

## Chapter Twelve: Language in Society

### 1. DIALECT

# **Idiolect** → the speech of a particular individual

# **Dialects** → mutually intelligible forms of a language that differ in systematic ways → *grammar / vocabulary / pronunciation*

- **Note:** Phonological or phonetic distinctions → **accent**
- **Note:** Intercommunication:
  - (a) the number of speakers involved, (b) geographical or natural features, and (c) social barriers
  - (a) population mobility, (b) mass communication, and (c) ease of travel

#### 1.1. Regional Dialect

when enough linguistic differences accumulate in a particular region, the language spoken has its own character

- **Note:** NORMS
- **Note:** A line which separates two areas → **isogloss**
- **Note:** A number of isoglosses coincide → **dialect boundary**
- **Note:** The relationship between English and the heritage language of their users → **ethnolects**

#### 1.2. Social Dialect

dialect differences that seem to come about because of social factors → socioeconomic status, ethnic or racial differences, education, occupation, religion, gender and age

- **Note:** What distinguishes people as belonging to one group or another is the use of **social markers**
- **Note:** Standard dialect vs. non-standard dialect // bases for classification is non-linguistic
- **Note:** Hyper-correction → deviations from the norm thought to be proper English

### 2. LANGUAGE IN USE

#### 2.1. Register

a conventional way of using language that is appropriate in a specific context:

*Tenor*, i.e., the relationship of speakers or familiarity with one another;

*Setting*, i.e., the relative formality of the occasion;

*Field*, i.e., subject matter and functions/purposes of communication;

*Mode*, i.e., the means by which communication takes place – notably, by speech or writing

*Channel*, i.e., the technical means (e.g., phone, radio, face-to-face)

#### 2.2. Speech Styles

variations in formality:

- **Note:** A change from one style to the other style → **style-shifting**
- **Note:** **Speech accommodation** → ability to modify speech style toward (**convergence**) or away from (**divergence**) the perceived style of the person(s) we're talking to.

### 2.3. Jargon

a defining features of a register is the use of **jargon** – the special words peculiar to the members of a profession or group

### 2.4. Epithet

an offensive word or phrase used to refer to a person or group, nationality, race, etc.

### 2.5. Obscenity

words and phrases that people avoid for reasons related to religion, politeness and prohibited behavior

### 2.6. Euphemism

a word or phrase that replaces a taboo word or serves to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects

- **Note:** Euphemism reveals that words have a *connotative meaning*.

## 3. LANGUAGES IN CONTACT

### 3.1. Lingua Franca

in populated areas, where groups desire social or commercial communication, one language is often used by common agreement

### 3.2. Pidgin

# traders and missionaries who visited and attempted to communicate with peoples residing in another distant part, created a simple rule-governed language based on the language of communicators

# the dominant language is called the **lexifier language** and the other language(s) is called the **substrate language(s)**.

# characteristics:

- Although pidgins are in some sense rudimentary, they are not devoid of rules.
- Pidgins have fewer grammatical words such as auxiliary verbs, prepositions, and articles, and inflectional morphology, including tense and case endings.

The set of pronouns is often simpler in pidgins.

|    | English |     | Kamtak      |
|----|---------|-----|-------------|
| he | him     | his | i    i    i |

Pidgins may have fewer prepositions. In Kamtok, for example, *fɔ* means ‘to,’ ‘at,’ ‘in,’ ‘for,’ and ‘from.’

- Other morphological processes are more productive in pidgins, e.g., *big-big* means ‘enormous.’

### 3.3. Creole

when children are exposed to a pidgin as their linguistic input, they develop a language that is more complicated

- **Note:** pidgin doesn't have native speakers but creole does

### 3.4. Bilingualism

situation in nations in which two languages are spoken and recognized as official or national languages

One of these is typically dominant in more important contexts of use → **subordinate bilingualism**, as in Ethiopia, Amharic vs. Tigrinya, Sidamo, Oromo

Both languages are generally used for all purposes → **coordinate bilingualism** as in Switzerland, French and German

### 3.5. Diglossia

a rather special situation involving two distinct varieties of a language: there is a 'Low' variety and a 'High' variety

## 4. SAPIR-WHORF HYPOTHESIS

the structure of a language influences how its speakers perceive the world around them is most closely associated with **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**:

- **Linguistic determinism** → language determines thought → the language we speak determines how we perceive and think about the world
- **Linguistic relativism** → different languages encode different categories and that speakers of different languages therefore think about the world in different ways