

Language variation

[Politics](#), [Marxism](#)



RESEARCH ARTICLE LANGUAGE VARIATION By Dr SHAMIM ALI ABSTRACT We must realize that language as a "thing" to be studied is necessarily a kind of simplification, because language isn't a "thing" external to human beings, but rather, something that makes up a part of who we are. KEY WORDS> Dialect variation, Sociolect, Register The life of language intermingles with the life of society. Language must also be profitably studied in its social context, in so doing, we learn both about language and about ourselves, the people who use it, live with it, and live in it. Sociolinguistics, then, as the name implies, is the study of language in human society. I'll focus here on a major aspect of sociolinguistic research in the past decades, an area generally referred to as language variation. As its own name implies, language variation focuses on how language varies in different contexts, where context refers to things like ethnicity, social class, sex, geography, age, and a number of other factors. When we are looking at variation, we have to constantly bear all of these factors in mind as potential extra-linguistic factors. In fact, we also need to factor in such things as age and sex, which also play important roles in understanding language variation. Language use varies in many dimensions. Three major dimensions are the following: 1. Regional: Dialect Variation. 2. Social: Sociolect 3. Functional: Register or Functional Style Variation. The term 'lect', a back-formation from 'dialect', is sometimes used to cover the notion of language variant. Language users move around in the 'variety space' defined by these three dimensions, and the 'territory' in variety space which is covered by a single user is known as his 'idiolect'. The movement of language users along the dimensions of regional and dialect variation is relatively restricted. Few

speakers command more than a couple of dialects or languages. But, in contrast, the variation of language with different functional contexts of use is startlingly varied - formal and informal, public and private, written and spoken, professional and trade languages. The dimension of functional variation is quite dominant, though speakers are often quite unaware of it, and respond more immediately to dialectal and sociolectal variation.

Speakers tend to have a language, a dialect and a sociolect which is associated with the circumstances of their birth and upbringing. But switches in language and dialect or sociolect tend to correlate closely with switches in functional context, in addition to the basic indexical function of social classification. At the level of languages, an instructive example is English in the late 20th century. English is used by a large community of native speakers in well-to-do Western societies, who accept that they fundamentally speak the same language, though different areas are associated with different dialects, and some of these dialects have become accepted as standard languages (south-eastern educated British; mid-West American; Canadian; Australian; South African. English is also used as a native language, and non-native standard language, in ex-colonies of the British empire. English is also used as a trade language by non-native speakers, in the form of a pidgin language and, in societies for which a pidgin has become a native language in the course of two or more generations, also creole languages. Some of these characterisations of the varieties of English point to the notion of 'register', the variation of language with type of use, rather than with the origin-marking features used in linguistics, a register is a subset of a language used for a particular purpose

or in a particular social setting. For example, an English speaker may adhere more closely to prescribed grammar, pronounce words ending in -ing with a velar nasal (e. g. " walking", not " walkin'") and refrain from using the word " ain't" when speaking in a formal setting, but the same person could violate all of these prescriptions in an informal setting. The term was first used by the linguist Thomas Bertram Reid in 1956, and brought into general currency in the 1960s by a group of linguists who wanted to distinguish between variations in language according to the user (defined by variables such as social background, geography, sex and age), and variations according to use, " in the sense that each speaker has a range of varieties and chooses between them at different times" (Halliday et al, 1964). The focus is on the way language is used in particular situations, such as legalese or motherese, the language of a biology research lab, of a news report or of the bedroom. A major factor in language variation is geography. It is important to note that classifying regional variation proceeds similarly to work in historical linguistics. The term comes here what we called isoglosses, they are geographical areas that exhibit shared dialectal features. People use isoglosses in dialect research, for example, to mark the regions where people say bucket instead of pail, or soda instead of pop, or drop their r's, or monophthongize their diphthongs. This results in general shared dialect properties that run along certain geographical lines. Of course, the lines are never perfectly clear, but in broad strokes, we can get a nice sense of how language varies with geography. Another factor driving language variation is ethnicity. Often, ethnicity is also closely tied to a particular geographical area, as is the case with Urdu , as Darbari , as Luchnowai , and as colloquial

Other times, ethnicity is a factor despite geographical dispersion, as is the case of Urdu. Linguists have long noted that there are many shared characteristics in Urdu, regardless of whether speakers live in the Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta or Punjab. A third major factor in language variation is social class (the term class almost feels quaint in these post-Marxist times! But, heck, it's useful enough to get the job done here). Often times, it is important to bear in mind that class plays a role in language. In English speaking community People, especially middle class people, exhibit a large difference between whether they drop r's or produce them, depending on how unguarded their speech is. The more unguarded, the more they drop r's. The more guarded, the more r's they produced. Class consciousness played a big role. In guarded moments, their class aspirations were visible. language is tied to social class. Language is one way of making class boundaries clear Social class can determine language use in many various manners. Probably the most important factor in the way social class determines language use is the tendency of society to attach social values to different types of language use. If an individual desires to signify his/her belonging to a certain social category, the most common way to show inclusion is by language signalling. Take for instance a young man in Islamabad City who is originally from Lahore. During the course of the day his language use may vary greatly, in the morning, when he goes to work, he may want to signify his belonging to the urban crowd by playing down his accent and striving towards a less 'punjabi' pronunciation. His choice of vocabulary may also change signifying his knowledge of the jargon used by his colleagues. He may even drop certain Punjabi terms to show his insider

knowledge of the Islamabad lifestyle. However, at certain times he may find it advantageous to emphasize his Punjabi dialect and accent. In the evening, he may meet friends from back home and begin to speak in an exaggerated Punjabi manner to signify his roots and identification with his friends from Lahore. One way to think of a person's position in society is to imagine a handoff cards, one from each suit: education, income, occupation and wealth. Social class explores language in its social contexts . connection between language, and social class,. The simpler versions are riddled with assumptions and value judgements about, or are based on rather weak and dubious evidence on, working class language, culture, and speech. Focussing on the assumptions leads us to the account of underachievement that came after linguistic deprivation theories. I am looking at the relationship between the way one speaks English(Language) and the Class one belongs to (social class) before analyzing it , I would like to go through the term Reproduction,. Reproduction is not simply a biological term, it is sociological. It is about how a social situation serves to reproduce itself . Reproduction takes place through processes of individuals being socialised into and within social groups. The middle class socialises its offspring to reproduce the middle class, the working and under classes socialise their own to reproduce more of their same. In order to understand changes now occurring in our culture, it might be useful to consider definitions of class which rely heavily on economic status. Some provisional operational definitions of Social classes:

Upper Class: Uses logical arguments in discussions with children encourages writing a pastime, non-violence taught and discussed, writing for pleasure is encouraged

Upper Middle Class: Speaks in paragraphs to children reading is

a pastime, reads aloud to children teaches civic virtue and tolerance
Lower Middle Class: Speaks in complete sentences to children some light reading at home, magazines and newspapers teaches dogma and intolerance of others
Lower Class: Speaks in sentence fragments to children no reading for pleasure, , TV on continuously, children are encouraged to play in the street. communicate in street language. Under-Class: Speaks single words to children no reading at home, children are not checked to watch soap whole day .
Bernstein: In his book gives a clear picture of Language and Social Class He mentions, the restricted code and the elaborated code. Some of the differences between the two codes are: In 1958 and 1959 Bernstein introduced the terms ‘ public’ and ‘ formal’ language (later to become known as ‘ restricted’ and ‘ elaborated’ codes, respectively). According to him, ‘ restricted’ code is characterised by ‘ the emotive rather than the logical implications and seems to be employed by working-class speakers, whereas ‘ elaborated’ code is grammatically and syntactically accurate and is used mainly by members of the middle class. In view of this, working-class children were, at that time, described by him as less sensitive to words as vehicles for feelings and ideas, and less curious about their environment. What is particularly depressing in Bernstein’s early theory is his contention that the disadvantaged child not only lacks critical skills but also has ‘ learned a self-perpetuating code that effectively bars him from acquiring them). Yet, the dividing line between elaborated and restricted code is blurred in everyday speech. Examples which show clearly all the differences between the two codes operating together are difficult to find in Bernstein's articles. One example which particularly illustrates (iv) above is quoted in

Bernstein, 1971: 194. Two five-year-old children, one working-class and one middle-class, were shown a series of three pictures, which involved boys playing football and breaking a window. They described the events involved as follows: (1) Three boys are playing football and one boy kicks the ball and it goes through the window and the ball breaks the window and the boys are looking at it and a man comes out and shouts at them because they've broken the window so they run away and then that lady looks out of her window and she tells the boys off. (2) They're playing football and he kicks it and it goes through there it breaks the window and they're looking at it and he comes out and shouts at them because they've broken it so they run away and then she looks out and she tells them off. The elaborated code is the one which, in the adult language, would be generally associated with formal situations, the restricted code that associated with informal situations. In the earlier articles it was implied that middle-class children generally use the elaborated code (although they might sometimes use the restricted code), whereas working-class children have only the restricted code. But Bernstein later modified this viewpoint to say that even working-class children might sometimes use the elaborated code; the difference between the classes is said to lie rather in the occasions on which they can use the codes (e. g. working-class children certainly have difficulty in using the elaborated code in school). Moreover, all children can understand both codes when spoken to them. Social changes produce changes in language. This affects values in ways that have not been accurately understood. Language incorporates social values. However, social values are only the same as linguistic values when the society is a stable and unchanging one.

Once society starts changing, then language change produces special effects (the language is the society. Society is its language. The two are one. The use of language forms a closed loop, since it is modelled on the loop of projection and introjection. The difference between the two loops is simply that the psychological one is based on individual meanings and the linguistic one on social values. This link between language and social values is one of identity,. In a society, the language is the society. Society is its language. The two are one. CONCLUSION In my opinion Language is a social activity. Whenever we speak we cannot avoid giving our listeners clues about our origins. Our accent and our speech generally show what part of the country we come from, and what sort of background we have. Two aspects of language behaviour are very important from a social point of view: first the function of language in establishing social relationship; and second the role played by language in conveying the the information about the speaker. Language varies not just according to who we are, but according to the situation in which we find ourselves. This variation refers to register. The basic notion of above discussion is that any given instances of languages is inextricably bound up with its contexts or situation and that's why we handle language differently. Language and social class are connected. Language is also a technical device to express not just culture but knowledge, including school knowledge. Social class can determine language use in many various manners. The most important factor in the way social class determines language use is the tendency of society to attach social values to different types of language use. If an individual desires to signify his/her belonging to

a certain social category, the most common way to show inclusion is by language signalling. the life of language intermingles with the life of society.