Omits the most [h]s
29. **Middle groups** Show intermediate percentages
30. **Regional variation** West Yorkshire shows higher [h]-dropping overall than Norwich, but the social pattern remains identical in both regions

Important Methodological Note

These are **averages**. Within each social group, considerable individual variation exists. In the West Yorkshire study, one middle-class person dropped every [h], sounding as if they belonged to a lower social group from a purely linguistic perspective. Averaging may conceal substantial within-group variation.

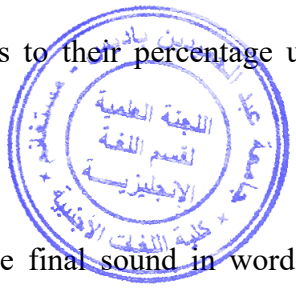
The Pioneering New York Study

Sociolinguist William Labov conducted a now-classic study of New York City speech that established the foundation for understanding social class variation. He:

31. Designed a sociolinguistic interview to elicit a range of speech styles from 120 people of different social backgrounds

32. Analyzed pronunciations of multiple consonants and vowels

33. Found regular patterns relating the social class of speakers to their percentage use of standard vs. vernacular pronunciations



The [ɪŋ] vs. [ɪn] Pattern

One linguistic feature Labov studied was the pronunciation of the final sound in words like "sleeping" and "swimming":

34. **Standard form** [ɪŋ] (the "ng" sound)

35. **Vernacular form** [ɪn] (the "in" sound)

This feature patterns socially in every English-speaking community in which it has been investigated:

Social Group	**Norwich**	**West Yorkshire**	**New York**	**Brisbane**
1 (Highest)	31%	5%	7%	17%
2	42%	34%	32%	31%
3	91%	61%	45%	49%
4 (Lowest)	100%	83%	75%	63%

The table shows: In each community, people from lower social groups use more of the vernacular [ɪn] variant; higher groups use more standard [ɪŋ]. Regional variations exist (different absolute percentages), but the social gradient is consistent.

The Post-Vocalic [r] Variable

Another extensively studied variable involves the pronunciation of /r/ after vowels in words like "car," "card," "for," "form":

36. Either the /r/ is pronounced [r]

37. Or it is absent (written as Ø)

The Fascinating Arbitrariness

In some regions, pronouncing post-vocalic /r/ is prestigious:

38. Eastern USA (Boston, New York)

39. Ireland

40. Scotland

In other regions, **not** pronouncing post-vocalic /r/ is prestigious:

41. Southern England (Reading, London)

42. Other areas

Labov's Elegant Experiment

In New York City in 1964, Labov asked people in different department stores "Where are the women's shoes?" Pretending not to hear, he asked "Excuse me?" Getting a repeated answer. This provided four opportunities to pronounce /r/ (twice in "fourth" and twice in "floor").

The Results

43. **By store prestige** The more prestigious the store, the more people used post-vocalic [r]

44. **By job status** In one store, supervisors (higher status) used post-vocalic [r] nearly 50% of the time; salespeople used it 18% of the time; stock boys rarely used it at all

45. **By social group** Overall pattern showed that higher social groups used more post-vocalic [r]

The Crucial Point: Arbitrariness of Prestige

This example perfectly illustrates that **the particular linguistic forms considered prestigious are entirely arbitrary**. There is nothing inherently good or bad about pronouncing /r/. Yet in New York City it's prestigious; in Reading, England, it's not. The prestige is **socially constructed and historically contingent**.

Historical Examples

46. **[h]-dropping** Well into the twentieth century, top English social classes dropped the initial /h/ in words like "hotel" and "herb." Today, dropping /h/ is stigmatized and associated with lower social classes

47. **Recent London variation** Initial [h] has recently reappeared in the speech of young Londoners from ethnic minority groups

48. **New York authenticity** Older white residents of the Lower East Side use non-rhotic pronunciations to assert status as "authentic New Yorkers"

The prestige value of linguistic forms changes over time and varies by region.

Vowel Pronunciation

The most obvious sociolinguistic patterns involve vowel pronunciation, though measuring vowel differences is technically challenging. In New Zealand, a study of 141 people in the South Island examined diphthong pronunciation in words like "boat," "bite," and "bout" using a four-point scale:

49. **Score 4** Pronunciations closest to RP

50. **Scores 3, 2** Intermediate positions

51. **Score 1** Broadest New Zealand pronunciations

The Pattern:

52. Highest social group: Scored 60+ out of 100

53. Middle group: Scored 50-55

54. Lowest group: Scored less than 43

The systematic relationship between social class and pronunciation of these vowels clearly revealed that social hierarchy was reflected in linguistic patterns.

2.4 Social Class Dialects in Non-English Languages (15 minutes)

Universal Pattern

Although sociolinguistic patterns have been most extensively researched in English-speaking communities, they appear in other languages too. We would expect to find such patterns in any community divisible into different social groups.

Paris French

In Paris, the pronunciation of the first vowel in words like "casser" (break) and "pas" (not) varies between social groups. Working-class speakers like Jean Charmier (a construction laborer) produce pronunciations that sound to middle-class speakers like "cosser" instead of "casser."

Montreal French

The frequency of [l]-deletion distinguishes French of two social groups. For example, in the impersonal pronoun "il" (it):

Social Class	**"il" (impersonal)**	**"il" (personal)**	**"elle"**
Professional	89.8%	71.6%	29.8%
Working Class	99.6%	100%	82%

Professional speakers delete [l] most frequently in the impersonal form (89.8%), where it's phonologically most reducible. Working-class speakers delete it nearly categorically (99.6%). The

pattern shows both linguistic context (whether the /l/ is reducible) and social class influence the feature.

Linguistic Context Matters

An important insight: pronunciation of linguistic forms often varies in different linguistic contexts. In Montreal French, [l]-deletion differs not just by social class but also by:

55. **Grammatical status of the word** (impersonal vs. personal "il")

56. **Surrounding sounds** (more likely to delete before consonants than vowels)

This demonstrates that **both linguistic and social factors** are relevant in accounting for pronunciation patterns. Within each linguistic context, however, social differences remain clear.

Other Speech Communities

Similar patterns appear in:

57. **Tehrani Persian**

58. **Swahili in Mombasa**

59. Other communities where social stratification exists

In all these communities, the higher social groups use more standard forms, while the lowest groups use the fewest standard forms.

2.5 Caste Dialects and Social Structure (12 minutes)

Institutional Social Division

In some societies, social divisions are more systematically institutionalized through caste systems determined by birth. In countries like Indonesia and India, caste systems impose strict social rules governing job, marriage, dress, diet, and behavior. Not surprisingly, these social divisions have corresponding speech differences.

Indian Caste Dialects

Clear differences exist between Brahmin and non-Brahmin caste speech in Indian languages:

Language	Brahmin Form	Non-Brahmin Form	Meaning
Kannada	haalu	aalu	milk
Tamil	tuungu	orangu	sleep
Tulu	gender, number, person distinctions in negative tenses	no such distinctions	negative verb marking

Javanese: Complex Social Dialects

Javanese provides the most complex example. An Indonesian student explained to her English friend:

"It is much harder than in English. It is not just a matter of saying 'sofa' instead of 'couch,' or 'house' rather than 'ouse.' Every time you talk to a different person you have to choose exactly the right words and the right pronunciations. Almost every word is different and they fit together in patterns or levels, depending on who you are talking to. Because I am well-educated and come from a rich family, I am expected to use five different levels of language."

Javanese Social Dialects

Javanese has six distinguishable stylistic levels, each with distinctive patterns of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. However, speakers from different social groups don't use all six levels:

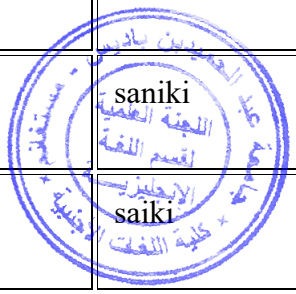
60. **Peasants and uneducated townspeople** Use stylistic levels 1, 1a, and 2

61. **Urbanized people with some education** Use levels 1, 1a, 2, 3, and 3a

62. **Highly educated, highest-status people** Use levels 1, 1a, 1b, 3, and 3a

The example of the word for "you" and "now" illustrates the complexity:

Stylistic Level	"You"	"Now"
3a	padjenengan	samenika
3	sampéjan	samenika
2	sampéjan	saniki
1a	sampéjan	saiki
1a	pandjenengan	saiki
1	kowé	saiki



The Key Insight

In Javanese, a **social dialect is defined as a particular combination of stylistic levels** that each social group uses. Different social groups don't simply use different words; they use different combinations of complete linguistic systems.

Comparison with English

In English, stylistic variation might involve choices like "ta mate" vs. "thank you so much"—relatively simple. In Javanese, every word has multiple forms depending on stylistic level, and different social groups command different subsets of these levels. This creates much more complex social stratification of language than in English.

2.6 Frequency-Based Social Variation (10 minutes)

Not Categorical, but Probabilistic

An important principle: social class differences in linguistic features are typically **not categorical** (you either use the form or you don't). Instead, they are **probabilistic**—different social groups use particular forms at different **frequencies**.

The Principle

Groups are often distinguished by the frequency with which they use particular features, not by their use of completely different forms. All social groups might use both the standard and vernacular variant, but in different proportions.

Example: Canadian vs. Parisian French

In discussing Canadian and Parisian French earlier, we noted that the difference in [l]-deletion patterns is frequently-based. Parisians omit the /l/ in "il pleut" (it's raining), but less frequently than Montrealers do. Both regions use the feature, but in different proportions.

Why This Matters

This frequency-based principle explains why:

63. There is always individual variation within social groups (some middle-class speakers drop all their /h/s)
64. Absolute boundaries between groups don't exist
65. Categories like "social class" are fuzzy, not sharply defined
66. **Language change** can occur—as different frequency distributions emerge across generations

Standard vs. Vernacular Forms

In sociolinguistics, we use the terms:

67. **Standard forms** Pronunciations, grammatical forms, or vocabulary items used by prestigious social groups and associated with formal contexts
68. **Vernacular forms** Forms used by less prestigious groups and associated with informal, home-based contexts

The relationship is not that vernacular speakers **cannot** use standard forms. Rather, they use them less frequently, particularly in informal contexts. In more formal situations, even vernacular speakers shift toward more standard forms (a phenomenon called **style-shifting**).

2.7 Session 2 Summary Integration of Regional and Social Variation (10 minutes)

Key Concepts from Session 2

69. **Social class correlates systematically with linguistic variation**—higher social classes use more standard forms; lower classes use more vernacular forms

70. **Pronunciation variation** patterns more systematically and reliably than vocabulary variation, particularly the frequency of use of particular variants

71. **Prestige is socially constructed and arbitrary**—no linguistic form is inherently better; which forms are prestigious depends on social history and ideology

72. **Variation is frequency-based, not categorical**—all groups use both standard and vernacular forms, but in different proportions

73. **Complex societies show complex social dialect systems**—from simple two-variant systems in English to elaborate multi-level systems like Javanese

74. **Both linguistic and social factors** influence which forms speakers use in particular contexts

Integration with Session 1

Session 1 demonstrated that language varies systematically by **geographic region**. Session 2 demonstrates that language varies systematically by **social hierarchy**. These two dimensions of variation often intersect. The accent triangle diagram from the chapter captures this intersection:

75. **At the bottom of the triangle** Working-class speakers show maximum regional variation—diverse pronunciations across regions

76. **Moving up** As social class increases, regional variation decreases

77. **At the pinnacle** RP or other prestige accents minimize regional markers, creating a relatively homogeneous accent for the upper classes

This reveals that prestige varieties are often **de-regionalized**—they obscure geographic origins in favor of displaying social status. Conversely, working-class and vernacular speech tends to retain strong regional markers.

Forward-Looking Questions

As we continue studying sociolinguistics, we might ask:

78. **Language and Identity** How do speakers use regional and social linguistic variation to construct and signal identity?

79. **Language and Power** How are prestige varieties maintained? How do attitudes toward different varieties reflect and reinforce social hierarchies?

80. **Language Change** How do patterns of social and regional variation relate to language change? Do younger speakers differ systematically from older speakers?

81. **Standardization and Ideology** What are the social consequences of standardization efforts that privilege particular varieties?

82. **Style-Shifting** How and when do speakers shift between standard and vernacular forms?

COMPREHENSIVE COURSE READER MATERIALS FOR BOTH SESSIONS

Primary Source

The attached chapter "Regional and Social Language Variation" from an introductory sociolinguistics textbook

Supplementary Materials for Course Reader

Glossary of Key Terms

83. Regional accent

84. Regional dialect

85. Isogloss

86. Dialect chain

87. Standard form / Standard variety

88. Vernacular form / Vernacular variety

89. Social class

90. Status

91. Prestige / Prestigious accent

92. Social stratification

Visual Aids to Include

93. **Accent Triangle** (showing relationship between social class and regional variation)

94. **Map of English dialect words for "splinter"** (showing isoglosses)

95. **Graphs of [h]-dropping by social group**

96. **Graphs of [ɪŋ] vs. [ɪn] pronunciation by social group and region**

97. **Tables comparing international English varieties**

Discussion and Reflection Questions

98. Why is vocabulary variation less systematic than pronunciation variation in marking social class?

99. How do we explain the "arbitrariness" of prestige? Why are some linguistic forms valued and others stigmatized?

100. In your own speech community, what linguistic features mark regional origin?

101. What linguistic features mark social class or education?

102. How do you code-switch (shift your language) depending on context?

Data Analysis Activities

103. **Dialect mapping** Collect vocabulary or pronunciation data from people in different regions and create an isogloss map

104. **Social class analysis** Audio-record speakers from different educational backgrounds describing their school, and analyze pronunciation patterns (following the methodology from the chapter)

105. **Language attitudes** Conduct interviews asking people what they think about different regional or social varieties of English (or another language)

Assessment Options

106. **Regional Dialect Case Study** (6-8 pages)
Students select a region (geographic area) and document the regional linguistic variation that distinguishes that region. Include phonological, lexical, and grammatical examples.

107. **Social Stratification Analysis** (6-8 pages)
Students analyze data (provided or collected) showing how a linguistic variable correlates with social class. They should identify the standard and vernacular forms, graph the pattern, and discuss what the pattern reveals about social structure in the community.

108. **Comparative Analysis** (6-8 pages)
Students compare how a particular linguistic feature varies across both regional and social dimensions (e.g., how does [h]-dropping vary geographically AND by social class?). What patterns emerge?

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Social Class and Pronunciation

Trudgill, P. (1974). *The social differentiation of English in Norwich*. Cambridge University Press.

Caste Dialects and Complex Social Systems

Gumperz, J. J., & Wilson, R. (1971). Convergence and creolization: A case from the Indo-Aryan/Dravidian border in India. In D. Hymes (Ed.), *Pidginization and creolization of languages* (pp. 151-167). Cambridge University Press.

Gender and Age Language Variation: A Two-Session Lecture

INTRODUCTION

This two-session lecture explores how language varies across gender and age dimensions within speech communities. While previous lectures examined regional variation and social class differentiation, this course focuses on **how speakers' gender identity and age systematically influence linguistic choice**, revealing that language serves crucial functions in constructing and performing masculine and feminine identities and in marking generational membership. The lecture demonstrates that gender differences in language are not biologically determined but are deeply social and cultural phenomena reflecting different social roles, values, and social networks. Gender-exclusive speech differences, found in highly structured traditional societies, contrast sharply with gender-preferential patterns in Western urban communities where women and men use different frequencies of the same linguistic forms. Session One examines **gender variation** in language, exploring how women and men speak differently, why these differences exist, and the complex interaction between gender and social class. The session challenges received explanations of women's linguistic behavior by introducing alternative frameworks based on interview context and accommodation patterns. Session Two focuses on **age variation**, distinguishing between age-graded features (patterns that emerge and disappear at particular life stages) and language change in progress, and examining how age interacts with social factors in accounting for linguistic variation. Through examples ranging from extremely different gender-exclusive languages (Tuyuka and Desano in the Amazon; Yana in North America) to subtle gender-preferential patterns in English, and from childhood speech acquisition through adolescent peer group pressure to age-related patterns in adulthood and old age, this lecture illustrates that identity construction through language is a fundamental sociolinguistic principle.

SESSION 1 GENDER VARIATION IN LANGUAGE 90 minutes

1.1 Introduction Gender as a Sociolinguistic Variable 10 minutes

The Observable Phenomenon

The moment speakers open their mouths, listeners make inferences not just about where they are from but also about their gender. From voice pitch, vocabulary choices, grammatical patterns, and pronunciation, people make reasonably accurate judgments about whether the speaker is woman

or man. This capacity for gender inference reveals that **language systematically encodes gender identity**.

Key Terminological Distinction

Before proceeding, it is crucial to distinguish between **sex** and **gender**. In sociolinguistics, sex refers to biological categories determined by physical characteristics. Gender refers to socio-cultural behavior and identity—how people are socially positioned and how they construct themselves through language and other social practices. This distinction is important because it allows us to recognize that the relationship between biological sex and linguistic patterns is mediated by social and cultural factors. Language variation is not explained by biology; it reflects **socially constructed gender roles, values, and identities**.

Two Patterns of Gender Differentiation

Gender differences in language manifest in fundamentally different ways depending on the social structure of the community:

109. **Gender-exclusive differences** Particular linguistic forms are used only by women or only by men. These patterns occur in highly structured traditional societies where gender roles are strictly defined and clearly demarcated.

110. **Gender-preferential differences** Women and men use the same linguistic forms but in different frequencies or proportions. These patterns occur in Western urban communities where social roles overlap and gender boundaries are more permeable.

1.2 Gender-Exclusive Speech Differences Traditional and Structured Communities 18 minutes

Extreme Example The Amazon Basin

The most dramatic example of gender differentiation in language involves Tayana, an Amazonian Indian woman from the northwest Amazon Basin. She lives in a longhouse where women and men speak different languages:

111. Tayana speaks **Desano** (her birth language) to her husband

112. Her husband replies in **Tuyuka** (his birth language, the language of his tribe)

113. With her children, Tayana uses **Tuyuka** (the language of the longhouse)

This linguistic pattern reflects the social structure: men marry outside their own tribe, so each tribe is distinguished by a different language. In this community, women and men literally speak different languages.

Phonological Gender-Exclusive Differences

Less dramatically, other communities show gender-exclusive features affecting pronunciation. In the **Gros Ventre** American Indian tribe in Montana:

114. Women say [kjajtsa] for "bread"

115. Men say [dfajtsa] for "bread"

Using the wrong form for one's gender carries serious social consequences. In this community, if a person uses the wrong gendered form, elders may consider them bisexual—a striking illustration that linguistic forms index gender identity and that violating gender norms linguistically has social sanctions.

In **Bengali** (an Indian language):

116. Women use initial [l] in certain words

117. Men use initial [n] in the same words

Morphological Gender-Exclusive Differences

Word shape (morphology) can be gender-differentiated. In **Yana** (a now-extinct North American Indian language) and **Chiquitano** (South American Indian language):

118. Men's forms are longer than women's forms

119. Men add suffixes not found in women's forms

Examples from Yana:

Women	Men	Meaning
ba	ba-na	deer
yaa	yaa-na	person
t'et	t'en'-na	grizzly bear
cau	cau-na	fire
nisaaklu	nisaaklu-ci	he might go away

The pattern is reversed in **Yanyuwa** (an endangered Australian Aboriginal language):

120. Women's forms are often longer

121. Men and women use different class-marking prefixes on noun classes, verbs, and pronouns

Vocabulary Differences

Traditional standard **Japanese** provides clear examples of gender-differentiated vocabulary:

Women's Form	Men's Form	Meaning
otoosan	oyaji	father
taberu	kuu	eat
onaka	hara	stomach

In modern Japanese, these distinctions increasingly reflect degrees of formality and politeness rather than gender per se. Men's forms are largely restricted to casual contexts and considered vulgar. Women's forms are used by everyone in public contexts. Importantly, young Japanese women are increasingly challenging these restrictive norms, using men's forms and thereby changing the social meanings associated with these forms.

Pronoun Systems

Some languages grammaticalize gender in pronoun systems. In Japanese, multiple words mean "I" and vary primarily in formality:

122. **ore** Used only by men in casual contexts

123. **boku** Used mainly by men in semi-formal contexts

124. **atashi** The semi-formal variant women are conventionally expected to use

125. **watashi** The formal variant used by all genders in formal contexts

126. **watakushi** The most formal variant used by all genders

Young Japanese women increasingly challenge these restrictions, using forms traditionally reserved for men—an important example of how linguistic norms can be actively contested and transformed.

The Connection to Social Structure

A crucial insight: **gender-exclusive speech differences reflect gender-exclusive social roles**. In communities where women and men have clearly demarcated, non-overlapping responsibilities, linguistic differences are rigid and categorical. Everyone knows that women have specific roles and men have others. These role differences are linguistically encoded. There are no arguments about who does what—social structure is clear and unambiguous. Linguistic form reflects and reinforces this social clarity.

1.3 Gender-Preferential Differences Urban Western Communities 15 minutes

The Overlapping Roles Context

In Western urban communities, women's and men's social roles overlap considerably. Both work outside the home (though in different proportions). Both participate in child-rearing, though often in different degrees. Both participate in community institutions and decision-making. This social overlap is reflected in linguistic patterns: women and men use the same linguistic forms but in different frequencies or proportions.

Example Keith's Confusion

Keith, a 7-year-old Canadian from Vancouver whose parents worked in Leeds, England, noticed something curious about his teacher Mrs. Hall's name. The boys called her "Mizall" while the girls called her both "Mrs Hall" and "Mizall." The difference reflects that **[h]-dropping** is gender-preferential:

127. Men drop more [h]s than women

128. Both men and women use both forms, but in different frequencies

129. Mrs. Hall, being female, uses more [h]-retention in formal contexts (when introducing herself), but drops [h]s in casual contexts (like being addressed informally by boys in class)

The [ing] Pronunciation Variable

One of the most thoroughly documented gender-preferential patterns involves pronunciation of final sounds in words like "swimming" and "typing":

130. **Standard form:** [ɪŋ] (the "ng" sound)

131. **Vernacular form:** [ɪn] (the "in" sound)

In all English-speaking cities where data have been collected:

132. Women use more [ɪŋ] pronunciations

133. Men use more [ɪn] pronunciations

134. Both men and women use both forms

The [l]-Deletion in Montreal French

In Montreal, the frequency of [l]-deletion distinguishes French used by different genders. In phrases like "il y a" (there is) and "il fait" (it is):

135. Men delete [l] more frequently than women

136. Both sexes delete [l], but at different rates

137. The difference reflects gender-preferential patterning

The [th]-Fronting Variable in Sydney

In Sydney, the initial sound in "thing" can be pronounced as [f]:

138. Men use this pronunciation more frequently than women

139. Both genders use both forms

140. Again, this is frequency-based, not categorical

The Consistent Pattern

Across all English-speaking communities studied, **women use more standard forms than men**, while **men use more vernacular forms than women**. This pattern has been described as "the single most consistent finding to emerge from sociolinguistic studies over the past 20 years." The pattern is robust and appears very early—gender differentiation in speech can be observed in children as young as 6 years old.

Grammar and Vernacular Forms

The pattern extends beyond pronunciation to grammatical forms. **Multiple negation** (e.g., "I don't know nothing about it") is a vernacular feature found more frequently in men's speech than women's:

Social Group	**Men**	**Women**
Highest	Lower percentage	Fewer instances

Social Group	Men	Women
Lower middle	32%	1%
Lowest	90%	59%

In Detroit:

Even in the lowest social group, men use roughly a third more instances of multiple negation than women. This pattern characterizes grammatical features generally: women use more standard grammatical forms; men use more vernacular forms.

Early Emergence of the Pattern

This gender differentiation appears very early in child development. In a semi-rural New England village, boys used more [ɪn] and girls more [ɪŋ] forms. In Boston and Detroit, the same pattern emerged. In Edinburgh, gender differences in pronunciation were observed in children as young as 6 years old. The consistency and early emergence suggest that gender differentiation in language is learned through socialization into gendered roles and peer group identification.

1.4 Gender Interacting with Social Class 15 minutes

The Complex Relationship

An important question emerges: **How does gender interact with social class?** Does women's speech in one social class resemble other women, or does it more closely resemble men in their own class?

The Norwich Study

Peter Trudgill's research in Norwich, England examined use of the vernacular [ɪn] form across five distinct social groups and by gender. The results revealed a complex pattern:

In every single social group, men used more vernacular [ɪn] forms than women. However, the relationship between gender and class varies by class level:

Highest and Lowest Social Groups

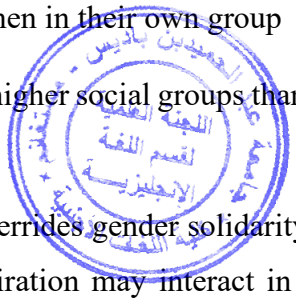
141. Women's speech is closer to that of men in the same group than to women in other groups

142. Class membership appears more important than gender identity

Lower-Middle Class (Group 2)

143. Women's score (3%) is closer to women in Group 1 than to men in their own group

144. These women may identify more strongly with women from higher social groups than with men from their own group



This pattern suggests that at extreme class levels, class solidarity overrides gender solidarity. But in the intermediate classes, gender identity and upward social aspiration may interact in more complex ways.

Grammatical Patterns Across Classes

For grammatical features, the pattern is more consistent across class levels: **in every social class, women use more standard grammatical forms than men**. In Detroit, multiple negation shows clear gender differentiation in every group:

145. Group 1 (Highest): Men 10-15%, Women minimal

146. Group 2: Men 32%, Women 1%

147. Group 3: Men 50%+, Women much lower

148. Group 4 (Lowest): Men 90%, Women 59%

The differences are sometimes most dramatic in lower-middle-class speech, where linguistic insecurity may be greatest—people are most aware of standard forms and trying to acquire them to move upward socially, yet men in this group still use vernacular forms at higher rates than women.

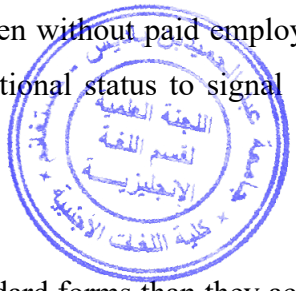
1.5 Explanations of Gender Differences in Speech 27 minutes

Why Women Use More Standard Forms

When this consistent pattern first emerged, researchers asked: "Why do women use more standard forms than men?" Multiple explanations were proposed:

Explanation 1 The Social Status Explanation

This explanation suggests that **women are more status-conscious than men**. Women are more aware that the way they speak signals social class background and status. Since standard forms are associated with high status, women use them to claim status. Women without paid employment might especially use standard forms since they cannot use occupational status to signal social position.



Supporting Evidence:

149. Women in New York and Norwich reported using more standard forms than they actually did in recordings

150. Women lacking status in society might compensate through linguistic choices

Undermining Evidence:

151. Research on women in paid service occupations (hotels, garages) versus women working at home shows the opposite: women in paid employment use MORE standard forms

152. This suggests they adopt the norms of more standard speakers they encounter at work

153. In Belfast, younger women who found work outside their community used more high-status features than older women working at home

154. This contradicts the prediction that unemployed women would use more standard forms

Alternative: Linguistic Capital

A refined version suggests that standard forms represent **linguistic capital**—valuable resources that professionals, especially women, use to construct professional identity. In white-collar professional contexts, standard forms are highly valuable. In working-class contexts (factories, building sites), the linguistic capital takes a different form—vernacular forms may be more valued.

Explanation 2 Women as Guardians of Society's Values

A second explanation points to socialization: society expects "better" behavior from women than men. Little boys are allowed more freedom; girls are more quickly corrected. Women are designated the role of modeling correct behavior for children.

Limitations of This Explanation:

155. It may apply to formal speech contexts but not to informal interactions

156. Mother-child interactions are typically relaxed and informal—contexts where vernacular forms occur most often

157. It seems odd to explain women's standard speech in formal tape-recorded interviews by reference to intimate, informal mother-child interactions

158. It takes women's behavior as the anomaly to be explained, rather than questioning why men use fewer standard forms

Explanation 3 Subordinate Groups Must Be Polite

A third explanation suggests that **subordinate groups must be polite**. Children must be polite to adults; women as a subordinate group must be polite to men. Polite speech equates to standard speech.

Critical Issues:

159. It is not obvious why polite speech should equal standard speech

160. You can express yourself politely in a working-class accent

161. You can be very insulting using RP (Received Pronunciation)

More Sophisticated Version:

Women use standard forms to **protect their "face"** (maintain social respect) and avoid offending others. This is more promising but overlaps with the status explanation.

Explanation 4 Vernacular Forms Express Machismo

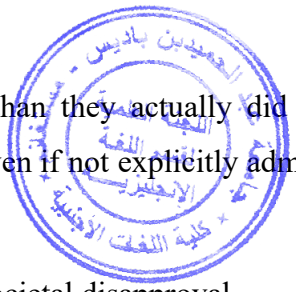
A fourth explanation addresses why men use more vernacular forms: **men prefer vernacular forms because they carry covert prestige—connotations of masculinity, toughness, and street credibility**.

Supporting Evidence:

162. Audio recordings of speakers identified as most likely to win in a street fight used the most vernacular forms

163. Norwich men claimed they used more vernacular forms than they actually did (self-reporting bias), suggesting they valued these forms highly even if not explicitly admitting it

164. Men apparently regard vernacular forms positively despite societal disapproval



The Covert Prestige Concept:

Covert prestige refers to social value that is not overtly acknowledged. Vernacular forms have covert prestige in working-class male peer groups—they are valued within those groups even though mainstream society stigmatizes them. By contrast, standard forms have **overt prestige**—openly acknowledged as correct and prestigious.

Problems with This Explanation:

1. It implies that working-class women who use high frequencies of vernacular forms are conveying toughness and masculinity—but listeners typically don't interpret women's vernacular speech as masculine

2. Instead, working-class women's vernacular speech may be interpreted as promiscuous ("loose morals," "sluts")—a negative evaluation

3. All speakers, regardless of gender, use more vernacular forms in relaxed informal contexts. Why should informal contexts be identified as masculine?

1.6 Alternative Explanations Context and Accommodation 12 minutes

Challenging the Status Explanation

Consider how early researchers classified women into social classes. **They used the woman's husband's occupation as the primary criterion**. This creates problems:

1. Women may be better educated than husbands
2. Women may have more prestigious jobs
3. Women may have married outside their social class

When women are miscategorized based on husband's occupation, their apparent use of more standard forms requires no special explanation—they are simply using forms appropriate to their actual social background.

The Interview Context Effect

In many social dialect studies, interviewers were middle-class, educated academics. **When people wish to cooperate, they accommodate to the speech of the person they're talking to**—their speech becomes more like their addressee's speech. This accommodation may be especially strong for women, who tend to be more cooperative conversationalists than men.

Evidence for Accommodation:

1. Swahili data from Mombasa (Kenya) showed that women shifted much more dramatically than men from standard to non-standard forms when speaking to friends versus strangers
2. This demonstrates differential responsiveness to conversational partners by gender

Male Divergence Pattern:

1. Working-class men may actually react AGAINST the speech of middle-class academic interviewers through **divergence**—using more vernacular forms to distinguish themselves from the interviewer
2. An Australian study found that adolescent boys reacted precisely this way in interviews with strangers

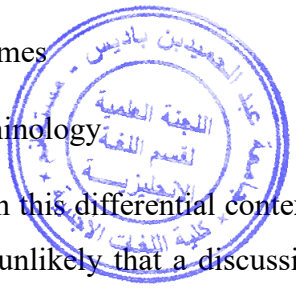
The Interviewer's Gender

Most early social dialect surveys were conducted by male interviewers. This created a fundamentally different context for women and men:

1. Women were being interviewed by a male stranger, a highly educated member of the dominant group—a situation evoking formality and social distance
2. Men were being interviewed by a member of their own gender—male solidarity reducing formality

Additionally, male and female interviewers asked different questions:

1. Women were asked about childhood games and skipping rhymes
2. Men were asked about fights, terms for girls, and sexual terminology



The resulting difference in vernacular form use is unsurprising given this differential context. As one commentary notes: "With the best will in the world, it seems unlikely that a discussion of skipping rhymes could induce the rapport of two men talking about smutty words."

Contextual Formality Explanation

This alternative framework suggests that **women's greater use of standard forms reflects their sensitivity to contextual factors**. Standard forms mark formality and social distance. In formal interviews with strangers, they are appropriate. Women may have experienced the interview context as more formal—a relatively distant, status-marked interaction—than men experienced it.

This explanation accounts for women's linguistic choices through their contextual sensitivity rather than through stereotypes about status-consciousness or guardianship of values. It shifts the focus from individual psychology to interactional dynamics.

1.7 Gender Identity as a Primary Factor 8 minutes

Beyond Class

While gender generally interacts with other social factors like class and context, there are cases where **gender identity itself seems to be the most influential factor** in accounting for speech patterns. In some communities, gender overrides class differences.

The Tyneside Example

In Tyneside (northeast England), glottalisation of [p], [t], and [k]—cutting off air at vocal cords while producing these sounds—is characteristic of the vernacular. This feature is better described as a **masculine norm** than a working-class norm:

1. Men use glottalised sounds across all styles and contexts
2. Men use these sounds regardless of social class
3. For women, glottalisation varies by social class
4. Working-class men and middle-class men both use high rates of glottalisation

This pattern suggests that **expressing masculine identity is more important than class affiliation** for men's speech choices.

The Reading Playground Study

Jenny Cheshire recorded adolescents in an adventure playground in Reading. She found:

5. Boys who used most vernacular forms had highest scores on a "toughness" scale (ability to fight, steal, ambition for tough jobs)
6. Tough girls were distinguishable from tough boys on grammatical features
7. Despite girls' demonstrated toughness, they used different speech patterns

This suggests **gender identity itself, not toughness or social group membership, is the distinguishing factor**. Girls construct identity differently through linguistic means than boys do.

Gender as Performance

More broadly, this research suggests that **linguistic forms serve as resources for constructing gender identity**. Speakers don't just reflect pre-existing gender categories; they actively construct masculine or feminine identity through linguistic choices. Different linguistic forms signal affiliation with "male" or "female" identity categories.

1.8 Session 1 Summary and Transition 5 minutes

Key Concepts from Session 1

8. **Gender differences in language are social, not biological**—they reflect socially constructed gender roles and identities, not inherent biological differences

9. **Gender-exclusive differences occur in highly structured societies** where gender roles are clearly demarcated and rigid

10. **Gender-preferential differences occur in Western urban communities** where social roles overlap and gender boundaries are more permeable

11. **The consistent finding across all English communities** is that women use more standard forms while men use more vernacular forms

12. **Multiple explanations account for gender differences**—status-consciousness, contextual sensitivity, accommodation patterns, masculine identity construction, and female positioning within hierarchies all contribute

13. **Gender interacts complexly with other social factors** like class, but can also be a primary factor in its own right for constructing and expressing identity

14. **Linguistic choice is agentive**—speakers strategically deploy linguistic resources to accomplish identity work

Preview of Session 2

Session 1 examined how gender identity influences language choice. Session 2 shifts focus to **age and generation**—how language varies across the lifespan and how age-graded patterns differ from language change in progress. We will discover that young people's linguistic choices reflect peer group pressure; that middle-aged people use most standard forms; and that older people often return to vernacular forms as societal pressures diminish. But we must learn to distinguish between patterns that repeat across generations (age-grading) and patterns representing actual language change moving through the community.

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SESSION 2 AGE AND GENERATIONAL VARIATION IN LANGUAGE 90 minutes

2.1 Introduction Language Across the Lifespan 12 minutes

The Observable Phenomenon

Language varies across the human lifespan. Infants and young children speak differently from teenagers, who speak differently from middle-aged adults, who speak differently from elderly people. Beyond obvious phonetic differences (pitch, voice quality), vocabulary, grammar, and discourse patterns all vary with age.

Physical Factors

Age-related differences in voice **pitch** reflect both physical and social factors. Physical explanation: male vocal cords grow faster and larger than female vocal cords at puberty, and men's heads and lungs are generally larger than women's. Result: male voices sound lower-pitched. Similarly, older people's voices sound deeper than children's.

However, social and cultural factors also matter. Young boys' voices often become lower-pitched before there is physical basis for the change—because it is more masculine to speak with lower pitch. Young boys adopt this masculine acoustic feature along with other sociolinguistic features of male speech.

Historical and Cultural Variation

The cultural relativity of pitch norms is striking. Some cultures have much higher average male pitch than Americans. Japanese women's pitch ranges far exceed English-speaking women's—reaching into ranges only young children could match in English.

Female politicians often have deeper voices than average, possibly reflecting public preference for masculine-associated acoustic features in political authority, or female politicians using male models to gain acceptance in previously male-dominated spheres. Margaret Thatcher famously underwent voice training to lower her pitch to be taken more seriously as Prime Minister.

Age and Linguistic Form

Beyond pitch, **vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar vary systematically with age**. Some linguistic features are appropriate for particular ages and disappear as people grow older. These are **age-graded patterns**.

2.2 Age-Graded Speech Patterns Vocabulary and Style 10 minutes

Slang as Age-Marked

Slang is the linguistic prerogative of young people. Current slang signals membership in the group "the young." Slang is ephemeral—it changes rapidly, and outdated slang instantly marks a speaker as older.

In New Zealand, young people use "sweet," "choice," "awesome," and "cool" to express approval. Earlier generations used "bosker" and "bonzer." "Grouse" reappeared briefly in the early 21st century after being fashionable in the 1970s. British urban slang includes "shubs" (rave or party) and "mandem" (group of boys).

Older speakers using current slang sound ridiculous. Conversely, young people would never use outdated slang like "spiffing," "topping," "super," "groovy," or "fab"—now associated with older generations.

Swearing and Vulgarity

Many teenagers develop extensive swear word vocabularies. However, patterns of swearing change with age:

15. Frequency typically diminishes with adulthood
16. Adult men may restrict swearing to all-male settings
17. Women tend to reduce swearing in all settings as they move into adulthood
18. Parenthood and socialization with families with young children typically suppresses swearing

When teenagers hear themselves swearing on recordings, they sometimes express regret: "When you get older, you think, 'Oh Jesus, what did I ever say that for?'"

Morphological Changes

In Glasgow, middle-class children between ages 10-15 learn to substitute [t] for the vernacular glottal stop in words like "water" and "matter"—replacing an early vernacular form with a standard form. This acquisition reflects expanding stylistic competence: children gradually acquire standard forms alongside vernacular forms.

2.3 Gender Differentiation in Childhood and Adolescence 8 minutes

Early Emergence

Gender differentiation in speech emerges early. In Britain and the USA, children's speech is generally not clearly gender-differentiated until they approach puberty. However, **in Denmark, gender differences in speech appear as early as age 4**. The explanation: 90% of Danish children under 4 spend 40+ hours weekly in daycare, so **peer group influence is stronger than parental influence** from very early age.

By teenage years, most English-speaking adolescents have developed awareness of standard English variants, though they may not choose to use them. Gender differentiation becomes pronounced during adolescence, with boys using more vernacular forms than girls.

2.4 Age and Sociolinguistic Patterns The Lifespan Curve 18 minutes

The Classic Pattern

Research has identified a **characteristic age-related pattern for stable vernacular features** (forms that don't change over time). The pattern follows a curve:

1. **High in childhood and adolescence** Young people use vernacular forms frequently
2. **Decrease in young adulthood and middle age** Usage of vernacular forms gradually reduces
3. **Peak standard form usage between ages 30-55** This is when societal pressure to conform is greatest; people are in workforce, raising families, advancing careers
4. **Gradual increase again in old age** After retirement, societal pressures reduce; vernacular usage increases again

The explanation: **societal pressure to conform is greatest in middle age** when people are most embedded in formal institutions (work, professional settings, child-rearing responsibilities). As people age beyond the workforce, social pressures diminish and they relax linguistic standards.

Age-Related Variables

Multiple linguistic variables show this pattern:

1. **Phonological:** [ɪn] vs [ɪŋ] in "walking," "swimming"
2. **Grammatical:** Multiple negation
3. **Consonant processes:** [d] for [ð] in "then," [θ] fronting to [f]

Supporting Evidence

In New Zealand, men in their 40s used fewer [ɪn] forms than men in their 20s or men over 70. The first part of the curve (decrease from youth to middle age) is clearly documented. The second part (increase in old age) is also supported, though less extensively studied.

In Detroit and Appalachia, young children use multiple negation more frequently than adolescents, and adolescents use it more than adults—illustrating the childhood-to-adulthood portion of the pattern.

Explanations

The decrease from childhood to adulthood reflects **acquisition of standard forms**. Children gradually acquire standard forms alongside vernacular forms, expanding their stylistic range. In formal interviews (where sociolinguists collect data), these newly-acquired standard forms are used more often.

The increase again in old age may reflect:

1. **Reduced institutional pressure** Retirement removes occupational conformity demands
2. **Solidarity with age cohort** Older people may use vernacular forms as identity markers of their generation
3. **Decreasing social monitoring** With less social interaction in formal settings, linguistic monitoring decreases

2.5 Adolescence Peer Pressure and Vernacular Forms 12 minutes

The Adolescent Peak

Adolescents use particularly high frequencies of vernacular forms, especially forms clearly recognized as non-standard (like "ain't" and multiple negation). This provides empirical support for a **peak during adolescence when peer group pressure not to conform to society's norms is greatest**.

However, this pattern is not attributable to age alone. **Vernacular forms act as solidarity markers**—they indicate membership in close-knit social groups.

The Gang Member Example

New York gang members delete the -ed past tense marker much more frequently than adults or non-gang youth:

1. Gang members say "miss" for "missed" ("he miss the bus yesterday")
2. Gang members say "pass" for "passed" ("it pass me")
3. Gang members use multiple negation more frequently

Gang members use these forms more often than "lames" (young people not in gangs) AND more than adults from the same social class. The crucial variable is **membership in a close-knit social group**, not age alone.

The Interaction of Age and Social Identity

Research by Penny Eckert with adolescents in Detroit playgrounds suggests that **while social group is fundamental, the symbolic value of speech is often more important for girls than boys**. Linguistic forms signal membership in gender-marked groups ("male" or "female") and indicate different social aspirations.

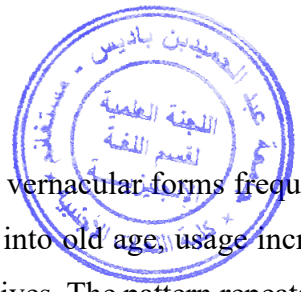
2.6 Age-Grading vs. Language Change in Progress A Critical Distinction 18 minutes

The Central Problem

How do we distinguish between stable age-graded patterns and actual language change moving through a community? This is crucial because misidentification leads to wrong predictions about the future.

Two Alternative Interpretations

Consider New Zealand data showing that 20-30 year-olds use glottal stops [ʔ] for [t] 82% of the time, while those 40+ years old use them 33% of the time:



Interpretation 1 Age-Grading (Stable Pattern)

The difference reflects a stable, recurring pattern. Young people use vernacular forms frequently; as they age toward middle age, they use fewer. As they age further into old age, usage increases again. Each age cohort follows the same trajectory throughout their lives. The pattern repeats with each generation.

Prediction: If this is age-grading, we would predict that current 20-30 year-olds will have reduced their glottal stop use by 33-35% by the time they reach 40.

Interpretation 2 Language Change in Progress

Alternatively, the difference reflects actual linguistic change. Glottal stops are increasing in New Zealand speech, becoming more standard. Younger people use more of the innovative form; older people use more of the traditional form.

Prediction: If this is change in progress, we would predict that the next generation of 20-30 year-olds will use even more glottal stops than the current 20-30 year-olds (perhaps 90%, 95%, approaching near-categoricality).

Milton Keynes and (th)-Fronting

The (th)-fronting phenomenon illustrates how to distinguish these patterns. Standard [θ] and [ð] are being replaced by [f] and [v] in words like "thought," "mouth," "mother," "brother."

Research in Milton Keynes (a new town north of London), Reading (west of London), and Hull (north of England) revealed:

1. In Milton Keynes and Reading, the pattern was more frequent

2. In Hull, the pattern was less frequent

3. If (th)-fronting is spreading northward from London, we expect highest frequency near London and decreasing frequency further north

The evidence suggests (th)-fronting **is a change in progress spreading northward** from London (where it originated around 1850). This is not stable age-grading but actual linguistic change.

The "Like" Particle

Research on the frequency of "like" in youth speech (as in "she like did this crazy thing") reveals a sharp increase among 15-16 year-olds, then dramatic reduction among 17-19 year-olds. This pattern suggests **age-grading** rather than change in progress:

1. If "like" were an incoming change, we would expect it to persist and increase as young people age

2. Instead, it emerges at a particular age (around 15-16) and largely disappears by 17-19

3. This matches age-grading pattern

However, the pattern may differ in other English varieties (London English), suggesting regional variation in whether "like" is age-graded or changing.

Critical Methodological Insight

The Montreal bilingualism pattern illustrates why careful analysis is essential. Young French Canadians are monolingual in French. Bilingualism increases through school and work. Bilingualism peaks between ages 30-50 (working years). After retirement, many revert to French monolingualism.

If researchers incorrectly interpreted this as change in progress, they would project the youth monolingualism forward and predict language shift to French with English loss. But this is **stable, recurring pattern**, not change. Each age cohort follows the same trajectory.

Implications

Distinguishing age-grading from change requires careful longitudinal study or comparative analysis across communities. Apparent age-differences must be interpreted cautiously. Stable patterns repeat; changes progress directionally.

2.7 Age and Language Change The Sociolinguistic Problem 12 minutes

The Lifespan Stability Assumption

Traditional sociolinguistic research assumes that **once adults acquire language patterns in early adulthood, those patterns remain relatively stable throughout life**. This assumption underlies the strategy of using age differences in current data to infer language change in progress.

If 20-year-olds use more of a feature than 70-year-olds, researchers assume the feature is increasing in the community—that as today's 20-year-olds age, the community will increasingly use this form.

However, this assumption may not always hold. Middle-aged speakers show patterns influenced by:

1. **Career advancement** Occupational demands increase conformity pressure
2. **Family formation** Raising children increases sensitivity to standard norms
3. **Institutional embedding** Greater participation in formal institutions (courts, schools, workplaces)

These institutional pressures create a temporary shift toward standard forms, not a permanent adoption. As people retire, pressures shift again.

The Generational Alternative

Language change may involve **generational shifts** rather than individual lifespan changes. If successive generations acquire different linguistic norms from their parents—norms that persist throughout life—we see language change through generational replacement.

In this model:

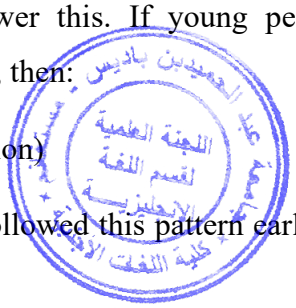
4. **Generation 1** Uses old norm throughout life
5. **Generation 2** (Younger people today) Uses new norm throughout life

6. **Language change** Results from generational replacement

Real Change vs. Age-Related Variation

The central challenge: **How do we distinguish real language change from temporary age-related variation?**

Longitudinal studies tracking individuals over decades can answer this. If young people's vernacular [ɪn] usage drops from 80% to 35% as they age toward 40, then:



7. Pattern may be stable age-grading (repeats with next generation)
8. Or may reflect generational change (if older people never followed this pattern earlier in their lives)

Without longitudinal data, researchers use comparative analysis across multiple communities to infer whether patterns are stable or changing.

2.8 Session 2 Summary Key Distinctions 8 minutes

Age-Graded Features

Age-graded features show systematic variation across the lifespan but repeat stably across generations:

9. High usage in childhood and adolescence
10. Decreasing usage approaching middle age
11. Minimum usage between ages 30-55
12. Increasing usage again in old age

Examples: Multiple negation, [ɪn] vs [ɪŋ], slang vocabulary

Language Change in Progress

Language change in progress shows directional movement toward or away from a feature:

1. Younger people use significantly more (or less) of a feature
2. Older people show the older pattern

3. Successive age cohorts move in the same direction

4. The pattern is predictive—next generation will show even more (or less) of the feature

Examples: (th)-fronting spreading northward in England; glottal stops increasing in New Zealand

Critical Variables

Distinguishing these requires examining:

1. **Geographic distribution** Do patterns show directional spread from one location to others?

2. **Social distribution** Do all social groups show similar patterns, or do different classes/groups differ?

3. **Multiple features** Do related features show consistent patterns across multiple variables?

4. **Longitudinal data** (Ideally) Tracking speakers over time to see if individual patterns persist or change

The Montreal Bilingualism Caution

The Montreal pattern (monolingual youth → bilingual middle age → monolingual old age) shows why simple age-comparisons mislead. Without understanding that this is a **stable pattern repeating with each generation**, researchers would mispredict language shift and loss.

2.9 Session 2 Synthesis and Integration 10 minutes

Interconnections

Gender, age, and other social variables interact in complex ways:

1. Young people adopt gender-appropriate speech patterns during adolescence

2. Peer group pressure during adolescence may override class differences

3. Middle-aged people use most standard forms across all gender categories

4. Gender differences persist across age groups but may shift in magnitude

Age-Specific Identity Work

Different ages perform different identity work through language:

1. **Adolescents** Use vernacular forms to signal peer group membership and solidarity
2. **Young adults** Use more standard forms to establish professional identities
3. **Middle-aged** Peak standard form usage reflects embedding in institutions
4. **Older people** May shift back to vernacular forms, signaling generational or ethnic identity

Forward-Looking Questions

As we continue studying sociolinguistics, we might ask:

1. **Authenticity and Change** How do speakers' perceptions of linguistic authenticity influence their adoption of innovations or maintenance of traditional forms?
2. **Intersectionality** How do multiple identity categories (gender, age, race, class) simultaneously influence speech patterns?
3. **Language and Social Mobility** How do people's linguistic choices reflect and facilitate (or impede) social mobility?
4. **Digital Natives** How do young people raised with digital communication technologies differ linguistically from older generations?
5. **Linguistic Vitality** For endangered communities, how do age-related patterns relate to language maintenance or loss?

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Ethnicity and Language Variation: A One-Session Lecture

Introduction

This lecture examines how ethnicity shapes language use and variety within multilingual and monolingual societies. The focus is on how speakers use distinctive language features, accents, or codes to express and construct ethnic identity. Unlike approaches that treat ethnicity as a static background, this session emphasizes the dynamic, symbolic, and functional role of speech in signaling ethnic belonging. Examples are drawn from around the world, with special attention to cases where speakers' variety of English or other dominant languages retains traces of their ethnic backgrounds. The lecture avoids discussion of social networks, focusing solely on linguistic markers and the social meaning of ethnicity.

What is Ethnicity in Sociolinguistics

Ethnicity refers to group identity based on shared cultural, linguistic, or ancestral heritage. In sociolinguistics, ethnic identity becomes salient when individuals signal group membership through language—including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and pragmatic features. Unlike social class or gender, ethnicity may be self-assumed or externally assigned, and language serves as a key resource for its performance.

Language Choice and Ethnic Signaling

Where multiple languages or varieties are available in a community, speakers can use their choice of language to index ethnicity. Even when full conversation in an ancestral language isn't possible, speakers may use short phrases, greetings, or distinctive discourse markers to display ethnic identity. For example, in New Zealand, Māori people frequently incorporate Māori greetings like "kia ora," expressions such as "e kī," softening tags like "ne," and responses like "ae" into English conversation as ethnic markers. In Singapore, Chinese Singaporeans may use distinctive particles such as "la" alongside English.

Linguistic Clues to Ethnicity

Ethnic identity may be signaled by a range of linguistic features:

6. Distinctive vocabulary, greetings, or pragmatic markers (e.g., "kia ora" in Māori English, "la" in Singapore English, "oy vay" in Jewish American English)

7. Pronunciation features or accent (e.g., postvocalic [r] in Scottish English, vowel pronunciations among Italian Americans)

8. Morphological or grammatical forms adopted from the heritage language

9. Lexical borrowing: Words from heritage languages (e.g., "schmaltz," "bagel," "glitch" in Jewish American communities) entering wider English or used within specific groups

Not all features are unique to an ethnic group, but their use in certain contexts, or with certain frequency, can signal shared identity.

Ethnic Minority Languages, Language Shift, and Ethnic Marking

In many settings, immigrant or minority communities experience language shift to the dominant language over generations. However, ethnic distinctiveness often remains visible linguistically—either through retention of ancestral language features, marked accents, or creative mixing.

Majority-language varieties associated with ethnicity can become important symbols of community identity—even after shift:

10. Italian Americans in Boston and Sydney retain distinctive vowel pronunciations in English.

11. Scots in New Zealand maintain postvocalic [r] and other Scottish English features.

12. African Americans in the USA have developed African American Vernacular English (AAVE), with unique grammar and usage.

When visible physical difference is lacking, these linguistic markers become especially important for signaling group membership.

African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

AAVE illustrates ethnicity-based variety development in a context where an ancestral language was lost. Characteristics distinguishing AAVE from Standard English include:

13. Omission of the copula "be" (e.g., "She very nice" for "She’s very nice")

14. Invariant "be" to signal habitual or repeated action (e.g., "She be at school on weekdays")

15. Higher frequency of multiple negation and consonant cluster simplification (more marked than in working-class white English)

These features carry symbolic weight and create both in-group solidarity and out-group differentiation.

British Black English and Patois

In the UK, British Black communities (descendants of Caribbean immigrants) use a range of varieties including:

16. Full Jamaican Creole (Patois)

17. British varieties with some Patois features (e.g., Midlands Black English, London Jamaican)

18. Standard English with ethnic feature incorporation

Choice of variety or inclusion of Patois features among friends signals solidarity and group membership. These forms are not used uniformly by all community members—proficiency and use vary by age, context, and socialization history.

Regional vernaculars such as Multicultural London English (MLE) can emerge in urban areas with high ethnic diversity. MLE combines features from several heritages and incorporates new slang ("blud" for "mate," "nang" for "good," "mandem" for "people/group") as an evolving youth code.

Māori English

A potential Māori dialect of English is recognized through higher frequency of:

19. Māori vocabulary (e.g., "kuia" for "old woman")

20. Vernacular forms (e.g., unmodified verb forms: "he seen it," "I rung up")

21. Narrative past tense markers unique to Māori storytelling

Although none of the features are exclusive to Māori speakers, their frequency and co-occurrence in speech signal identity, particularly among Māori youth and women.

New Englishes and Ethnic Identity

In former colonial contexts, English varieties are influenced by local indigenous languages, producing recognizable "New Englishes" (e.g., Singapore English, Indian English, Hong Kong English). Some features develop to symbolize ethnic/local identity, distinguishing these varieties from "older" forms of English and from each other.

In "exploitation" colonies (e.g., Singapore, India), English develops alongside persistent multilingualism, often serving as a lingua franca. Locally innovative features (in grammar, lexis, or phonology) mark speakers both as English-competent and as members of a particular ethnic or national group.

Pragmatic Features and Conversational Norms

Ethnolects (varieties associated with ethnic groups) may differ in discourse norms and interactional routines. For example:

22. African American "sounding" or ritual insult routines among youth
23. Māori conversational norms for pausing, feedback, or use of "eh" and other response tokens

These norms can result in miscommunication or negative stereotyping when not shared by other groups.

Ethnic Identity as Dynamic

Language features function not only as identity markers but also as resources for negotiating identity. Speakers may use, blend, or resist ethnic markers, depending on setting, audience, and purpose.

Conclusion

Language—through vocabulary, accent, syntax, and pragmatic markers—serves as a key resource in the symbolic expression of ethnic identity. Ethnic language features are not static or monolithic; they are dynamic, variable, and functional, allowing speakers to negotiate belonging,

solidarity, and difference in multiethnic societies. Understanding ethnicity in language requires recognizing both the persistence of heritage forms and the innovative, situated ways speakers mark identity in daily life.

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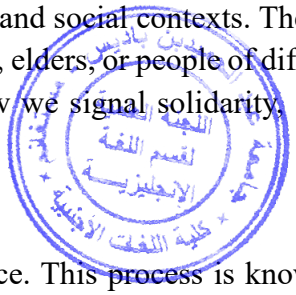
Language Variation According to the Addressee: A One-Session Lecture

Introduction

This lecture explores the crucial role of the addressee—who we are addressing—in shaping the style, vocabulary, and grammar we use in communication. Language is not just about conveying information; it is a deeply social act, responsive to our relationships and social contexts. The way we speak to different addressees—friends, family, strangers, children, elders, or people of different statuses—reveals the flexibility of our linguistic repertoire and how we signal solidarity, social distance, politeness, or authority.



Language Style and the Addressee

Speakers routinely adjust their language depending on their audience. This process is known as stylistic variation. Two central variables influence these adaptations:

24. The degree of familiarity or solidarity with the addressee
25. The perceived status or social distance between speaker and addressee

We use more casual, relaxed, and vernacular language with those we know well, and a more careful, formal, standard variant with strangers or people of higher status. A teenage boy might politely request from his friend's mother, "Excuse me. Could I have a look at your photos too, Mrs Hall?" but shift to informal speech with a peer: "C'mon Tony, gizzalook, gizzalook." This shows that relational distance is a key factor in the stylistic choices speakers make.

Age of the Addressee

Language is tailored not only to familiarity but also to the perceived linguistic competence or status of the addressee. When talking to children, speakers simplify grammar and vocabulary, use more explicit language, and often adopt a higher pitch and sing-song intonation. In the famous Monty Python sketch, the comedic effect comes from using "baby talk" with a grown adult—a strong signal that such speech is only appropriate for children. Letters to children contain simple sentences, explicit explanations, and familiar words ("a lot", "play"), while those to adults use more complex structures, subordinate clauses, and advanced vocabulary ("subsequent", "gratitude", "embroiled").

Speakers may also use a patronizing style with elderly people, characterized by simplification and the use of inclusive pronouns like "we" ("It's time for our lunch now, isn't it Mary?" when "your lunch" is meant). Both of these modifications—towards children or the elderly—demonstrate the principle of adapting to the assumed needs and identities of our addressees.

Foreigner Talk

When native speakers address non-native speakers of their language, they often unconsciously modify their speech in ways that mirror "baby talk." Simplification, slower speech, clearer articulation, and avoidance of idioms are common. This aids communication, but may also be perceived as patronising or distancing.

Social Background of the Addressee

Speech style also responds to the social class and background of the audience. Studies in radio broadcasting in New Zealand showed that newsreaders modified both pronunciation and grammar to suit different audiences: more formal and prestige forms for high-status, older audiences on public radio, and relaxed, vernacular forms on popular stations targeting younger or working-class listeners. Even the same person reading the same news story will vary their style based solely on which audience they are addressing.

In face-to-face interaction, speakers often unconsciously shift pronunciation to approach that of their addressee. For example, a travel agent in Cardiff would adjust her pronunciation of words like "better" or "matter" depending whether she was serving a colleague, a schoolteacher, a cleaner, or a friend. With customers from lower social classes, she used more "vernacular" pronunciations, while with higher-status clients, her speech was more "standard." This responsive linguistic flexibility is a major mechanism of social accommodation.

Theories of Accommodation

The phenomenon of shifting speech in response to addressee is captured in Accommodation Theory. Key processes include:

26. **Speech convergence:** Speakers shift their speech to become more like that of their addressee, signaling liking, solidarity, or a desire to put the other at ease. This can involve simplifying vocabulary and grammar, adopting a similar accent, or choosing the most comfortable variety for the other.

27. **Speech divergence:** Speakers deliberately accentuate linguistic differences from their addressee, signaling distinctiveness, resistance, or group loyalty. For example, speakers may broaden their regional accent or switch to a heritage language to emphasize ethnic or cultural solidarity, especially in response to linguistic or cultural threat or denigration.

Accommodation can be upward (towards higher status or more standard forms) or downward (towards more vernacular, in-group varieties). It can be observed in many contexts: a nurse mirroring the pronunciation of a hospital matron (upward convergence), or speakers "toning down" language for children or language learners (downward convergence).

Practical Implications and Applications

Understanding address-based language variation is critical for:

28. Interpreting patterns in sociolinguistic fieldwork and interviews, as speakers change in response to interviewers' identities and speech styles

29. Recognizing sources of miscommunication in multicultural, inter-generational, and cross-status settings

30. Training professionals (teachers, healthcare workers, service providers) to adapt their communication strategies to suit different audiences

31. Appreciating the role of audience design in media, marketing, and public communication

Discussion and Reflection

32. How do you change your language when addressing younger children, older adults, strangers, or people of authority compared to peers or family?

33. Can you recall instances where someone's way of addressing you made you feel included, excluded, patronized, or respected?

34. In multilingual or multicultural contexts, how does code-switching serve as a form of accommodation or divergence?

35. Think of examples from media or daily life where speakers change their language for different audiences. What features change (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, intonation)?

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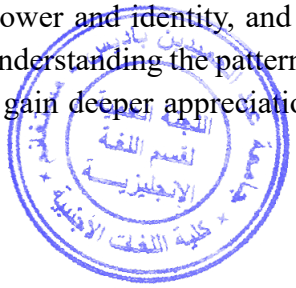
Language Codes, Diglossia, and Code-Switching

This lecture investigates how human language is shaped by and actively shapes social life, focusing on the varied ways speakers select languages, dialects, and styles in response to social context, group membership, and communicative goals. Through real-world examples and key sociolinguistic concepts such as code, diglossia, bilingualism, and code-switching, we explore how linguistic choices reflect and reinforce social hierarchies, express power and identity, and serve both pragmatic and symbolic purposes in multilingual societies. By understanding the patterns and social motivations behind code choice and switching, students will gain deeper appreciation for the complex, dynamic relationship between language and society.



Session 1 The Concept of Code and Diglossia

Introduction

This session introduces the concept of a language code and examines one of the most important organizational patterns in multilingual societies: diglossia. We explore what it means to call a language, dialect, style, or register a "code," the social significance behind code choice, and the dynamics of high (H) and low (L) varieties in diglossic communities. Key examples are drawn from Arabic, Swiss German, Haitian Creole, and Greek.

What is a Code

A "code" in sociolinguistics refers to any system used for communication—language, dialect, style, register, pidgin, or even private invented codes. Codes are chosen whenever people communicate; very few are single-code speakers. Every act of speaking involves code selection, and shifts between codes (shifts in language, dialect, variety, or style) carry social meanings.

The neutrality of the term "code" avoids the emotional responses sometimes triggered by value-laden terms like "standard language," "dialect," or "creole." The study of codes is about understanding why people make the linguistic choices they do—why a particular language, dialect, or variety is picked for a given situation, and what social meanings these choices communicate.

Diglossia Definition and Characteristics

Diglossia is a stable language situation where two distinct codes coexist, each with sharply separated functions. In a diglossic community, the "High" (H) variety is used for formal occasions, literature, religion, education, and official writing, and is highly codified, taught, and prestigious. The "Low" (L) variety is used in everyday conversation and informal communication, is more basic grammatically, learned at home, and lacks overt prestige.

Key examples:

36. Arabic: Classical Arabic (H) vs. regional colloquial Arabic (L)

37. Switzerland: Standard German (H) vs. Swiss German (L)

38. Haiti: Standard French (H) vs. Haitian Creole (L)

39. Greece: Katharévousa (H) vs. Dhimotiki/Demotic (L)

Each variety is seen as appropriate for different domains, and their use is rigidly prescribed by social norms.

Social Significance of H and L Varieties

The H variety is attached to power, prestige, elite status, and often considered inherently superior—more logical, expressive, and beautiful—while the L variety is marked as less prestigious or even disparaged. Almost all children acquire the L variety first; H is often learned in schools or religious settings.

Prestige and power relationships are reinforced by diglossia, helping maintain social hierarchies. Literacy, literature, and institutional support are typically focused on H, while L may be viewed as having no proper grammar or deservedly less valued. In many cases, movement to elevate the L variety (e.g., writing literature in Haitian Creole) meets resistance from both elites and the general population, who may see this as threatening access to the H language and thus to social mobility.

Diglossic Stability and Change

Though diglossic arrangements are remarkably stable, they can be challenged by shifts in social, political, and educational systems. Over time, the L variety may assume new functions (as English did in post-Norman Conquest England) and eventually replace the H. The boundaries between H and L (words, grammatical forms, domains of use) are typically clearly maintained, though contact and borrowing occur.

Multilingualism and Bilingual Identity

Bilingualism and multilingualism are common in much of the world. Abilities in different codes vary by need and social context. In some places, multilingualism is celebrated as part of group identity (e.g., among the Tukano of the Amazon, where marriage requires out-group linguistic diversity). In others, one language (as in Paraguay with Guaraní and Spanish) serves some social domains and another others. Such settings often create diglossic arrangements or complex systems of code choice.

Discussion

40. What social values and attitudes are attached to H and L codes in your community or communities you know?

41. Can you identify domains (e.g., home versus school, religious settings versus street) where the same speaker reliably uses different codes?

42. How have efforts to elevate L varieties faced resistance or support in your context?

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Session 2 Bilingualism, Code-Switching, and Social Meaning: A Two-Session Lecture

Introduction

This session focuses on how bilinguals and multilinguals use code-switching to accomplish social and communicative goals. We investigate types of code-switching, motivations for language choices, and how these behaviors relate to power, solidarity, and identity in communities around the world.

Bilingual and Multilingual Situations

Multilingualism is the norm in many societies. Bilinguals usually have unequal competence in their codes and decide which language to use based on context and audience. Bilingualism may be stable (as in Switzerland, Paraguay, or Haiti) or unstable (immigrant communities), with stability often related to how language use is partitioned by domain or function.

Bilingual identity is shaped not only by knowledge of two codes, but by their functional uses. For example, the Tukano of the Amazon and the Siane of New Guinea use different languages in different domains (home, village, trade, ritual), and children acquire several at once.

Types and Functions of Code-Switching

43. **Situational code-switching**: A clear change in situation triggers a change in code (e.g., teacher lectures in Bokmål, discussion with students in Ranamål; a priest delivers a sermon in Latin, but chats in the local vernacular).

44. **Metaphorical code-switching**: Topic or relationship change within the same situation prompts a switch, signaling group membership, intimacy, seriousness, or affect. For example, Catalans switch between Catalan and Castilian to indicate in-group or out-group relations, even among bilinguals.

45. Intra-sentential (within a sentence) and inter-sentential (between sentences) code-switching are observed, each shaped by local linguistic norms.

The Social Meanings of Code Choice

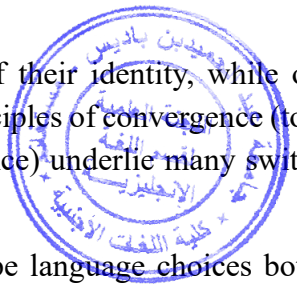
Code choice is rarely random. Speakers use languages and varieties to claim identities, signal solidarity, negotiate power, and navigate social boundaries. Code-switching can express resistance or deference, humor, or subtle shifts in relationship. Unmarked choices reflect default or expected behaviors; marked choices may carry risk or signal creative intent.

Case studies (e.g., Singapore, Kenya, Montreal, Hemnesberget, Kampala) illustrate that code choice is a dynamic process involving solidarity, power, context, and shifting social values.

Stereotypes, Attitudes, and Accommodation

Matched-guise experiments reveal that listeners make powerful judgments about speakers based on language or dialect, regardless of message content. Code-switching is often a form of accommodation—aligning speech with the perceived needs or status of the addressee, sometimes to reduce, sometimes to increase, social distance.

Some communities and groups embrace code-switching as part of their identity, while others restrict it or stigmatize mixed codes (e.g., Spanglish, Franglais). Principles of convergence (toward social norms or addressees) and divergence (away, to mark difference) underlie many switching acts.



Speaker and audience design also play crucial roles: speakers shape language choices both for present company and for more abstract audiences, regulatory groups, or cultural referees.

Illustrative Examples from the Chapter

46. Dominican American students in Providence signal distinctiveness through alternation between English and Spanish, negotiating both solidarity with local African Americans and their own separate identity.

47. Alsatian French bilinguals in Strasbourg use code-switching both as a compromise and a form of accommodation, depending on context (e.g., upshifting to French for prestige, downshifting to Alsatian for solidarity).

48. Hong Kong's Legislative Council members increased Cantonese usage as a way of aligning with a shifting power structure ahead of the 1997 handover.

Discussion

49. What determines when and how you switch codes or styles in your own linguistic community?

50. How do others judge or evaluate speakers who engage in code-switching or who use less-prestigious codes?

51. In what ways can code-switching be both a hurdle to and a resource for communication and identity?

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Language and Dialect: Understanding the Distinction: A One-Session Lecture

Introduction

This lecture examines the complex relationship between the concepts of language and dialect—a foundational issue in sociolinguistics. While most people are confident about what language they speak, professionals and linguists often face challenges defining where to draw boundaries between languages and dialects. These distinctions have crucial implications for identity, nation-building, education, power, and social attitudes. Drawing from global examples and key criteria, the session explores why language and dialect remain ambiguous terms, how political, social, and historical contexts shape their meaning, and how processes such as standardization, mutual intelligibility, and prestige influence their status.

What Is a Language/ What Is a Dialect

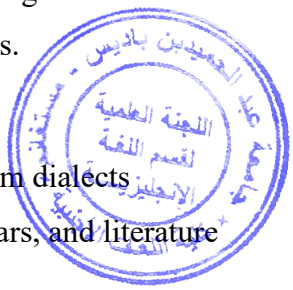
Many people equate language with ethnicity or nationality, feeling their language is central to their identity. However, even within a given region or ethnic group, people may use different names for what they speak, depending on local, caste, or social divisions. The way speakers name their variety may shift with political and social changes. This shows that the connection between language and identity is neither natural nor fixed. Linguists define language as a collection of related norms or varieties, and dialect as a single norm or local variety, but the terms overlap and are context-dependent. In ordinary usage, dialect often means a local, non-prestigious, sometimes “improper” way of speaking, while language is seen as standard and prestigious. Yet, scholars recognize these are not fixed categories.

Ambiguities and Social Factors

The ambiguity of language and dialect dates back to Ancient Greece, when multiple varieties existed and only later did a common language (koiné) emerge for wider communication. Modern confusion continues. Some regional varieties are called dialects if they have no literary tradition, while standard varieties are rarely labeled as dialects.

Political and social forces greatly influence whether a speech variety is considered a language or a dialect. For example, Hindi and Urdu are, linguistically, almost identical but are treated as separate languages due to religious and national identities, different writing systems, and elite

preferences. Both varieties draw on different sources for vocabulary and spelling. Serbo-Croatian split into Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin due to political and ethnic conflicts, even though the varieties are highly similar. In contrast, China considers mutually unintelligible varieties like Cantonese and Mandarin as dialects of Chinese because of a shared writing system and national unity. In some border regions, speakers of mutually intelligible varieties claim different language identities based mainly on state boundaries (as along the Dutch-German border), highlighting the power of politics in defining language status.



Criteria for Distinguishing Language and Dialect

Linguists have listed several criteria for distinguishing languages from dialects

Standardization has the variety been codified in dictionaries, grammars, and literature

Vitality is there a living community of speakers

Historicity does the variety carry a sense of historical identity

Autonomy do speakers feel their variety is separate from others

Reduction is the variety considered subordinate or restricted

Mixture is the variety seen as pure or mixed

Norms are there recognized good and bad forms of the variety

Applying these criteria can be complex. Some languages have more than one standard, while others have only one recognized standard. Autonomy and historicity are often subjective—cultural and political forces outweigh purely linguistic criteria.

The Standardization Process

Standardization involves selecting one variety—often that of the political or literary elite—and codifying it as the official norm in grammar, lexicon, and usage. This process unifies communities but also separates the standardized group from others, granting prestige and power to standard speakers and marginalizing other varieties as dialects.

Standardization is accompanied by ideological beliefs—the standard is seen as more correct, expressive, and central to national identity, while dialects may be viewed as incorrect or substandard. National academies and official bodies often reinforce these ideologies.

Dialect Continuum and Mutual Intelligibility

A dialect continuum exists when speech varieties change gradually over space with no sharp boundaries. Over large areas, speakers at each end might not be mutually intelligible, even

though neighboring communities can converse. Political boundaries intensify this division, transforming continua into defined language borders.

Mutual intelligibility is often considered a test for distinguishing languages from dialects, but it is unreliable. Some recognized languages are mutually intelligible, while some dialects of the same language are not.

Accent Vernacular and Koiné

Within each language, further differences exist.

Accent refers to differences in pronunciation only, while dialects involve grammar and vocabulary.

Vernacular is the everyday speech naturally transmitted in families and communities.

Koiné refers to a common variety that emerges as a lingua franca among speakers of different vernaculars.

Social Dialects and Power

Besides regional dialects, social dialects reflect differences based on class, ethnicity, religion, and other social factors. These variations are especially visible in urban settings and link persistently to dynamics of power and solidarity. Standard varieties have more prestige and institutional support, while social and regional dialects can signal solidarity, resistance, or local identity.

Language, Beliefs, and Attitudes

Beliefs about language shape attitudes toward dialects, regional accents, and varieties. Language can become a source of pride, rivalry, or stigma. Judgments about good language, correctness, and purity are influenced as much by social and political factors as by linguistic realities.

Discussion Points

Why do speakers resist or embrace the label dialect for what they speak

What are the consequences—positive and negative—of language standardization

How do regional and social dialects contribute to individual and group identity

How do power and solidarity drive the development and maintenance of languages and dialects

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Pidgins and Creoles Understanding Origins and Characteristics: A One-Session Lecture

Introduction

This lecture introduces pidgins and creoles, two important types of contact languages that have historically been marginalized in linguistic study but are now recognized for their linguistic richness and social significance. Pidgins arise in multilingual contexts where speakers with no common language create simplified systems for specific functions like trade or work, typically with no native speakers. Creoles develop when pidgins become nativized—that is, when children acquire them as first languages—leading to expanded linguistic systems capable of expressing a full range of human experience. This session unpacks their origins, linguistic features, social roles, diversity, and the controversies that surround their classification and study.

What Are Pidgins

Pidgins are simplified languages that develop among speakers of different tongues who need to communicate but lack a shared language. They have limited vocabulary and simplified grammar, often borrowing heavily from dominant languages but reducing complexity such as inflections and complex phonology. Pidgins serve as auxiliary languages, usually in contexts of unequal power. They have no native speakers, are limited in function, and often adopt vocabulary from dominant European languages mixed with local terms.

What Are Creoles

Creoles emerge when pidgins become the native language of a community, expanding in grammar, vocabulary, and function. Creoles are full languages with complex structures and broad expressive capacity. The transition from pidgin to creole involves expansion and stabilization of the linguistic system, such as increased use of tense markers, embedded clauses, and vocabulary growth. Unlike pidgins, creoles have native speakers and serve as the primary means of communication.

Origins and Theories

Several theories attempt to explain the origins of pidgins and creoles:

52. **Polygenesis theory** suggests multiple independent origins shaped by social contact and simplification needs.

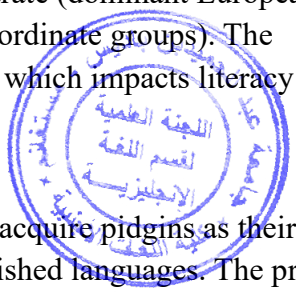
53. **Monogenesis and relexification theory** posits a common ancestor lingua franca (e.g., Sabir) whose grammar was retained but vocabulary replaced in various contact situations.

54. **Language bioprogram hypothesis** claims that creoles share structural similarities because of innate universal grammar activated in children learning restricted input languages.

Though contested, these theories acknowledge the combined influence of social, linguistic, historical, and cognitive factors.

Distribution and Features

Pidgins and creoles are prominent in coastal and trade regions globally, with notable concentrations in the Caribbean, West Africa, South Pacific, and parts of the Americas. They exhibit reduced sound systems, lack of inflections, fixed word orders, and pragmatic innovations like reduplication for emphasis. Vocabulary often reflects the superstrate (dominant European language) mixed with substrate languages (native tongues of the subordinate groups). The graphic system and linguistic prestige are often limited or contested, which impacts literacy and education.



Pidgin to Creole Development

Not all pidgins creolize; creolization typically occurs when children acquire pidgins as their mother tongue under social conditions limiting access to fully established languages. The process involves elaboration of grammar and lexicon, expanded domains of use, and growing social prestige. Creoles can develop continuums from acrolect (near standard language) through mesolect to basilect (most divergent creole forms), reflecting social stratification.

Social and Educational Issues

Creole-speaking communities often face social stigma and educational challenges because creoles are viewed as inferior languages or dialects. This affects literacy, social mobility, and cultural identity. However, movements to standardize and valorize creoles (e.g., Tok Pisin, Haitian Creole) seek to reverse such attitudes and improve social outcomes.

Discussion Points

55. How do pidgins and creoles challenge traditional concepts of language and linguistic "purity"?

56. In what ways do power and social stratification shape the status and function of pidgins and creoles?

57. What implications do pidgin and creole languages have for education and language policy in multilingual countries?

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Solidarity and Politeness in Language Use (90 minutes): A One-Session Lecture

Introduction

This lecture explores how linguistic choices convey social relationships, focusing on solidarity and politeness as core dimensions of human interaction. It examines key practices such as pronominal distinctions (tu/vous), naming and addressing conventions, and the use of politeness markers across languages and cultures. By illustrating how these forms reflect perceptions of social distance, power, respect, intimacy, and group membership, the session highlights the inseparable connection between what is said and how it is said. The lecture addresses examples from French, Javanese, Japanese, English, and other languages to illustrate cross-cultural variation and commonalities in politeness strategies. It also discusses the changing social functions and ideologies attached to address forms and politeness, showing that language serves as a central resource in negotiating social order and identity.

Pronominal Choice Tu and Vous

Many languages differentiate between familiar (T) and polite (V) second-person pronouns, such as French tu and vous, German du and Sie, Italian tu and Lei, and Russian ty and vy. Historically derived from singular/plural distinctions, these have evolved to encode social relationships of solidarity and power. Polite V forms indicate social distance or deference, whereas familiar T forms mark intimacy and solidarity. The use patterns vary by class, age, region, and context—mutual V signals politeness, mutual T signals solidarity, and asymmetrical use often signals power differences. Contemporary trends show increasing replacement of asymmetrical T/V with mutual T, reflecting shifts towards greater social equality and solidarity.

Naming and Address Terms

Choosing how to name or address someone involves multiple factors, including relative status, intimacy, setting, and cultural norms. Systems vary cross-culturally, from the complex kinship-based address in Vietnamese and Nuer societies to more flexible English naming conventions. Forms range from titles and full names to nicknames and terms of endearment. The choice can signal respect, familiarity, power, or condescension, and mismatches can cause offense or misunderstandings. Naming practices reflect and reinforce social hierarchies, gender roles, and changing norms.

Politeness and Face Management

The concept of face—our public self-image—and its protection underlies politeness in communication. Positive politeness strategies build solidarity through friendliness and collective identity, whereas negative politeness strategies distance, respect autonomy, and avoid imposition. Different languages encode politeness through diverse linguistic devices: honorifics in Japanese and Javanese, length and formality of utterances in French, and address term selection across

cultures. The negotiation of face involves constant interpersonal balancing, and violation constitutes impoliteness.

Cross-Cultural Variation and Change

Languages differ widely in the complexity and use of politeness systems. Javanese requires choosing verbal styles and honorifics reflecting status and intimacy, creating a highly stratified linguistic system. Japanese politeness intricately balances gender, social rank, and in-group/out-group distinctions; politeness involves mastery of subtle honorific forms. Meanwhile, politicized language changes in China and Iran illustrate shifts in address terms reflecting social change toward solidarity or egalitarianism. Politeness norms evolve, but their foundational role in social interaction remains pervasive.

Discussion Points

58. How do pronominal and address choices reflect social structure in your community?
59. Can you identify politeness strategies you use to negotiate social distance or intimacy?
60. What difficulties or misunderstandings have you observed or experienced involving politeness or address forms?
61. How do politeness norms change in cross-cultural encounters or over time within your community?

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